The Use of Spanish Preterite and Imperfect Tenses among IPFW Students

Brittany Byerley  
*Indiana University - Purdue University Fort Wayne*

Emily Reich  
*Indiana University - Purdue University Fort Wayne*

Indira Eastom  
*Indiana University - Purdue University Fort Wayne*

Amnesty Byrd  
*Indiana University - Purdue University Fort Wayne*

Eduardo Ruvalcava  
*Indiana University - Purdue University Fort Wayne*

Follow this and additional works at: http://opus.ipfw.edu/stu_symp2012  
Part of the Spanish Linguistics Commons

Recommended Citation  
Brittany Byerley, Emily Reich, Indira Eastom, Amnesty Byrd, and Eduardo Ruvalcava (2012). *The Use of Spanish Preterite and Imperfect Tenses among IPFW Students.*  
http://opus.ipfw.edu/stu_symp2012/22
The Use of Spanish Preterite and Imperfect Tenses among IPFW Students

Brittany Byerley, Emily Reich, Indira Eastom, Amnesty Byrd, Eduardo Ruvalcava
Dr. Jens Clegg
International Languages and Culture Studies
Indiana University Purdue University Fort Wayne

In the Spanish language, there are two ways of speaking in the past tense: preterite and imperfect. For Spanish speakers, the two tenses are so distinct that the tense used changes the meaning of the sentence. Because there is only one past tense used in English, the use of Spanish preterite and imperfect tenses is difficult for English-speaking students to learn. Spanish teachers have tried many different ways of presenting these tenses to their students and try to focus on specific uses of the tenses that continue to present difficulties for their students. In order to evaluate the effectiveness of the teaching methods on the IPFW campus, third and fourth year Spanish students were interviewed, and their understanding of the preterite and imperfect tenses was analyzed. Questions were compiled which tested the students’ knowledge of the different uses of both tenses. Student researchers conducted the interviews with both female and male Spanish students, as well as native speakers. The ability of the students to choose the correct tense in conversation was analyzed and compared to that of the native speakers. The students’ responses were also categorized according to the specific uses of both tenses to determine weaknesses in understanding that need to be addressed in the introductory classes on campus. Preliminary data show that IPFW Spanish students have 68% accuracy when using preterite or imperfect verbs in conversation. The results suggest that this area of Spanish grammar may need a larger emphasis in introductory and upper level classes.