

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



THE OVERGENERALIZATION OF REGULAR VERBS IN SIMPLE PAST
PRONUNCIATION BY STUDENTS TAKING INTENSIVE INTERMEDIATE
INTENSIVE ENGLISH I DUE TO THE LACK OF ORAL REINFORCEMENT AT
THE FOREIGN LANGUAGE DEPARTMENT OF THE UNIVERSITY OF EL
SALVADOR DURING THE YEAR 2014.

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BV09004
MC08001
RH09007

FINAL RESEARCH REPORT IN ORDER TO OBTAIN THE DEGREE OF
BACHELOR OF ARTS IN MODERN LANGUAGES WITH SPECIALIZATION IN
FRENCH AND ENGLISH

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INTRODUCTION

In the following graduation work is presented one of the main problems of students when learning a new language: overgeneralization of regular verbs in simple past pronunciation. It is well known that overgeneralization is a common issue that students have to face in their daily academic life and this issue usually has its root in the learning process background.

Overgeneralization is the phenomenon when one overextends one rule to cover instances to which that rule does not apply. This phenomenon may appear in different aspects such as semantic, syntactic, morphological, or behavioral. It is a systematic way that children create and unconsciously use, and here appears the greater opposition to the idea of imitation.

It is creative. "The phenomenon of overgeneralization itself is not in doubt, nor is the creative nature of the psychological processes that cause it" (Marcus, 1992)

There are many theories on language acquisition. For example, the relational frame theory (Hayes, et al, 2001), which is selectionist. It is based on Skinners behaviorist approach in which he claims that language acquisition is determined by the type and period of linguistic interaction. The psychological events that the child experiences are a crucial and have great influence in his language acquisition; these include feelings, thoughts and behaviors. The Imitation Theory says that children learn language by imitating the speech of the people around them. It consists of memorizing words and sentences and drawing conclusions from them as to what are the grammatical rules of the language. This theory is probably at least partly correct. There are some things (like the meaning of words) which the child learns by imitation, but there are some things that the theory fails to account for. For instance,

children's speech is full of errors. In individual cases this is due to the fact that language is complex and a child's first attempt is often not successful. It is commonly believed that children acquire their mother tongue through imitation of parents, caregivers, or people in their environment. Furthermore, some approaches were neutral in that they considered the environment and biological influences. For example, the Emergentist theories, such as MacWhinney's (2005)

Most of you have probably heard a child say a word that you would never say. For example, children acquiring English routinely produce verbs like *bringed* and *goed* or nouns like *mouses* and *foots*, and they certainly haven't learned these forms from the adults around them. So they aren't imitating adult speech, but they are figuring out grammatical rules, in this case the way to form past tense verbs and plural nouns. This process of figuring out a grammatical rule and applying it generally is called overgeneralization. They will later modify their natural rules of past tense and plural formation to accommodate the exceptions, including brought, went, mice, and feet. And moreover, they will modify their language only when they are good and ready.¹

At the same time, to develop the graduation work, it will be used a correlational study in order to measure the degree of relation existing between the variables present in the graduation theme: the degree of overgeneralization and the lack of oral reinforcement in the simple past pronunciation; and determine if the variables are related or not between each other.

¹Denham, Kristin and Anne Lobeck (2010), *Linguistics for Everyone: An Introduction*. Wadsworth.

Moreover, a transactional research will be done because with this type of research, data is collected in a unique time. Its purpose is to describe variables and to analyze their incidence in a specific moment on the time. Besides, the trans-sectional correlational design will pursue to describe the relationship between the variables, if it is the case.

All in all, as the experience like students has shown the research team, overgeneralization has become a common problem in the process of learning a language, and it is the main goal of this graduation work to find out the relationship between overgeneralization of the simple past pronunciation of regular verbs and the oral reinforcement that students can get.

CHAPTER I

1. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

1.1. PROBLEMATIC SITUATION

The difference in pronunciation on the regular verbs in simple past is created depending on their final sound in the simple present tense. Thanks to the experience of the work team as students, the different rules are known by learners but at the moment of speaking about a past situation, they tend to overgeneralize on the sound or they even omit it completely.

As it has been demonstrated, there are many rules which need to be applied at the moment of forming and using simple past regular verbs in English. The simple past regular verbs rules are not taken, most of the time, into account by teachers of English who teach just the way of forming the past form of these verbs. Since students need to be taught courses like pronunciation, morphology and others, teachers only give the necessary knowledge at the moment of writing the past tense, but they put less importance on the part of how these verbs need to be pronounced in the correct way.

When students realize about the reality of how simple past regular verbs must be pronounced, it turns out to be difficult for them the pronunciation of voiced and voiceless sounds, and it affects students when they think that voiced and voiceless sounds are not necessary and they can pronounce the different regular verbs as they want, or as they can.

After taking courses such as the ones previously mentioned, students realize that the terms *voiced* and *voiceless* become an important part at the moment of speaking, and if the

students talk about a past situation in an oral evaluation and they use regular verbs, a correct pronunciation is needed for reaching a better accuracy level on their presentations.

1.2 RATIONALE

While learning new languages and new forms of pronunciation, it is difficult to learn new sounds because these sounds are not in one's mother tongue. In some way, new sounds are added, and some others are kept away. That is the case of learning English, which presents a variety of sounds that in Spanish are not present.

Also, students have to learn new rules, new patterns, new ways of pronunciation, etc. and this can be very stressful and confusing since all of this tends to change from one language to another.

As the experience as students showed the research team, one of the most common problems that students have to face is overgeneralization. This type of issue becomes a very interesting problem to study since the majority of learners face this problematic situation.

As former students of languages, the work team has faced this issue by themselves especially during the first stages of the English learning process. Students tend to think that one rule applies for all the cases, such as Simple Past Tense with regular and irregular verbs.

As students continue learning, they realize that every case has its own rules and exceptions which lead them to self-correction. Students learn this with all kinds of resources related to the topic such as internet, books, guidelines, and others.

Overgeneralization and Simple Past Tense Pronunciation of regular verbs has a lot of resources with information which can help the work team to collect data and to know which path may be taken in order to succeed. But at the same time, both variables, overgeneralization and lack of oral reinforcement, will allow to understand a little bit more the main reasons why students tend to overgeneralize rules of regular verbs pronunciation in simple past tense.

Since pronunciation is a very wide topic, and generations change through time, there are always new things to find and new reasons that allow students to understand more the main problem. It is also well known that pronunciation is a very studied topic, but since students of first year of the Major in Modern Languages do not take courses of pronunciation during that time, it will help them to get deeper inside the topic and find how students face it with the tools they have and with the information they handle.

All in all, it is the main goal of this study to determine that lack of oral reinforcement is the reason why students tend to overgeneralize the pronunciation of regular verbs in the Simple Past tense.

1.3 DELIMITATION

The study will be focused on first year students of Modern Languages Major, taking Intensive Intermediate English I in the Department of Foreign Languages as our target. Since many students have not taken some courses such as Pronunciation, Morphology, Linguistics or Grammar, the study will try to discover if having this courses in the 3rd year of the major is a factor which affects them for not identifying the differences in those sounds.

Furthermore, it is a great opportunity for studying why students find easy or difficult to know why sounds make a difference, and what the difference is in pronunciation.

All in all, this research will be done in the University of El Salvador to first year students taking Intermediate Intensive English I of the Modern Language Major during the second semester in 2014.

1.4 OBJECTIVES

1.4.1 General

- ◇ To recommend ways for enhancing Modern Languages Major students pronunciation of the regular verbs in simple past in the University of El Salvador.

1.4.2 Specific

- ◇ To find out the most common verbs overgeneralized by the students of Modern Languages Major in the University of El Salvador in order to provide it as a tool for avoiding this tendency.
- ◇ To determine the most frequent cases of overgeneralization regarding the simple past in English.

CHAPTER II

2. HISTORICAL FRAMEWORK

In the University of El Salvador, people have the opportunity of studying the Modern Languages Major in the Foreign Language Department with a specialization in English and French.

Learning a second or foreign language is important in today's world. It is also known that more than half of the world's population knows more than one language. Some of these people have learned from family or societal sources, that is, growing up in family which speaks more than one language or living in a society which requires knowing more than one. In some cases, this learning process begins during youth; in other instances, it begins in childhood. Despite these varied facts, we are still a long way from understanding how second languages are learned, why many individuals have difficulty in reaching high levels of proficiency in a second language, or even what the best pedagogical approach might be.

2.1 Overgeneralization background

Overgeneralization is the application of a form or rule not only to contexts where it applies, but also to other contexts where it does not apply.

The study of overgeneralization has been studied from at least early this century, but it can hardly be said that there is a consensus about what the main issues are. Most of the studies are related to morphology and syntax of the language, and only a few of them are related to phonology and pronunciation. Some of the studies about these last ones were taken as a form of diaries. The goal of these works was mostly descriptive because little was known

about the behavior and environmental situations that can affect the development at the moment of learning a new language.

The main goal for those type of research was to explain language acquisition and to investigate how learning is accomplished in the presence of incomplete and often contradictory input.

Research on the second language (L2) acquisition has shown that beginner and intermediate L2 learners are strongly influenced by the first language (L1). For example: studies on the dative alternation (Mary sent a book to John. / Mary sent John a book) show that L2 learners overgeneralize this alternation according to the properties of their L1.

Another example is the study made by Lydia White², where at early stages of acquisition, L1 English speakers learning L2 French assume that double object constructions are allowed in French and L1 French speakers learning L2 English reject these constructions in English.

In these cases, overgeneralization errors motivated by transfer of L1 knowledge are predicted by the full transfer / full access hypotheses³ which state that the L1 in its entirety is the initial state of L2 acquisition. However, as for how learners recover from these errors, White proposes that overgeneralization errors are presumably more difficult to overcome since L2 learners would need to rely on direct or indirect negative evidence to restrict their interlanguage grammars.

²White, Lydia (1991). Argument Structure in Second Language Acquisition. *Journal of French Language Studies*

³Schwartz, Bonnie and Rex Sprouse (1994). Word order and Nominative Case in nonnative language acquisition: A longitudinal study of (L1 Turkish) German Interlanguage, eds. Teun Hoekstra and Bonnie Schwartz, *Language Acquisition Studies in Generative Grammar: Papers in Honor of Kenneth Wexler from the 1991 GLOW Workshops*, 317-368, Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Based on that and the experience of learning a new language, it was showed that most of the students in the Modern Language Department tend to face some problems at the moment of pronouncing the simple past of the regular verbs. At the same time, some of them continue doing it during the next years until they start taking courses such as pronunciation, linguistics, morphology and some others.

Students are taught the rules for pronouncing regular verbs in the simple past tense since the very first course but not in the way they completely understand how they have to use it and when they need to use it. This type of background tends to create issues such as overgeneralization and overextension of some rules, especially those related to phonemes and morphemes, and terms like voice and voiceless. In that case, it is important to look for the main reasons about the tendency of overgeneralizing and cutting it off.

As it is shown, the investigation of overgeneralization has been part of the learning process research from its beginnings, but only a few people have studied the overgeneralization in the phonetic/linguistic field. Most of the studies are focused on morphological or lexical field, and specially about the learning process when a person is a child and during the first stages of their lives.

Moreover, most of the problems of overgeneralization are motivated by the learner's lack of knowledge of the morphological-linguistic features. Given their incomplete L2 knowledge, learners resort to a default at the moment of pronouncing simple past of the regular verbs.

The rationale behind the incomplete L2 knowledge in the pronunciation for regular verbs in the simple past tense lies in the fact that most of the teachers only provide the idea about how this has to be done. Only after taking courses such as pronunciation, linguistic, and others, students are aware that they need to pronounce the verbs in the correct way and the reason for that pronunciation.

CHAPTER III

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Overgeneralizations are a common feature of language development. In learning the English past tense, beginners typically overgeneralize the ‘-ed’ rule, producing constructions such as “we holded the baby rabbits” (Pinker, 1995). This provides as well the idea that it does not matter the age, new learners will always overgeneralize the sound of the regular simple past tense which will lead them to make incorrect sentences, but as they move forward they learn the correct ways to pronounce.

Douglas Brown on his work “Principles of Language Learning and Teaching”⁴ states that in second language acquisition it is common to find the overgeneralization in the early process of learning English, since new learners tend to apply a particular rule or item for all the cases such as plurals, simple present structure or most common past tense. Unaware that these cases have their own rules and special constraints, this overgeneralization is committed by learners of English from almost any native language background. So every person that will begin learning a second language will face this overgeneralization problem, unless this learner is really committed and practices and reads a lot in order to avoid it and never experience it.

It is also known that overgeneralization may appear in different ways, as for example semantic, syntactic, and morphological.

In the semantic aspect it is dealt with words and meanings and according to Shipley and McAfee (2008) a child has a vocabulary of fifty words or more by the time he is 18 months

⁴ Douglas Brown, Principles of Language Learning and Teaching

old. The typical vocabulary of a child of three years old is nouns or noun-like words, with verb and adjective-like words. These words may reflect properties, actions, greetings, or short answers; an example of overgeneralized word is “water” children at this age tend to name any liquid as “water”.

So it can be said that nouns and adjectives are a great variety, which makes it difficult for children to recognize them all, and thus, they pick the easiest ones and overextends them over others.

Moving forward with the syntactic aspect we know that its principal study it is the sentences structures, even though for children in this particular age (18months old) it is not expected to build a proper or any sentence structure because most of them only produce sounds or single words. So overgeneralization for this manner cannot be applied.

However for the students of first year of Modern Languages Major it can be applied once they learn some structures like for example simple present and the auxiliary “do” and when they start with a new subject like the modal “Can” and in order to form a negative sentence, in an early stage they can write down like this “Williams doesn’t can study” when they actually wants to say that “Williams can’t study”.

It was only highlighted because this can be taken as an overgeneralization as well but without forgetting that the main goal of this study is the overgeneralization of regular verbs in simple past pronunciation.

Nevertheless It is the same principle applied for the students of the first year of Modern Languages Major once they start learning English they know how to form the simple past tense with regular verbs, they can see that the endings are the same for all regulars,

therefore they tend to overgeneralize the pronunciation of “ed” for all the forms, that we know they are pronounce different according to their endings in the simple present.

3.1 SIMPLE PAST TENSE RULES

The Rules concerning verb-forming that indicates the past event in English can be problematic for the first learners. They have various forms some verbs requires the suffix “-t” (for example sleep becomes slept, leave become left, etc.), and this rule often results in errors. The error occurs when the student adds the suffix “-ed” to the verbs for instance “I slepted and I leaved”, such error is related to regularization since the regular mark is used in place of the irregular one. In this case, the student is overgeneralizing the verbs to the regular ones, such as opened, closed, etc. therefore the sentences they create come to errors.

Some verbs in English require the change of vowel to form the past verb (strive = strove). This irregularity often causes the students come into error. The student often generalizes the verb “strive” to the regular one by adding the suffix “-ed” (I strived) instead of changing the “I” into “o”. This error is related to malformation because the student gives the wrong form of the morpheme.

The next error is in line with verb-forming to indicate the past occurrence. In the sentence is apt to over generalize the verb “laugh” to the irregular verb by adding a final letter “-t”. This kind of error is concerned with malformation as the student supplies the wrong morpheme. It seems that the student is influenced by the previous experience (bought). In this case, the verb “laugh” is included the regular verb. Therefore, it should be added by the suffix –ed “laughed”

Here are the rules which need to be followed in order to have the proper pronunciation of the regular verbs in the simple past tense.

Voiceless sounds ending in the simple present with – /p/ – /k/ – /s/ – /ch/ – /sh/ – /f/ – /x/ – /h/ - pronounce “ED” as /t/ in the simple past, for instance: Ask = asked /t/,

Help = helped /t/ Jump = jumped /t/

Watch = watched /t/ Relax = relaxed /t/

Then we have **Voiced Sound**: – /l/ – /v/ – /n/ – /m/ – /r/ – /b/ – /g/ – /w/ – /y/ – /z/ – and vowel sounds (diphthongs) pronounce ED as /d/ Example: Allow, allowed = allow/d/, advised (ad’vaiz) + /d/

Cry = cried/d/ Follow = followed/d/

Jail = jailed/d/ Kill = killed/d/

Last but no least we have /t/ **or** /d/ pronounce ED as /id/, for example:

Need,needed = need/id/ Skate = skated/id/

Land = landed /id/ Flood = flooded/id/

Teaching Strategies for these sounds

The information presented here is mostly focused on how “teaching English past tense pronunciation is probably one of the more challenging parts of teaching the Simple Past to ESL and EFL students”.

However, with a few simple pronunciation tips, which are also mentioned in this website, ESL and EFL teachers can effectively design lesson plans so that English language learners can master pronunciation of the challenging "-ed" endings of regular simple past verbs.

A lesson plan teaching English past tense pronunciation can mostly involve drills, such as a list which contains the most frequent cases, to help students choose the correct ending and also to *hear* the differences between "-ed" endings.

You can also give learners a list of the endings that take /t/ or /d/ sounds. ESL and EFL students often feel more comfortable memorizing such a list.

While a list will help with a lot of verbs, it's better to have the back-up rule on the voiced or unvoiced, which are mentioned before, -ed ending that the student can always rely on for correct English past tense pronunciation.

CHAPTER IV

4. HYPOTHESES

The less exposure of oral reinforcement in the pronunciation of the regular verbs in the simple past tense given in the Intermediate English I level at the Modern Language Major, the more overgeneralization will be produced.

4.1 Conceptual definition of variables

reinforcement /, ri: n' fɔ: smənt/ n.

1. the act of reinforcing;
the state of being reinforced.
2. something added to provide support, such as to a building

modern /' mɒ dən/ (adj)

1. of, involving, or befitting the present or a recent time; contemporary
2. of, relating to, or characteristic of contemporary styles or schools of art, literature, music, etc, esp those of an experimental kind
3. belonging or relating to the period in history from the end of the Middle Ages to the present

language /' læŋg wɪ dʒ / (n)

1. a system for the expression of thoughts, feelings, etc, by the use of spoken sounds or conventional symbols
2. the faculty for the use of such systems, which is a distinguishing characteristic of man as compared with other animals

3. the language of a particular nation or people
4. any other systematic or nonsystematic means of communicating, such as gesture or animal sounds: *the language of love*
5. the specialized vocabulary used by a particular group: *medical language*
6. a particular manner or style of verbal expression: *your language is disgusting*

mispronunciation /mɪ sprənʌ nsi ' eɪ ʃ ən/

1. to pronounce (a word) wrongly

past /pæst/

1. time gone by: far back in the distant past.
2. the history of a person, nation, etc.: our country's glorious past.
3. what happened at some earlier time: Try to learn from the past.
4. an earlier period of a person's life, career, etc.: He's got a very interesting past; read this report from the police.
5. the past tense.

verb /vɜːb/

a member of a class of words that typically express action, state, or a relation between two things and are often formally distinguished, as by being marked for tense, aspect, voice, mood, or agreement with the subject or object. *Abbr.:* v.v

Modern Languages (' mɒ dən ' læŋg wɪ dʒ ɪ z) *plural noun*

Plural of modern language; often used to describe the educational department in a school or university which teaches the languages spoken in present-day Europe, with the exception of English.

4.2 Operational definition of variables

The less exposure of oral reinforcement in the pronunciation of the regular verbs in the simple past tense given in the Intermediate Intensive English I level at the Modern Language Major, the more overgeneralization will be produced.

The **Modern Language Major** is a major offered by the University of El Salvador which includes: French and English as languages to learn by the students. Both of them form the main languages that the Foreign Language Department offers to the community of students. At the same time, students are prepared for teaching, applying what they have learned in the area of tourism, working as translators of little paper work, and some others.

The **simple past** expresses an action in the past taking place once, never, several times. It can also be used for actions taking place one after another or in the middle of another action.

A **regular verb** is any verb whose conjugation follows the typical pattern, or one of the typical patterns, of the language to which it belongs. In English, for example, verbs such as *play*, *enter* and *associate* are regular, since they form their inflected parts by adding the typical endings *-s*, *-ing* and *-ed*, to give forms such as *plays*, *entering* and *associated*.

CHAPTER V

5. RESEARCH DESIGN

In order to answer the research question: “*How does lack of oral reinforcement produces overgeneralization on the simple past regular verbs pronunciation?*” The group has chosen to make a non – experimental quasi-experimental research. Making this type of research, it is pretended not to manipulate intentionally the variables that are taking into account. With this, observation will be an important part and it will help the students to analyze real situations.

Because of the topic, studying individuals in their real situations may allow the researchers to collect the data about the knowledge that they already have about the pronunciation of the regular verbs in the simple past. It is pretended to collect the data in just one moment; it means the researchers will be applying Trans-sectional Research.

Another reason for doing Transactional Correlational Study is that it is closer to the real variables; consequently, there is a higher level of validity than in experimental research. It is the main goal to obtain as much information as the students can so the research will be worthy.

Furthermore, in order to collect the data, the work team will observe the way students pronounce some regular verbs from a given list and how they face the different cases from the given instrument. In that case, a survey will be used and it will be focused on gathering information about what is the difficult part, understanding if students have the necessary knowledge for pronunciation or, if they need more oral reinforcement for no overgeneralizing the rules.

Moreover, the survey will be separated into two parts, and each part will be focused on each variable of the hypothesis. In that way, the first part will be about knowing which verbs are the most overgeneralized and in which cases they do it; and the second part will be about why they tend to overgeneralize, trying to figure out if the hypothesis is accurate or not.

Finally, it is expected to describe the relationship between the two variables presented in the hypothesis: *“The less exposure of oral reinforcement in the pronunciation of the regular verbs in the simple past tense given in the Intermediate Intensive English I level at the Modern Language Major, the more overgeneralization will be produced”*. The description will be given but about the relationship between the lack of reinforcement in how to pronounce regular verbs in their simple past and how this could affect students’ pronunciation.

CHAPTER VI

6. POPULATION AND SAMPLE

The project will be focused on the students of first year of the Modern Languages Major in 2014, taking Intensive Intermediate English I. In order to answer the question *Who will be measured* It is expected to get the opinions and the real situation that students are facing, the rules that they know and how they apply them at the moment of speaking, and the knowledge that students have about the study program. The instrument to be used is a survey which will be administrated to students in order to get the results.

6.1 POPULATION

For gathering the data and the results, the population to take into account will be the students of the Modern Languages Major in the Department of Foreign Languages in the University of El Salvador during the year of 2014. Since the graduation work is in English, the population is the most appropriate for doing the research and knowing if the hypothesis is correct or not.

6.2 FIRST SAMPLE

Among the students of the Department of Foreign Languages, the research group will take into account the freshman students of the Modern Languages Major which are taking Intensive Intermediate English I.

Going a little deeper, some of the characteristics (some of them have already been mentioned) for selecting the students of Modern Languages Major are:

- ✓ To be students of first year in the Modern Languages Major.
- ✓ To have succeeded the courses during the first semester in the major.

At the same time, major coordinator will be asked for the number of students of first year in the Department of Foreign Languages. After doing that, the following formula will be applied:

$$n_1 = \frac{s^2}{v^2}$$

n_1 = First Sample

s^2 = Variance of Sample

v^2 = Variance of Population

For getting s^2 , it will be applied the next equation:

$$s^2 = p(1 - p)$$

Where:

p = Chances of Error to Occur

In order to get the value of Sample, it will be applied:

$$n = \frac{n_1}{1 + \frac{n_1}{N}}$$

Where:

n = Sample

N = Population

6.3SAMPLE

Since it is difficult to measure the results for all the students of Modern Languages Major, the research group has selected as their sample the students, taking Intensive Intermediate English I. This is according to the following chart:

Group	Total of Students
5	39
6	39
7	42
8	32
Total	152

After doing that, it was applied the formula, which is the following:

$$n_1 = \frac{s^2}{v^2}$$
$$n_1 = \frac{0.09}{(0.015)^2}$$
$$n_1 = \frac{0.09}{0.000225} = 400$$
$$n_1 = 400$$

n_1 = First Sample = 400

s^2 = Variance of Sample = 0.09

v^2 = Variance of Population = 0.000225

For getting s^2 , it was applied the next equation:

$$s^2 = p(1 - p)$$

$$s^2 = 0.90(1 - 0.90)$$

$$s^2 = 0.90(0.10)$$

$$s^2 = 0.09$$

Where:

p = Chances of Error to Occur = 0.90

In order to get the value of Sample, it was applied:

$$n = \frac{n_1}{1 + \frac{n_1}{N}}$$

$$n = \frac{400}{1 + \frac{400}{152}}$$

$$n = \frac{400}{1 + 2.6315789}$$

$$n = \frac{400}{3.6315789} = 110.144928 \approx \mathbf{110}$$

$$n = \mathbf{110}$$

Where:

n = Sample = 110

N = Population = 152

According to the given information, there are four groups of students who are taking Intensive Intermediate English I and here it is presented a chart with every single group and its number of students. The criteria to choose them was previously mentioned.

Group	Total of Students	n/N	Sample per group
5	39	0.723684	28
6	39		28
7	42		30
8	32		24
Total	152		110

CHAPTER VII

7. ANALYSIS OF DATA

7.1 DATA GATHERING

The data were gathered during Intensive Intermediate English I, semester II – 2014 courses.

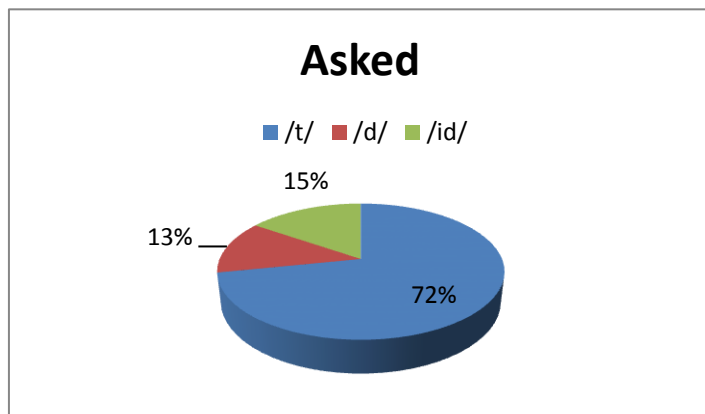
The survey was focused on measuring, by the answers given, the knowledge that students had about the pronunciation of the regular verbs in the simple past tense.

The survey was administered to the four groups of Intensive Intermediate English I of the Modern Languages Major of the Department of Foreign Languages according to the following chart:

Group	Total of Students	Sample per group	Hour
5	39	28	06:15 – 08:00
6	39	28	08:00 – 10:00
7	42	30	15:00 – 17:00
8	32	24	17:00 – 19:00
Total	152	110	

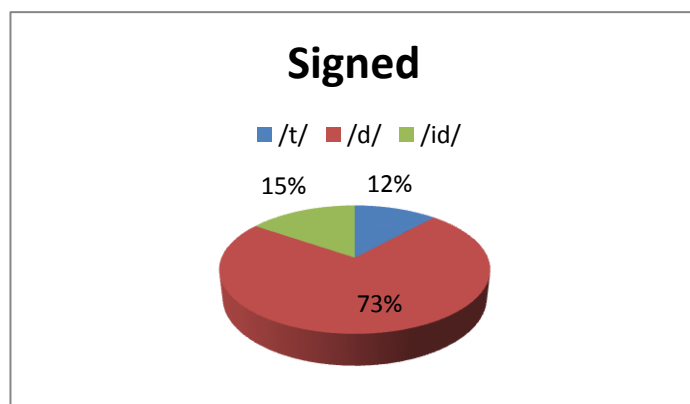
7.2 DATA ANALYSIS

The analysis has been divided in 2 parts. The first one is about the pronunciation of certain verbs. Students had to choose the best way of pronouncing each verb and choose among the options that the instrument provided.



As revealed by the graph, a 72% of the students who took the test answered correctly. Meanwhile, a 13% made a mistake when checking /d/ as answer, and 15% answer incorrectly when checking /id/.

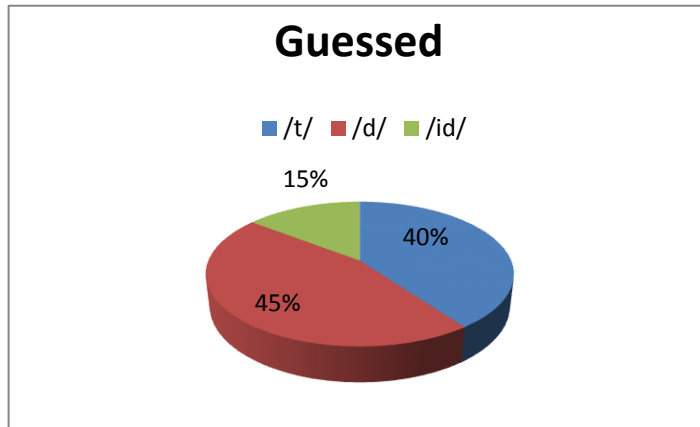
Interpretation: The results confirmed that most of the students do not have much problem at the moment of recognizing which ending they should emphasize to proper pronounce the past for “asked”. It can be added that because it is a common verb they are more familiar with it.



As it is shown, a 73% of the students checked /d/ as the answer, which is the correct one. Another 12% checked /t/ as the answer, and 15% made a mistake when checking /id/ as their answer.

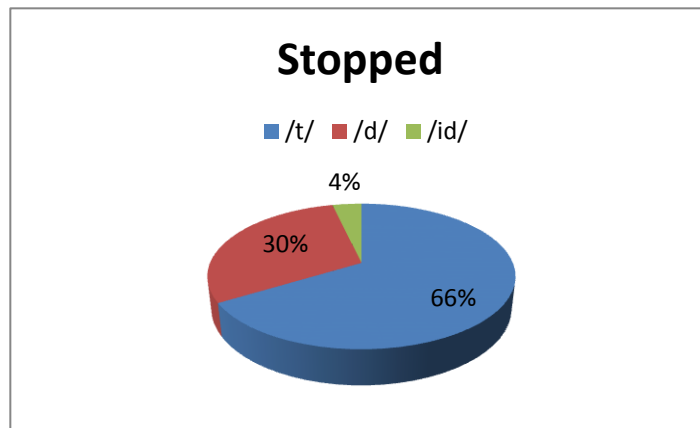
Interpretation: Based on the percentages, it can be said that the result was positive as well with this verb. It could be found that

most of the students at the moment of pronouncing the ending of the verb they did pay attention in how to pronounce it which is why the majority of students succeed it.



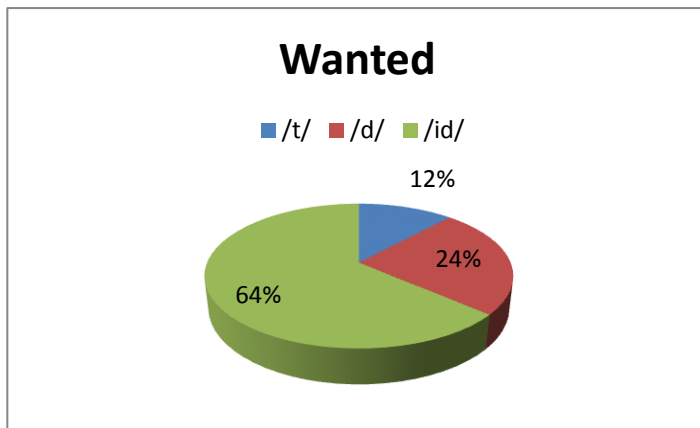
The graph shows that only 40% checked the correct answer. However, a 45% made a mistake when checking /d/ as their answer, and the other 15% committed a mistake when checking /id/ as the answer.

Interpretation: In this particular case it can be said that students got confused on how to pronounce, it was determined by the research team that it was due to the ending of the verb that it can lead to a /d/ pronunciation, showing clearly an overgeneralization of the /d/ sound.



The outcomes reveal that 66% of the students answer correctly when checking /t/. Meanwhile, a 30% of them checked /d/ as their answer, and the rest of them made a mistake when choosing /id/ as their answer.

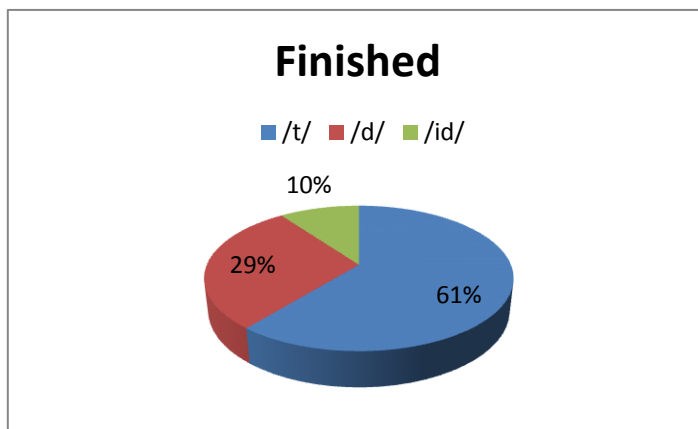
Interpretation: According to the results, a great number of students know, indeed, the right pronunciation of this verb that is commonly mispronounced with the /d/ sound in the past.



As reveal by the graph, 64% of the students checked the correct answer, where as a 12% of them made a mistake when checking /t/ checked wrong when answering /t/, and a 24% answer incorrectly when checking /d/

as their answer.

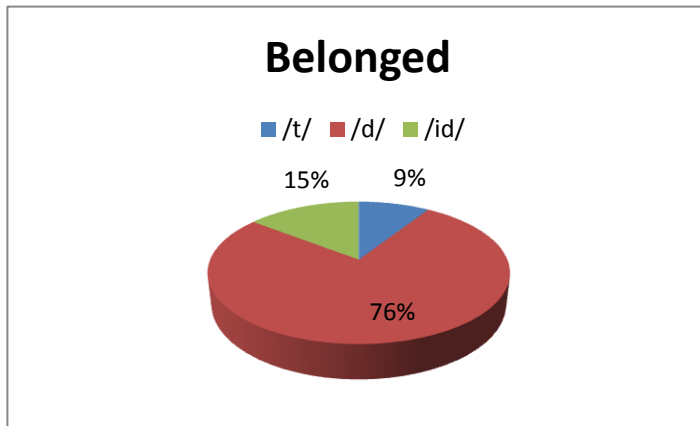
Interpretation:As the previous verbs got positive results, this one it is not the exception. However, the same pattern is followed, due to the ending letter in the simple present; students might think that the proper pronunciation on the past is with /d/ sound.



As it is shown by the graph, a 61% of students who took the test chose the correct answer. Meanwhile, a 29% of the students committed a mistake when checking /d/ as their answer, and a 10% made mistake choosing /id/ as their

answer.

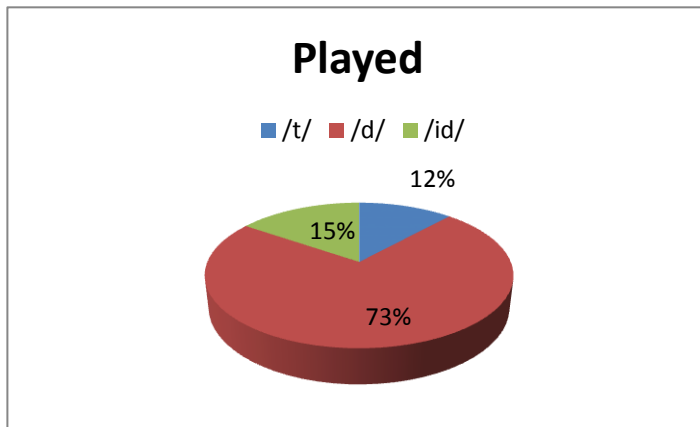
Interpretation:Most of students commit many pronunciation mistakes due to only 61% knew how to pronounce, leaving a total of 39% of the student population that didn't know which one was the correct answer.



With the graph, it is revealed that a 76% of the students chose right when checking /d/ as their answer, a 9% of them made a mistake when checking /t/ as the answer, and the rest 15% committed a mistake when checking

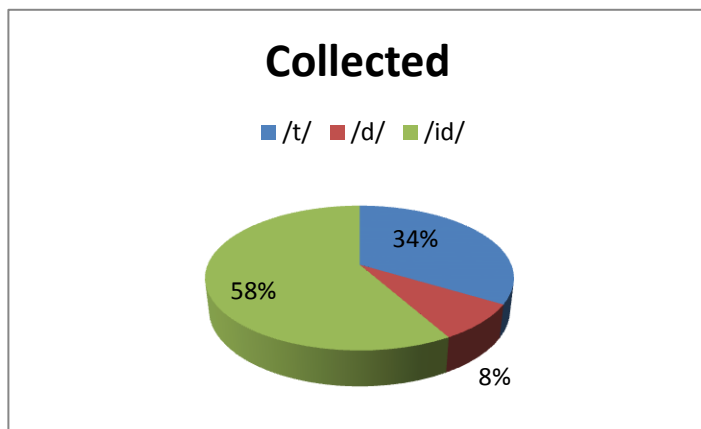
/id/.

Interpretation: Most of students checked and pronounce /d/ the correct sound ending, one aspect is that /d/ sound exists in Spanish, they are familiar with it. So, that is why it is easy to produce that sound.



The graph shows that 73% of the students who took the test answer correctly when choosing /d/; another 12% of them made a mistake when checking /t/ as the answer; where as a 15% chose wrong when checking /id/ as their answer.

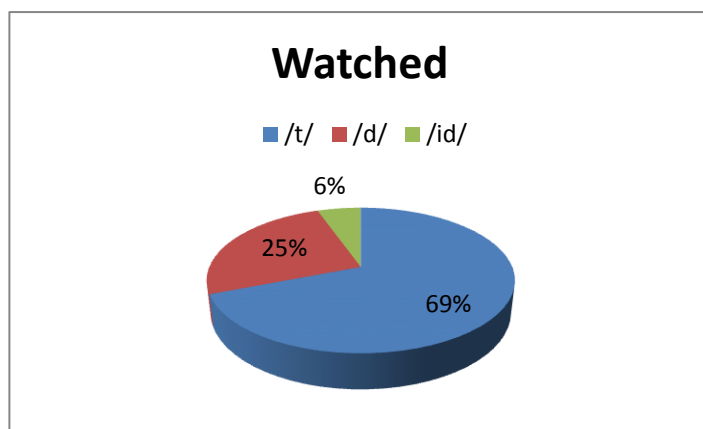
Interpretation: It could be found that mother tongue does not interfere with the /d/ sound in English, which help students to pronounce properly in the past tense.



As it is shown by the graph, 58% of the students chose right when checking /id/ as their answer, while a 34% of them chose incorrectly when checking /t/, and a 8% answered wrong when choosing

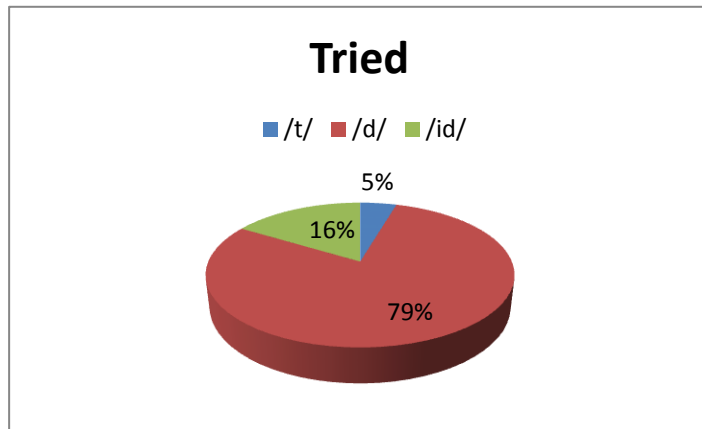
/id/ as their answer.

Interpretation: The /id/ ending is easy to identify, which makes the majority to have had the correct answer.



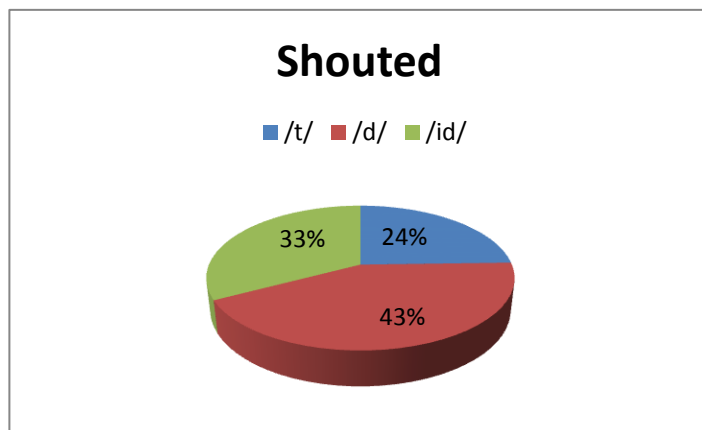
As reveal by the graph, 69% of the students answered well when choosing /t/. Meanwhile, a 25% made a mistake when checking /d/, and the rest of them answered incorrectly when choosing /id/.

Interpretation: The research team agreed that this verb does have extra reinforcement in class, due to its ending in the present “ch”, it is really unique that is why students were able to pronounce correctly.



As it is shown, a 79% of the students checked /d/ as their answer, which is the correct one; where as a 5% of them chose incorrectly when checking /t/, and the rest committed a mistake when choosing /id/ as their answer.

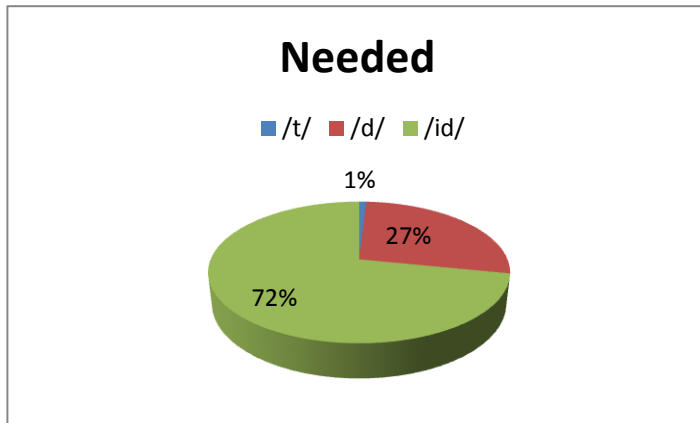
Interpretation: In the same line for /d/ sounds, almost the entire student population knows when to pronounce it correctly. On the other hand, it could be determined that because they were not sure how it was pronounced they overgeneralized the sound which made them to have the correct answer even though they did not know that was the proper one.



The graph shows that only 33% of the students checked /id/ as the correct answer, which is right. Another 43% checked /d/ as their answer which is incorrect, and the rest of them made a

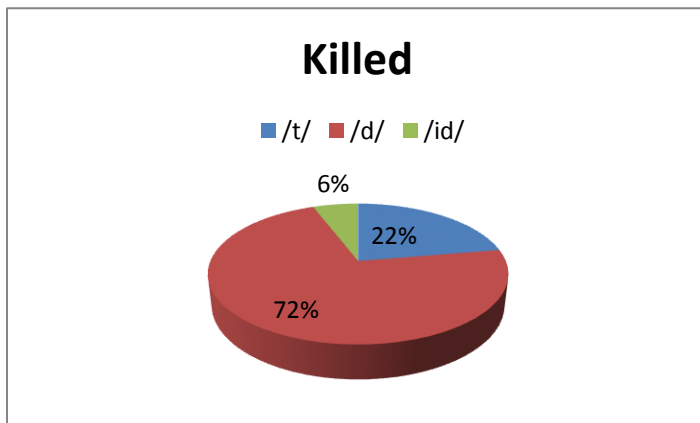
mistake when checking /t/.

Interpretation: In this particular case it was determined and analyzed that because students did not know this verb, they were not able to pronounce or check the correct one, meaning that if students are not familiar with the verb, they cannot produce the proper sound.



The outcomes reveal that 72% knew the correct answer when choosing /id/. However, 27% answered incorrectly when checking /d/ as their answer, and only 1% was mistaken when checking /t/ as the answer.

Interpretation: As it is revealed, most of the students know the rule for verbs ending in T or D, applying the rule and making the correct sound. However, it is found that not all of them are aware about the rule and tend to pronounce these verbs with the sound /d/, revealing that it may be confusion because of the sound. At the same time, a 1% demonstrates that it might have a complete lack of knowledge about the rule.



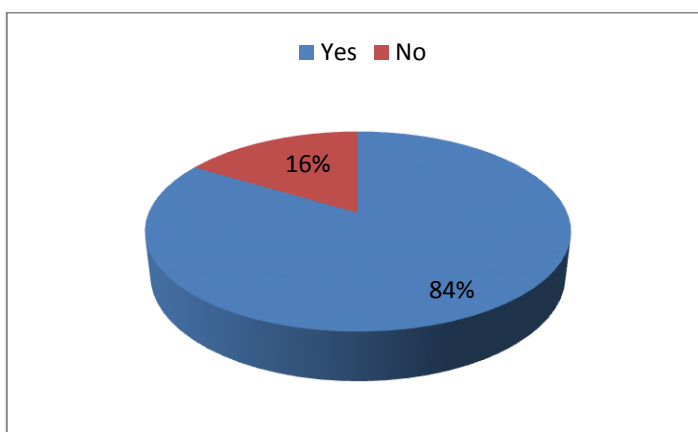
With the graph, it is revealed that 72% of the students chose right when checking /d/ as their answer, a 22% of them made a mistake when selecting /t/ as the answer, and the other 6% committed a mistake when checking /id/.

Interpretation: It is shown that a 72% of the students know that ending a verb with a voiced sound, it is necessary to pronounce ED as /d/. Nevertheless, the results show that some other students pronounce these verbs with a /t/ sound, demonstrating that they need some reinforcement for this type of verbs; and moreover, a 6% showed that there is a lack of knowledge for pronouncing verbs correctly.

SECOND PART

The second part is about some questions regarding the courses and the knowledge that students have gotten since the first course of English. Students had to choose the best option that better fit with them.

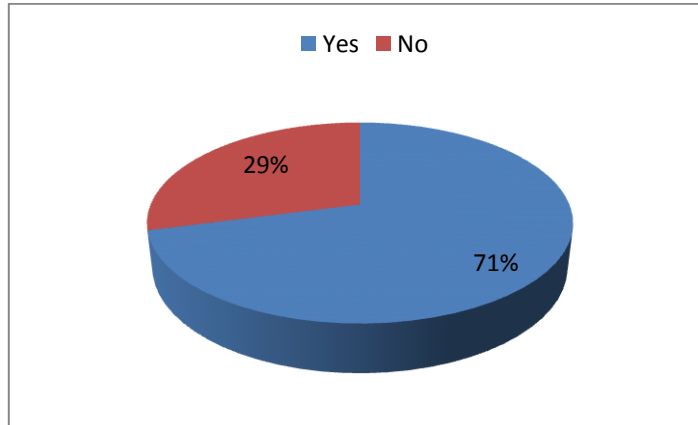
1 – Did you know the regular verbs in simple past have different pronunciation sounds?



After the gathering of information it has been revealed that most of the student population, in its 84%, knows the different pronunciations of the regular verbs in the simple past, this is a really good amount since it's only a small portion of the students of the 16% do not know such difference at this level, English Intermediate I.

Interpretation: It is revealed that students already got the knowledge about the pronunciation of regular verbs in the simple past, demonstrating that teachers already provided them the way of doing it. However, a 16% reveals that they did not know that different ways of pronouncing the sounds for the past of regular verbs must be applied.

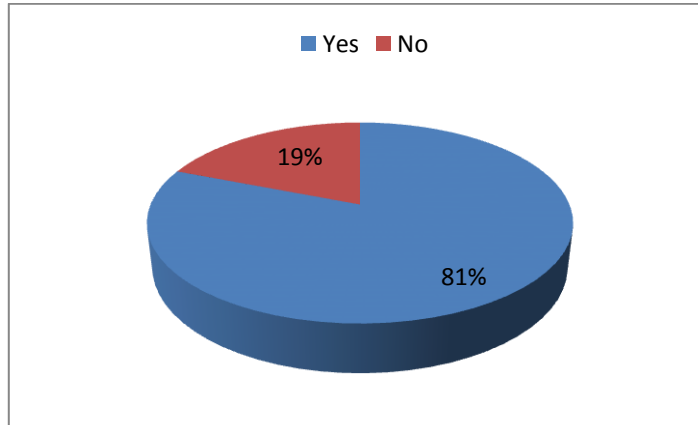
2-Do you know the rules that are applied to make the difference on the pronunciation of the simple past of regular verbs?



As it is shown on the graphic above a positive amount of the 74% of students have the knowledge to proper pronounce, meaning that they know the rules even though sometimes they have a hard time to apply it. On the other hand the results revealed that a 29% do not know the rules so that factor really affects their pronunciation of the simple past of regular verbs.

Interpretation: Most of the students who took the survey know that there are rules that need to be applied when pronouncing verbs in the simple past; nevertheless, a small quantity demonstrate that they do not know these rules to be applied.

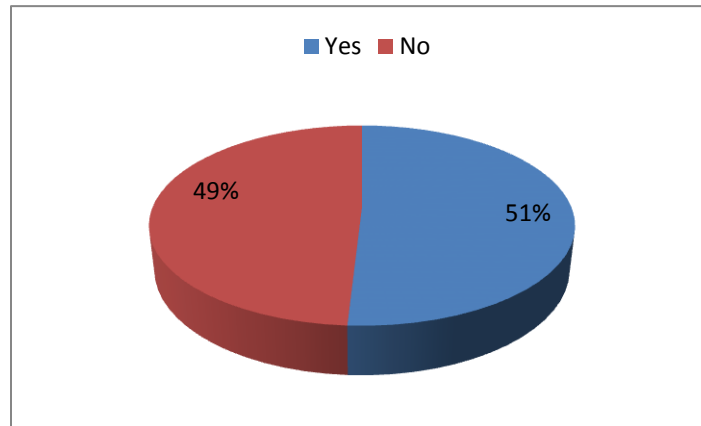
3-Has your English teacher taught you the different forms regarding the simple past pronunciation with regular verbs?



In this particular case, the research team found out that a 19% of the sample studied expose that teachers have not taught them the 3 different forms of the simple past. However the other 81% remaining did admit that their corresponding teachers have had the time to properly teach them what they need to pronounce correctly the simple past of regular verbs.

Interpretation: These answers reveal that teachers have already taught students the way of pronouncing regular verbs in their simple past. Since all of them should have passed the first course of Basic English, it may be said that they already got that knowledge. However, not all of the students agree with that, giving us the idea that it might be the possibility that teachers do not take the time for teaching it appropriately or students were transferred without passing Basic English.

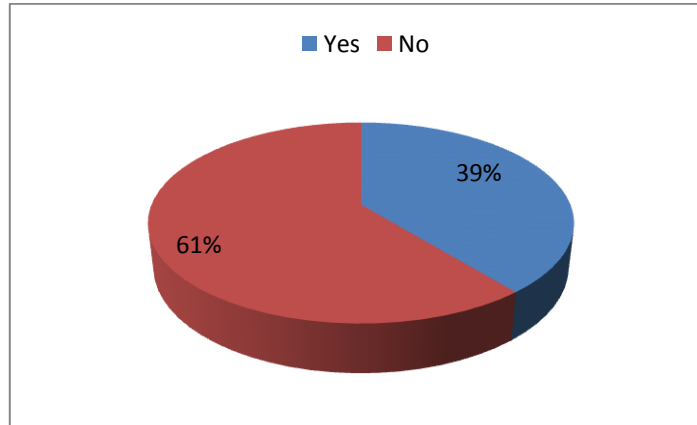
4- Have you had enough oral reinforcement in classes to master the different ways of pronouncing the regular verbs in the simple past tense?



A 49% of the students that were submitted to the study, answered that oral reinforcement is not sufficient to master or at least have a better pronunciation of the regular verbs in the simple past tense. Nevertheless, a 51% think different due to their answer was positive towards the oral reinforcement they received in class is more than enough to master such pronunciation.

Interpretation: The quantity of difference is pretty small, but it is shown that the majority of the students are satisfied with the oral reinforcement in classes for the pronunciation of regular verbs in the simple past. However, the other part agree that they have not had the appropriate oral reinforcement to master the different ways of pronouncing the regular verbs in the simple past tense.

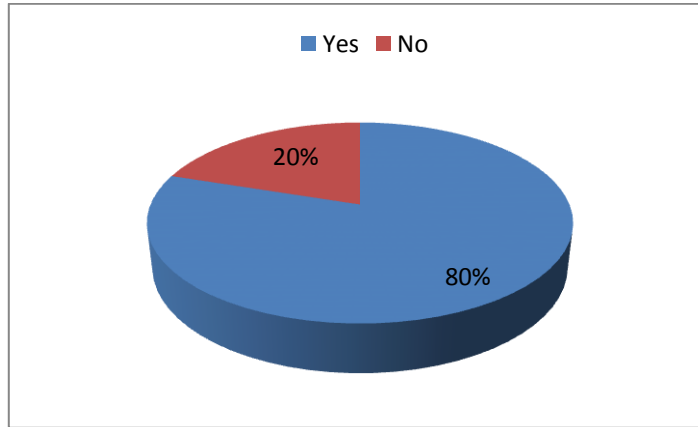
5-Do you think it is easy to apply the rules and properly pronounce the 3 different sounds that the regular verbs have in the simple past?



As it is shown by the results on the graphic a 39% of students find difficult the 3 different sounds that the regular verbs have in the simple past, the research team, as a former students totally agree with this results due to it was a problematic faced in the process, but it seems the other 61% in this level does not have much difficulty to apply the rules and proper pronounce the different forms.

Interpretation: As it has been demonstrate, most of the students agree that it is easy to apply the rules for pronouncing the three different sounds of the regular verbs in the simple past tense, but there is a small group who is having problems with this.

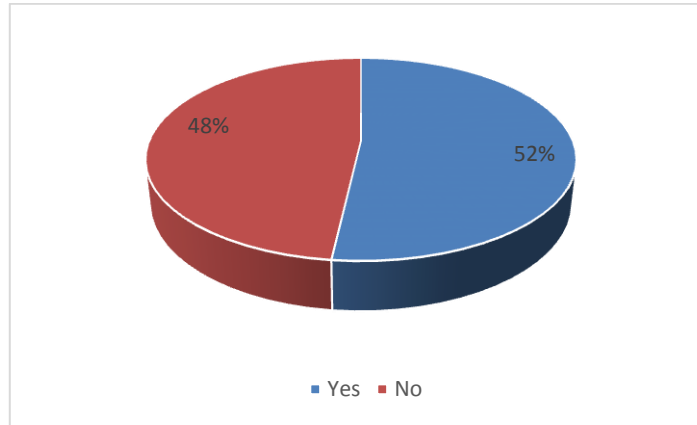
6-Do you think it is a good idea to have a pronunciation course during the first year of the major?



An 80% of the students consider that in fact it is a good idea to have a pronunciation course during the first year of the major since it will help the students to correct themselves since the very beginning. As a good sign only a 20% rejected this idea.

Interpretation: Students agree that taking courses of pronunciation since the beginning of the career would facilitate the way of learning the correct form of pronunciation. Nevertheless, a 20% of the students may think it is not necessary and it may represent an extra subject which may add extra pressure for them.

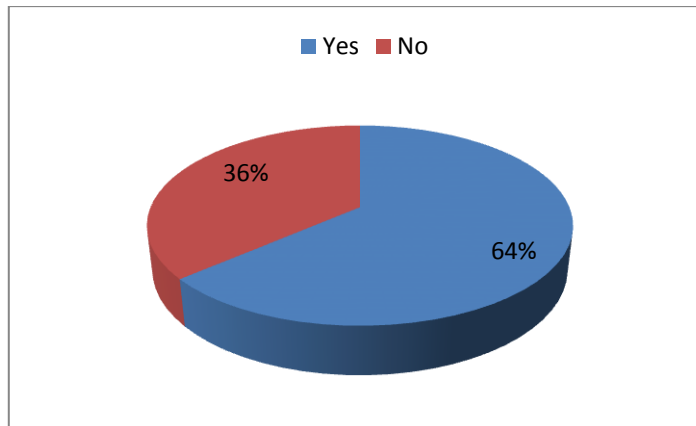
7- Do you think one course of pronunciation is enough to overcome every gap on enunciation, diction or articulation problem?



In this case the difference of opinions is really tied, due to the fact 48% of the students consider that one and only one course of pronunciation is not really enough to have a proper pronunciation; meanwhile, a 52% is satisfied with only one course of pronunciation.

Interpretation: Under this question, the majority of the students are aware that taking only one course of pronunciation is not enough for overcome every gap on enunciation, diction and articulation problem, inquiring that it is necessary to take more than one course to learn the correct way of pronouncing regular verbs in their simple past. However, the other part of the students thinks that it is enough one course and not necessary another one.

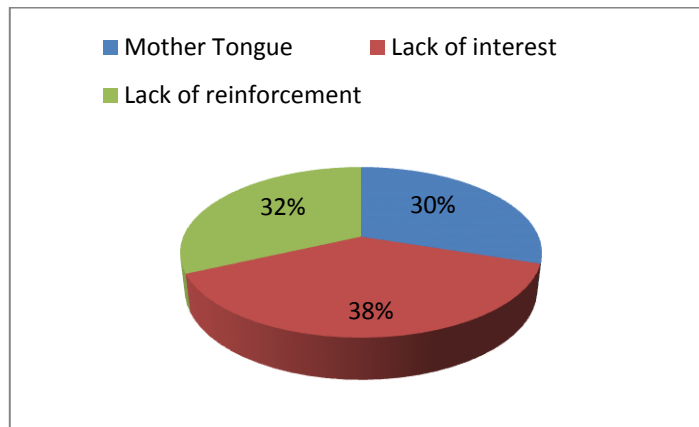
8- Do you consider that your pronunciation on the regular verbs in the simple past is facing the overgeneralization problematic?



This question is really interesting since 64% of the students admitted that their pronunciation is facing the overgeneralization problematic and they are aware that their pronunciation it is not so good regarding the simple past tense of regular verbs. Nonetheless, a 36% consider that they do not have this problematic; they are very satisfied in the way they pronounce.

Interpretation:With this question, it is revealed that overgeneralization in the simple past of regular verbs is a problematic situation that students face at the time of pronouncing. Most of the students agree that their pronunciation may not be good enough. However, the other part of the students agrees they are not facing this problem and their pronunciation is good enough.

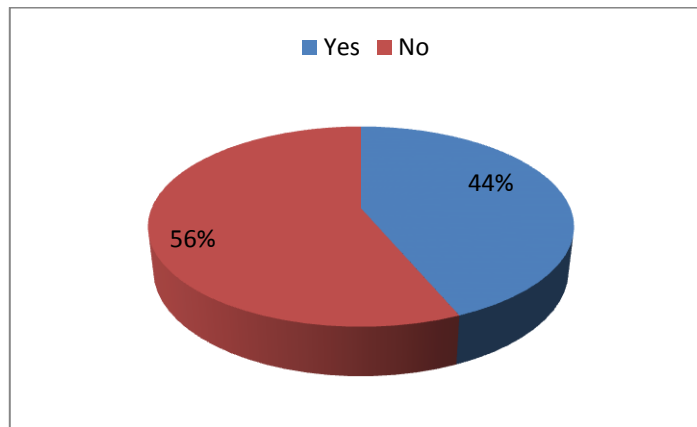
9- Which factor do you think interferes the most with your pronunciation?



As a result in this question, it is important to highlight that 38% of students acknowledge that their pronunciation is not that good due to the lack of interest on their side. However a 32% states they lack of reinforcement in the classroom is really affecting their pronunciation. Without forgetting mother tongue it is as well another factor that interferes and a 30% of students agree with it.

Interpretation: It is shown that for students, the factor that interferes the most with the pronunciation is the lack of interest, placing in second place the influence of their mother tongue. The lack of reinforcement was placed in the third place as the factor that interferes the most with the pronunciation of the regular verbs in the simple past.

10-Were you aware about the overgeneralization before this test?



Last but not least it has been revealed that a 56% of the sample studied was not aware, not at all, about what overgeneralization means, this question required a more explanation at the moment when the students were taking the survey. However a 44% did not have a problem answering and they were quite aware what it means and how affect the learning and pronunciation.

Interpretation: Despite of the fact that students know their pronunciation may be not good enough, they did not aware of what overgeneralization is. Most of them struggled with this word and its meaning. As it is revealed, before the test, they had never realized about they way they tend to overgeneralize. However, a 44% did know about the concept of overgeneralization.

CHAPTER VIII

8. CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

8.1 CONCLUSIONS

As the research arrives at its final part, the research group comes as well with the final conclusions of why students of English Intermediate I on his first year at the Foreign Language Department of the Modern Languages major, overgeneralize the regular verbs on the simple past tense.

- One of the conclusions the research team can confirm is that one of the main problem or factor that interferers/affects the pronunciation of the regular verbs in the simple past is the lack of reinforcement in the classroom as well as the lack of pronunciation courses in the first year. This affects students because, as they express, they do not know when to pronounce or how to pronounce the 3 different forms of the regular verbs, and as time goes by they cannot master this topic and when they reach the pronunciation course they are already facing and producing some fossilized sounds. It is known that teachers may teach them the rules on when to use it in the spoken form but sometimes teachers miss the important pronunciations explanation, and moreover the properly practice to overcome any articulation or enunciation problem. When teachers do not emphasize on how to pronounce the 3 different forms of regular verbs on the simple past tense, students get used to only pronounce the most common sound that is /ed/ at the end of the words.

- Based on the research it is concluded that teachers play a major role on the overgeneralization of the regular verbs in the simple past because they neither give a deeply reinforcement on such matter nor takes the time to motivate students to research on their own.
- As the thesis team moves forward on the research it can be said as well that a great portion of students simply do not care about how to correctly pronounce the regular verbs in its past form or they just do not pay attention when teachers are explaining this important topic just because they find it boring without realizing how this affects their learning of the pronunciation of the simple past tense of regular verbs, another reason is that they forgot the rules, in case they studied them in the class.
- The research group concludes that lack of practice and interest on the side of the students is another factor that affects students' pronunciation on the simple past tense of regular verbs which lead them to overgeneralize them. They learn rules but do not put into practice what they learn, eventually those "acquired rules" will be forgotten.
- After the data analysis a really important fact needs to be highlighted and it is that students do not easily find the rules of the regular verb in the simple past due to the fact that in Spanish those sounds do not exist. To overcome the mother tongue will

not be a simple task to be performed in a perfect way without the proper practice from both students in their side and teachers in the classroom.

As the research presents, both teachers and students need to put their own effort to practice the proper way of pronounce the regular verbs in the simple past. This will enhance students' performance and pronunciation of the English language. More than one pronunciation course is as well mandatory so students can continue their learning process without any further difficulties.

8.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

After doing the research, administrating the instruments and gotten the results, the research team can give recommendations so the given problematic situation can be avoided in a near future. Just as a reminder, the problematic situation was the following one: *“The overgeneralization of regular verbs in simple past pronunciation by students taking Intensive Intermediate English I due to the lack of oral reinforcement at the foreign language department of the university of El Salvador during the year 2014.*

The first recommendation we suggest, as the research has finished, and the one the research team considers the most important, is the implementation of a pronunciation course during the first year of the Modern Languages major. As expressed by students in the given results, it would be more than useful for them to have this kind of course during their first year of the major so that the different sounds can be learned and with that they can learn to differentiate between voiced and voiceless sounds. The research group thinks this is one of the first things students should know and learn during their first contact with English because, as the research group has experienced in their own learning process, having some fossilized mistakes and trying to correct them until the third year of the major can be considered a serious problematic.

Likewise, as the results have shown, students are affected by the lack of oral reinforcement in the classroom. The research group suggests applying and giving more and varied ways of practicing the three different pronunciation sounds, of the regular verbs in simple past, during the class so that students can master how to differentiate these sounds. Giving

students the opportunity of practicing these sounds in varied activities will help them to develop a better pronunciation level on regular verbs in simple past. When the research group proposes varied activities, it means that sometimes students tend to easily forget what the teacher taught during one oral reinforcement practice in the classroom. By having different activities on different classes, students continue practicing and like that the tendency to forget what was learned can be reduced and, in the best case scenario, eliminated completely and so students will, again, master the different sounds in simple past regular verbs.

As it has been shown, the recommendations the research group gives are a combination between changes to be done on the major's study plan and the varied activities to be done in the classroom when studying these regular verbs pronunciation sounds. Although these factors mentioned are important, the research group also thinks that giving positive reinforcement to students and making them know they will accomplish the correct pronunciation can also help students to not get disappointed if problems arrive into their learning process.

8.3 LIMITATIONS

In order to complete the thesis project the research team encountered difficulties, among them we can mention the most important ones:

- ❖ The day set for the instruments to be developed the investigation group found out that a letter was required in order to have authorization from the tutors so the survey could be accomplished.
- ❖ The next date scheduled for the survey to be performed not all the groups were available, because some activities were planned ahead the corresponding tutor. The instruments were accomplished in two days.
- ❖ Because the survey was given to fill out as a voluntary act, in one group, 3 students refused to take one, they only forwarded it without keeping one for themselves.
- ❖ When students were filling out the survey, an estimated of 8 students per group, found some problems on the comprehension of the questions; they had some doubts about the meaning of some words, so clarification and explanations were needed, leading the team group to take extra minutes on the time that tutors had allowed them to.

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