



**TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY OF COTOPAXI**

**PEDAGOGY OF NATIONAL AND FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

**UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAM**

**MODALITY: RESEARCH REPORT**

**THEME:**

**THE ACQUISITION OF THE THIRD-PERSON SINGULAR “S” IN EFL YOUNG  
LEARNERS**

Research report before obtaining the bachelor degree in National and Foreign language  
Pedagogy, English Major

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**AUGUST – 2024**

## ENDORSEMENT OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT TUTOR

As the Tutor of the Research Project titled:

"THE ACQUISITION OF THE THIRD-PERSON SINGULAR 'S' IN EFL YOUNG LEARNERS," by Cabrera Arguello Melanie Anahi; Sacatoro Toaquiza Ana Elizabeth, from the Pedagogy of National and Foreign Languages program, I consider that the aforementioned Research Report is deserving of the endorsement for approval, as it complies with the technical standards, translation, and prescribed formats, and has also incorporated the observations and recommendations proposed during the pre-defense.

I am conveying this information for the pertinent purposes.

Pujilí, August 21, 2024.



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## ENDORSEMENT OF APPROVAL OF THE DEGREE TRIBUNAL

As the Readers' Tribunal, approve the present Research Project according to the regulations issued by the Technical University of Cotopaxi, and by the Pujilí Extensión; because, the applicants: Cabrera Arguello Melanie Anahi; Sacatoro Toaquiza Ana Elizabeth, with the title of the Research Project: **"THE ACQUISITION OF THE THIRD-PERSON SINGULAR "S" IN EFL YOUNG LEARNERS"**, has considered the recommendations issued timely and meets the sufficient merits to be submitted to the act of substantiation of the degree work.

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## DECLARATION OF AUTHORSHIP

Cabrera Arguello Melanie Anahi, with citizenship card No. 175474934-7, Sacatoro Toaquiza Ana Elizabeth, with citizenship card No. 055024603-7 declare to be authors of the present RESEARCH PROJECT: **“THE ACQUISITION OF THE THIRD-PERSON SINGULAR “S” IN EFL YOUNG LEARNERS”**, being Rosero Menéndez Jorge Luis, MSc. tutor of the present work; and, I expressly exempt the Technical University of Cotopaxi and its legal representatives from possible claims or legal actions.

Furthermore, I certify that the ideas, concepts, procedures and results expressed in this research work are my sole responsibility.

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## **GRATEFULNESS**

*To God for his constant guidance, strength, and inspiration throughout this journey, enabling us to achieve one of our greatest goals: completing this stage of our professional development. We are profoundly grateful to the Technical University of Cotopaxi and its professors for their warm welcome and for sharing with us not only knowledge but also values that have made a significant difference in our lives. Additionally, our sincerest thanks go to our friends, whose unwavering support and constant encouragement have been a fundamental pillar in this process. Their love and companionship have made this journey much more meaningful and manageable.*

**Ana & Melanie**

## **DEDICATION:**

*This research work is dedicated to: To God, my faithful life companion. Your constant blessings have protected and guided me, allowing me to grow professionally. To my family: my mother Vilma, my beacon of inspiration, who despite the distance, has always been present in my heart and mind. My father Ángel, who has been my rock, providing unconditional support every step of this challenging journey. My dear sisters Daniela, Alejandra, and Angelita, my nephew Pablito, and my beloved grandmothers Rosa and Dolores. You have been the best examples of resilience and perseverance, teaching me to dream and strive to achieve my goals. Thanks to your boundless love and sacrifices. To the other members of my family, whose encouragement and wise advice have been a guiding light in times of uncertainty. Finally, to my friends Ana, Adriana, Pamela, and Gabriela, who were a great support during this journey.*

**Melanie Cabrera**

## **DEDICATION**

*With deep love and gratitude, I dedicate this research to my family, whose unconditional love, constant support, and sacrifices have been the main sources of inspiration and strength for me throughout this journey. Their encouragement during difficult times, and constant presence have meant everything to me. This achievement is as much yours as it is mine, and I hope you feel proud of what we have accomplished together, it reflects your ongoing support and all the ways you have enriched my life.*

**Ana Sacatoro**

**TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY OF COTOPAXI**

**UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAM**

**DEPARTMENT OF NATIONAL AND FOREIGN LANGUAGE PEDAGOGY**

**ENGLISH MAJOR**

**THEME: THE ACQUISITION OF THE THIRD-PERSON SINGULAR “S” IN YOUNG LEARNERS.**

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**ABSTRACT**

Mastering grammar rules is a fundamental aspect of teaching and learning English for clear and effective communication. However, some rules, such as the third person singular ‘s’ in the simple present tense are often difficult for learners to use or are overlooked in language teaching because it is seen as a seemingly simple structure. By focusing on this specific aspect of grammar, the main objective of this study was to establish the level of application of the third person singular "-s" in young EFL students at the Cotopaxi International Educational Unit. The research employed a mixed-method (qualitative and quantitative) approach, specifically utilizing a descriptive type of method to evaluate the accuracy of the third-person singular "-s" morpheme in both written and oral productions among twenty seventh-grade students aged 11-12 years. Data collection was conducted through forms specifically designed to assess both written and oral expressions, complemented by an interview guide for teachers to identify the underlying causes of errors. Results revealed that students demonstrated a low level in correctly applying the "-s" morpheme in written work, often resulting in incorrect sentences. In oral work, students generally used the "-s" morpheme correctly in affirmative descriptions demonstrating a high level of application of this grammatical rule; furthermore, teacher interviews provided valuable insights, indicating that students challenges with the "-s" morpheme were primarily attributed to negative interference from their native language, they also pointed out that insufficient practice and overgeneralizations of grammatical rule significantly contributed to the errors observed.

**Keywords:** Grammar rules, inflectional morpheme, present simple, third-person singular,

# UNIVERSIDAD TÉCNICA DE COTOPAXI

## CARRERA DE PEDAGOGÍA DE LOS IDIOMAS NACIONALES Y EXTRANJEROS

**TÍTULO:** LA ADQUISICIÓN DE LA "S" DE TERCERA PERSONA DEL SINGULAR EN JÓVENES ESTUDIANTES.

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### RESUMEN

Dominar las reglas gramaticales es un aspecto fundamental de la enseñanza y el aprendizaje del inglés para una comunicación clara y efectiva. Sin embargo, algunas reglas, como el 's' de la tercera persona del singular en el tiempo presente simple, a menudo son difíciles de usar para los estudiantes o se pasan por alto en la enseñanza del idioma porque se consideran estructuras aparentemente simples. Al centrarse en este aspecto específico de la gramática, el objetivo principal de este estudio fue establecer el nivel de aplicación del morfema "-s" de la tercera persona del singular en jóvenes estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera (EFL) en la Unidad Educativa Internacional Cotopaxi. La investigación empleó un enfoque de métodos mixtos (cualitativo y cuantitativo), utilizando específicamente un método descriptivo para evaluar la precisión del morfema "-s" de la tercera persona del singular en producciones tanto escritas como orales de veinte estudiantes de séptimo grado de 11 a 12 años. La recolección de datos se llevó a cabo a través de formularios diseñados específicamente para evaluar tanto las expresiones escritas como las orales, complementados por una guía de entrevistas para los maestros con el fin de identificar las causas subyacentes de los errores. Los resultados revelaron que los estudiantes demostraron un bajo nivel en la aplicación correcta del morfema "-s" en el trabajo escrito, lo que a menudo resultó en oraciones incorrectas. En el trabajo oral, los estudiantes generalmente utilizaron el morfema "-s" correctamente en descripciones afirmativas, demostrando un alto nivel de aplicación de esta regla gramatical. Además, las entrevistas con los maestros proporcionaron valiosas perspectivas, indicando que los desafíos de los estudiantes con el morfema "-s" se atribuían principalmente a la interferencia negativa de su lengua materna. También señalaron que la práctica insuficiente y las sobregeneralizaciones de las reglas gramaticales contribuyeron significativamente a los errores observados.

**Palabras clave:** Morfema inflexional, presente simple, reglas gramaticales, tercera persona del singular.

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## **1. GENERAL INFORMATION**

**Theme:** The acquisition of the third-person singular “s” in young learners.

**Starting Date:** April 2024

**Ending Date:** August 2024

**Place of Research:** Private Educational Unit “Internacional Cotopaxi”

**Sponsoring Faculty:** Pujilí Campus

**Sponsoring career:** Pedagogy of National and Foreign Languages Undergraduate Program

**Marco project of the career:** A Transdisciplinary Study of Education and Linguistics in Linguistic-Communicative Contexts for English Language Teaching

**Work team:**

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**Knowledge area:** Education

**Research line:** Education, communication and design for human and social development.

**Research line of the career:** Education, linguistics, literature, Interculturality, and society.

## 2. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Over time English has become a global standard for communication, and a key component of mastering it is understanding grammar because it improves the ability to express thoughts clearly, write effectively, understand written material, and speak confidently (Verbalplanet, 2023). However, it is important to note that grammatical rules have changed radically over time. This evolution is evident in Middle English's varied forms for the third person singular, with the decline of "-eth" and the rise of "-s" in late Middle English and early Modern English (Baugh & Cable, 2005). This difficulty was evident during pre-professional practice at the Internacional Cotopaxi Educative Unit, where young learners frequently made errors with this grammatical feature. Despite its apparent simplicity, mastering the addition of the 3rd person singular "-s" in English is often seen as an uncomplicated rule to grasp, especially in the early stages of language acquisition (Picon, 2015).

This issue can be attributed to different causes such as the lack of focus on the complexity of English morpheme acquisition, learners often encounter considerable difficulty in acquiring and applying the English plural morpheme "-s," which is regarded as one of the most challenging grammatical elements. Surprisingly, there's a scarcity of studies focusing on its acquisition and usage compared to research on verbal inflection and other grammatical morphemes (Adejare, 2019). Furthermore, "the students learn this morpheme late in their language development because the third person singular present tense -s is a feature that does not exist in the students' L1" as (Joelsson, 2017, p. 12) affirms. Moreover, focusing on broader grammatical aspects can result in a knowledge gap regarding the challenges students face in acquiring this rule, James et al., (2022) stress that, "the 's' morpheme has its own principles and rules that the user of the English language must adhere to, otherwise, the users' message could be misconstrued if these rules and principles are broken" (p.167). It can also result in a limited understanding of specific challenges leading to ineffective teaching strategies. Sari et al., (2015) state that individual learners' differentiated acquisition of various morphemes to discover the influence of factors like teaching methods, and educational resources such as textbooks and supplementary materials.

Adejare (2019) claims also that in numerous cases, learners show signs of inadequate learning, such as neglecting rules, making over-generalizations, and being inconsistent,

particularly those who have difficulty achieving proficient learning, as well as Morshedi and Rahimy (2014) argue that second language learners' failure to use inflectional morphemes correctly might stem transferring from their first language.

So, it is essential to identify the difficulties that students face when learning this grammatical rule and how these difficulties affect their ability to express themselves clearly, write effectively, comprehend written material, and speak confidently in English. Furthermore, it looks to fill a knowledge gap by focusing on a particularly challenging yet often overlooked grammatical aspect compared to other grammatical elements, in the same way, focusing on a specific educational setting, such as the Internacional Cotopaxi Educative Unit has contributed to the development of better understanding the particular challenges that students face in applying the "-s" morpheme, educators could design more tailored and efficient pedagogical approaches, as well as identify possible influences of causes such as teaching methods and educational resources on this learning process.

Therefore, the following research questions guided the find possible solutions to identified problem and helped achieve the establish objectives:

In what percentages do students use the morpheme -s correctly and incorrectly in the third person singular in written and oral production? and what are the causes of incorrect use of the morpheme “s” in the third person in writing and oral production?

### **3. OBJECTIVES**

#### **3.1. General objective**

To examine the level of the use of the third person singular (s) in young EFL students of the Cotopaxi International Educational Unit.

#### **3.2. Specific objectives**

- To develop theoretical foundations for addressing the problem of acquisition of morphemes in young learners within the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context.
- To determine the current status of applying the third person singular (s) as a basic grammar rule, among EFL young learners at the International Cotopaxi Educative Unit.

- To define conclusions and recommendations regarding the correct and incorrect use of the third-person singular morpheme '-s' in young learners within the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context.

#### 4. ACTIVITIES AND TASK SYSTEM IN RELATION TO THE OBJECTIVES PROPOSED

Specific objective	Activities	Verification Means
To develop theoretical foundations for addressing the problem of acquisition of morphemes in young learners within the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context.	-Look for information from academic papers, scientific journals, and official institutional websites.	-Theoretical framework. -References
To examine the level of use of the third person singular (s) among EFL young learners at the International Cotopaxi Educative Unit.	-Select the data collection technique. -Design data collection instruments. -Apply the instruments. -Analyze the obtained information. -Review the results, analyze and discuss them.	-Interview -Registration Form
To define conclusions and recommendations regarding the correct and incorrect use of the third-person singular morpheme '-s' in young learners within the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context.	-Analyze and discuss.	-Conclusions -Recommendations

*Elaborate by: Melanie Cabrera and Ana Sacatoro*

## **5. JUSTIFICATION**

The research on the application of the third-person singular "-s" morpheme in young English learners is conducted due to the difficulties these students face when using this grammatical rule, which directly affects their language proficiency and communication skills. Errors in the use of this morpheme can hinder both the oral and written expression of students, limiting their accuracy and fluency in the language. Therefore, it is essential for educators to identify and address the specific challenges faced by learners in mastering the "-s" morpheme to effectively orient their teaching methods and support students in overcoming this linguistic difficulty.

The correct use of the "-s" morpheme is crucial for the language development of young English learners, as it directly influences their communication abilities. Proficiency in using this morpheme is essential for achieving grammatical accuracy and clarity in English expression. This project also addresses an underexplored area in the literature on morpheme use in young learners, offering valuable insights into language development. By highlighting the challenges associated with applying the "-s" morpheme in learners, the study enriches theoretical knowledge for educators, equips them with the use of effective strategies to support students in mastering this grammatical feature.

In summary, this research is relevant and necessary as it addresses a critical aspect of English language learning that has a direct impact on learners ability to communicate effectively. Its practical usefulness lies basically in improving teaching strategies and, consequently, students learning, helping them to master the language efficiently.

## **6. SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL FOUNDATION**

### **6.1. Research Background**

To support the investigation effectively, it's important to rely on sources that enhance comprehension and contribute to achieving the project's goals. That is why some works are shown below.

Sarı et al., (2015) conducted a study to examine challenges faced by English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners in acquiring the 3rd person agreement morpheme "-s." Using a mixed-methods approach, the research included both qualitative and quantitative aspects and focused on 40 elementary-level 7th-grade students at a state school in Istanbul, Turkey, the participants were 20 males and 20 females aged 12 to 14. Recorded data revealed that the primary errors were linked to over-regularization of the rule, with no significant impact of L1 interference on the acquisition process.

Ulgu et al., (2012) conducted a qualitative study exploring challenges faced by Turkish language learners in acquiring the third person "s" morpheme in English. The research, at an Istanbul primary school, involved 35 6th-grade students. Findings revealed a consistent pattern in morpheme acquisition, indicating that the third person "s" is typically acquired later by both native speakers and L2 learners due to its complexity in sound and meaning. Among L2 learners, the primary error was morpheme omission, influenced by their native language, with variations such as "ies," "-es," or "s" noted in their usage of the third person singular "s."

Picón (2015) investigated the impact of timed written and oral contexts on the use of the 3rd person singular morpheme "-s" in English Present Tense among L2 learners. Six Catalan/Spanish bilingual students, aged 11 to 15. Results revealed consistent errors in both oral and written formats, with participants frequently omitting the "-s" morpheme. Contrary to expectations, oral context did not result in more errors; instead, time constraints hindered performance in written tasks.

Torres (2021) conducted national study analyzing subject-verb agreement errors in third-person singular present simple among 15 high school students. The most frequent error was misformation, followed by omission, misordering, and addition. The study emphasizes the need for targeted teaching strategies to address these issues effectively. Although there is extensive international research, however, a review of the literature in Ecuador reveals a limited number of studies in this area. Consequently, this study is presented as original research that seeks to contribute to existing knowledge and offer seeks to contribute to existing knowledge and offer possible solutions to specific problems within the local context.

## **6.2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **6.2.1. English Language**

The English language, a global lingua franca, has evolved over centuries to become one of the world's most widely spoken and influential languages. Originating from the Anglo-Saxon dialects brought to Britain by Germanic invaders, it has been shaped by a myriad of influences, including Latin, Norse, and Norman French (Mark, 2019).

The dynamic evolution of English has been pivotal in its ascent as a global lingua franca. However, its widespread adoption is not a result of historical development but is deeply intertwined with geopolitical and cultural dominance. The extensive colonization efforts of the British Empire spread English across continents, embedding it into the administrative, educational, and social frameworks of numerous countries.

Nevertheless, the rich linguistic history has endowed English with a vast and diverse vocabulary, making it remarkably adaptable and expressive. This global reach facilitates communication and collaboration across borders, ensuring English remains relevant and dynamic in an ever-changing world.

### **6.2.2. Teaching and learning English language**

The study of English education will identify the challenges, deficiencies, and problems within the process of teaching and learning the language. These issues can be categorized into seven main areas, which are integral parts of any educational system: students, teachers, materials, teaching techniques, and assessment, along with two additional closely connected aspects: curriculum and policies (Akbari, 2015).

The study of English education reveals a range of challenges affecting both students and teachers. Addressing these deficiencies is crucial to enhancing the effectiveness of the language teaching and learning process. Additionally, the quality of materials, teaching techniques employed, and progress assessment are fundamental elements that require attention to ensure meaningful learning.

Implementing coherent educational policies and continuously updating the curriculum are essential aspects of addressing the identified challenges. A comprehensive approach promoting teacher training, access to quality resources, and ongoing assessment to adapt to

changing student needs and educational contexts is necessary. Improving these areas will strengthen the English language teaching and learning process and contribute to more effective development of language skills.

### 6.2.3. Interlanguage theory

Interlanguage as claims by Guo (2022) refers to the “knowledge system that emerges during a specific stage of a learner's second or foreign language acquisition. It is a transitional language system that constantly changes and adjusts in response to learners' second language expertise” (p.8)

Understanding interlanguage helps educators tailor their teaching methods to support learners better, acknowledging the fluid and evolving nature of language acquisition. This perspective can improve the design of instructional materials and assessment tools, fostering a more effective and responsive learning environment.

According to Tarone (2018) about interlanguage “identified five cognitive processes that constitute the latent psychological structure and shape interlanguage linguistic systems: (a) native language transfer, (b) overgeneralization of target language rules, (c) transfer of training, (d) strategies of communication, and (e) strategies of learning” (p.2).

- **Language transfer** involves learners applying their native language (L1), including both linguistic and cultural elements, to process data in their target language (L2). This process significantly influences learners' interlanguage systems. Positive transfer occurs when L1 expressions align with or resemble L2 expressions, aiding in learning the target language (TL). Conversely, negative transfer, known as interlingual interference, happens when L1 traits hinder L2 learning. Negative language transfer contributes significantly to learner errors, both linguistic and pragmatic, though it's not the only factor shaping interlanguage development (Guo, 2022, p. 10).
- **Transfer of training** refers to the scenario where L2 learners may have practiced specific interlanguage structures extensively during formal instruction, leading to difficulties in adopting new structures successfully. This phenomenon can result in errors due to misunderstandings caused by inadequate teaching or materials. Additionally, transfer of training not only contributes to errors but also strengthens incorrect forms, further complicating the learning process (Guo, 2022, p. 10).

- Learners utilize **communication strategies** when their interlanguage system lacks the necessary forms to convey meaning in a native-like manner. For instance, when trying to refer to an electrical cord in English without the exact vocabulary, learners can employ various strategies. These include using an approximate term (like "a tube"), describing its function ("a kind of cord used for electrical purposes"), or detailing its appearance ("a wire with two plugs on each side"). Sometimes, these linguistic attempts, if effective in communicating with the listener, may continue to exist in the learner's interlanguage for a period (Tarone, 2018, p.3).
- **Learning strategies** are deliberate efforts made by learners to improve their proficiency in the target language. Some examples of these strategies include using mnemonics to remember vocabulary, memorizing verb forms or textbook conversations, utilizing flashcards, and so forth (Tarone, 2018, p.3).
- **Overgeneralization** happens when learners create rules for their second language due to difficulty differentiating between rules from their native language and the target language. This can occur in various ways based on learners' background knowledge, leading to confusion about certain patterns. It typically arises when both languages have different patterns for the same type of knowledge (Matiini, 2016, p. 145).

All of that interacts to influence the accuracy and progression of language acquisition in learners.

#### 6.2.4. English Grammar

Grammar consists of a set of rules and entails the systematic analysis and explanation of a language. This includes the organization of words, phrases, clauses, and sentences (...) English has become a global language, and one of the most fundamental assertions of modern linguistic study is that all spoken languages have a grammar (...) the study and understanding of English grammar aid technical students in correcting mistakes and improving both writing and speaking skills. This knowledge provides insight into the human mind and our incredibly complex mental abilities (Seetamahalakshmi et al., 2020).

It highlights that grammar is essential because it allow individuals to converse about language, identifying the various types of words and word combinations that construct sentences across languages, not solely limited to English. Humans naturally form sentences

from childhood, indicating an inherent understanding of grammar. Yet, possessing the ability to analyze sentence construction and recognize different word types and combinations embodies true grammar knowledge.

To be a piece of completely true knowledge, it is often challenging for pupils to speak English well without mastering the language's grammar. Thus, grammar instruction is a necessary part of teaching foreign languages to teachers in formal education. Nonetheless, the place of English grammar in language instruction has always been debatable given the evolution of language education history (Wang, 2010).

Interestingly, the way people learn and use language can change over time, and this dynamism is reflected not just in grammar, but also in how we approach its instruction. This example of the evolution of verb endings in English demonstrates how grammar is not a set of rigid rules, but rather a flexible system that adapts to the changing needs of its speakers. In Middle English, a variety of forms coexisted to mark the third person singular. Initially, the ending "eth" was common in Old English and early Middle English, as seen in forms like *telleth*, *giveth*, *droppeth*, *blesseth*, etc. However, over time, this ending started to decline in usage in late Middle English and early Modern English. The "-s" ending gradually gained popularity and became the more prevalent marker for the third-person singular in English verbs during this transitional period. This shift in verb endings reflects the evolving nature of the English language as it moved from Middle English to early Modern English. This transitional phase allowed for flexibility in choosing between the traditional "-eth" endings and the emerging "-s" endings, showcasing the evolving nature of the English language during this period of linguistic transformation (Baugh & Cable, 2005).

This evolution underscores the dynamic nature of language itself. Language is not a fixed set of rules, but rather a living system that adapts and transforms over time. This dynamism is evident not only in the vocabulary and pronunciation of a language but also in its grammar. It also presents or comes with challenges for learners, particularly when it comes with certain rules or structures that may seem simple.

### **6.2.5. English language teaching and learning grammar**

The primary goal of teachers in grammar instruction is to systematically teach the language's structure, enabling students to master the language and accurately use grammatical structures

in real-life spoken or written scenarios, so exploring grammar represents a crucial aspect of learning the English language. Rama (2012) state that “grammar teaching in the foreign language classroom has constituted an important and debated issue for the last fifty years. In the history of language teaching, the role of grammar has been addressed by linguistic methodologies” (p. 179). This underscores the significance of grammatical understanding in language acquisition, leading to the development of various instructional methods designed to aid in comprehending and effectively utilizing grammatical concepts such as the following ones.

- **Grammar translation method**

It focuses on learning grammar rules and vocabulary. The primary goal is to enable students to translate between languages. Emphasis is on reading and writing, focusing less on speaking and comprehension. Lessons are teacher-centered, with grammar and vocabulary memorized. Grammar is explained in the native language, and then applied through translation. Sentences are the core unit of learning. Most classes involve phrase translation. Instruction uses the student's native language to explain and compare new concepts with the target language (Aznar, 2014).

- **Communicative Language Teaching [CLT]**

It is a learner-centered approach emphasizing communicative competence through authentic interactions and meaningful tasks. It posits that language learning is most effective when learners actively use language for real communication. It focuses on language as a tool for expressing meaning and achieving communicative goals, prioritizing effective communication over grammatical correctness, in contrast to traditional grammar-translation methods (Chen, 2024).

Furthermore, it makes a lively and effective way to teach languages, encouraging students to use the language in real-life situations actively. It helps them communicate confidently and effectively, connecting what they learn in the classroom to everyday situations, integrating grammar into authentic contexts, emphasizing practical application and gradual development through meaningful activities.

- **Suggestopedia**

It helps people learn three times faster than usual. It creates a safe learning space where students feel comfortable exploring. Key principles include encouraging students to learn without fear of mistakes, connecting information to positive feelings, using peripheral perception for subconscious learning, and simulating information before analysis. This method shows how emotions and subtle cues can boost learning speed and memory (Gold, 2019).

So, it accelerates learning and nurtures a positive and secure environment for students to thrive. It demonstrates the power of emotions and subtle cues in enhancing learning speed and memory retention, making it a valuable approach for educators aiming to optimize the learning experience.

- **Total physical response [TPR]**

Is a language method that combines language learning with physical movement. It focuses on coordinating speech with actions and pairing vocabulary with physical actions to enhance comprehension. (...) students learn by listening to spoken language and understanding its meaning through associated physical movements. By seeing and doing these actions, students internalize and practice the language more effectively (Rambe, 2019).

So, it effectively engages learners by integrating physical activity with language practice, making the learning process more interactive and memorable, ultimately enhancing language retention and proficiency.

### **6.2.6. Verbal Tense**

Mastering verb tenses is crucial for effective communication in English, as they indicate when an action occurs. Ellis (2023) states that verb tenses indicate the timing of an action and its duration. The primary verb tenses are past, present, and future. Moreover, there are various aspects that provide additional information, such as the duration of the action, the sequence of events, or the relevance of a past action to the present. These aspects include the simple tense, perfect tense, continuous tense, and perfect continuous tense.

### **6.2.7. Present simple**

Tenses are used to express the similarity between an event and the time it occurred; simple present tense is a form of time in English that is used to express habits, general facts, or

general truths that apply continuously. This form is usually used to express activities or situations that occur repeatedly, routinely, or in current conditions. Usually, the simple present tense uses verbs in the basic form (infinitive) without the addition of -s or -es for third-person singular verbs (he, she, it). (Sholihin, Pertiwi, & Lubis, 2023, p.152)

Moreover, studying verb tenses, such as the simple present in English, provides insight into how language reflects one's perception of time and the repetition of events in daily life. The simple present tense not only allows individuals to talk about habits and general truths but also connects them with consistency and continuity in their daily actions. Mastering this tense not only enhances linguistic skills but also fosters a deeper understanding of how language mirrors the reality around them, making individuals more aware of how they communicate their experiences and thoughts in the present tense.

#### **6.2.8. Third person singular and its properties in English and Spanish: a comparison**

The Spanish language has a relatively complex inflectional system compared to English. Tense in Spanish is conveyed through verb inflections, with all forms morphologically modified to indicate tense and agreement. Spanish verbs are categorized into three conjugations, distinguished by their infinitive endings: -ar, -er, and -ir (Bruyne, 1995).

The principal difference between Spanish and English is that English possesses a significantly less complex inflectional system. According to Picón (2015), in English, tense and agreement are grammatical features expressed through verb inflection. Finite verbs, which indicate tense, are morphologically marked as either present or past. Since English does not have a future-inflected form, verb conjugation is limited to these two tenses.

#### **6.2.9. Pedagogical activities to guide the students to utilize morpheme -s in the third person singular present**

Pedagogical activities can allow the teacher might explicitly talk about grammar and encourage students to consider how linguistic patterns are formed (Roca, 2015), in the same way teachers are essential in helping learners achieve their goals and form their perspectives.” (European Commission, 2015, p.8). It is important to state that “the significance of grammar

teaching lies in teaching students how to use grammar in communicative activities” (Sun & Zhang, 2022, para 23).

The use of the morpheme -s in the third person singular present can be taught in two ways according to Zheng (2015) explicit grammar instruction enables students to gain a thorough understanding of grammatical concepts through systematic teaching. In contrast, implicit grammar instruction focuses on students naturally acquiring grammar through context and situational exposure. (p. 557). Some activities that can be applied to teaching grammar in an effective way as reported by Zhang, et al. (2022) could be “watching videos in the target language can engage students in long-time exposure to language inputs through visual and audio channels” (para. 18), and drilling is a widely used technique for teaching and learning new grammar points in second language education. It helps students master these grammar points and incorporate them into their language use. “Researchers were also interested in learners’ leisure reading as a type of EFL activity. Engaging in activity, people were exposed to a massive amount of vocabulary and grammar knowledge in the written form and frosted reading comprehension” (Zhang & Sun, 2022, para. 12).

Another activity could be games, since the perspective of Gozcu and Caganaga (2016), games provide numerous advantages for both language teachers and learners. They enhance the acquisition of the target language by engaging students in enjoyable activities, allowing them to learn without even realizing it (p.127). One of the most common activities is pair work and group work because they have a lot of advantages, such as Sun & Zhang (2021) say in their research “if teachers arrange meaning-based activities with a primary purpose of improving students’ communicative ability such as group work or pair work or other contextualized activities to help students learn grammar and vocabulary” (para. 10).

#### **6.2.10. Morphology**

“Morphology examines how morphemes, the smallest units of meaning, combine or stand alone to create different meanings. It plays a vital role in lexicology, the study of words and their meanings, and in etymology, the study of word origins and evolution” (Ellis, 2022).

In simple terms, as explained by Haspelmath (2002), “morphology is the study of the internal structure of words (...) is both the oldest and one of the youngest subdisciplines of grammar.” (p.1).

In light of this idea Ellis state that its significance is that morphology

“Can help us comprehend the meanings of terms you've never encountered before, which will increase your reading comprehension. Morphology can also aid in understanding word meanings and expanding our vocabulary. It can also provide answers to many annoying problems, such as why certain words have strange spellings or irregular word usage that defies convention. By using morphological analysis, you can employ sophisticated vocabulary in your work without fear of making mistakes and infer the meaning of terms you have never seen before” (Ellis, 2022, para 1-2)

### **6.2.11. Morpheme**

Research delves into the controversial nature of the English language highlighting:

Various changes, adaptations, and simplifications it has undergone over time. Even today, English can pose challenges for both native and non-native speakers, earning it the label of a controversial language. One controversial aspect of English is the morpheme, defined as the smallest unit of language with its own meaning either a whole word or a part of one (Moldovan, n.d.). Hamawand (2011) also describes it as, “the minimal meaningful unit in a language. It is minimal because it cannot be further divided into smaller units. It is meaningful in that it stands for something conceived in the speaker’s mind” (p.3). A morpheme is a linguistics unit that cannot be divided internally into smaller meaningful units and has internal stability. It is also externally transportable, demonstrating positional mobility or free distribution in various contexts, and is represented within curly braces { } and using capital letters for lexemes and descriptive designations for other morpheme types (Brinton, 2000). So, as Plag (2018) stated, is basically, “an entity that consists of the content or meaning on the one hand, and the sounds or letters which express this meaning on the other hand. It is a unit of form and meaning, a sign” (p. 20). This multifaceted understanding adds depth to the intricate nature of the English language, and ultimately, this enriched understanding not only addresses surface complexity but also reveals deeper layers of meaning and expression that characterize this language.

Moreover, studying morphemes extends beyond their structural aspects. According to Lane et al., (2019) “knowledge of morphemes, the smallest meaningful units within words, contributes to word reading skills, vocabulary, and text comprehension.” (para 1). In this

context, gaining insights into the combinatorial properties of morphemes becomes crucial, Novita (2014) emphasizes that it is because they are the “building blocks of English vocabulary, all the words are made up of morphemes. When learners are conscious of the structure, meaning, and function of morphemes, at the end they are able to develop a lifelong strategy to understand word meanings” (p. 14). This awareness of morpheme structure and function also aligns with another critical aspect, Embrick (2015) points out that, morphemes connect a specific kind of phonological representation with a specific sort of semantic information, which is ultimately how they tie sound and meaning. The specifics of how they accomplish this are a crucial theoretical issue. So, exploring morphemes reveals their crucial role as the foundation of English language proficiency, shaping skills, vocabulary, and the intricate relationship between sound and meaning.

After all,

“Morphemes, being a fundamental component of the linguistic examination, embody the essence of meaning in language, encapsulating semantic significance at its core. They are elemental building blocks that amalgamate to construct words, each bearing its unique connotation or grammatical role. Understanding morphemes is an essential requirement for apprehending the intricate framework and operational mechanisms ingrained within languages” (Eduventure Technologies [ET], 2023, para 1).

### 6.2.12. Type of Morphemes

In English language exists two main types of morphemes: free and bound morpheme.

According to Giordano (2015) “**free morphemes** are morphemes that can stand by themselves as single words. **Bound morphemes** are morphemes that must be attached to another form and cannot stand alone. Bound morphemes include all types of affixes: prefixes and suffixes” (para. 2).

Bound morphemes are divided into two subtypes: derivational and inflectional morphemes: Derivational morphemes change the meaning or part of speech of a word, such as un- giving a negative meaning, -y turning nouns into adjectives, or -ness turning adjectives into nouns. Inflectional morphemes add grammatical information, to the word, such as -s on *runs*, which tells us that it is 3rd person singular present tense verb, or the -s on *plays*.

This classification aids in analyzing how words are formed and modified, providing a solid foundation for language study.

### **6.2.13. The “Natural Order” of morpheme acquisition**

The "Natural Order" of morpheme acquisition refers to the systematic way in which children learn and internalize grammatical elements, revealing a patterned sequence fundamental to language development. According to Kwon (2015), "[n]atural order studies have shed important light on the order in which speakers acquire grammatical morphemes"(p.1). Furthermore, Krashen's (1977) mentions that the Natural Order has recently faced questioning. Researchers across different theoretical standpoints widely embrace the idea of a universal or consistent natural order in morpheme acquisition. This notion persists as a crucial inference in numerous texts on Second Language Acquisition. As well, since the initial exploration of "morpheme order" in the early 1970s, the evolution of this field into what is now termed "Natural Order" studies has significantly contributed to advancing comprehension regarding the progression of language acquisition and its developmental sequence (Wang, 2014). At the same time Ramos (2017), mentions that "over time, the consideration of L1 as a main factor when determining the natural order of morpheme acquisition has started to be shared by many recent linguists" (p.13). In addition, even before the shift to natural order studies in the 1970s, research on morpheme acquisition provided substantial evidence for a consistent sequence. Some researchers noted similarities between second language (L2) and first language (L1) acquisition, supporting the idea of a consistent order in language learning (Dulay & Burt, 1973). In conclusion the extensive exploration and consensus among researchers across decades underscore the fundamental and pervasive role of the "Natural Order" in morpheme acquisition, elucidating its vital contribution to our understanding of language development and acquisition.

The Natural Order hypothesis proposes a universal sequence for second language learners to acquire grammatical morphemes, independent of complexity or classroom instruction, moreover, the examination of evolving interlanguage systems concerning grammatical morphemes, like the addition of -s to denote plurality in nouns or -ing to indicate the progressive aspect in verbs, has garnered substantial interest among specialists in Second Language Acquisition (Goldschneider et al., 2009). In addition Kwon (2005) expresses, “to the main goal of finding the consistency across different subjects and different learning

environments, researchers in both L1 and L2 have attempted to determine what factors may affect the order of morpheme acquisition” (p.10). As well as, the natural order hypothesis, language rules are acquired in a predictable sequence, where certain rules are commonly acquired earlier than others. This order doesn't seem to be solely dictated by formal simplicity and is observed to be unrelated to the sequence in which these rules are taught in language classrooms. (Hang, 2007). Additionally, in the natural order hypothesis, language rules follow a discernible sequence of acquisition, wherein certain rules are grasped early while others emerge later in the learning process. This sequence does not seem to be exclusively determined by their formal complexity; rather, it suggests a distinct pattern of internalization. Moreover, empirical evidence supports the notion that this order of acquiring language rules remains consistent regardless of the order in which these rules are taught within language class (Ashari & Prastyo 2011), in essence, the Natural Order Hypothesis sheds light on a structured and consistent progression in second language acquisition, revealing a fascinating pattern in how learners naturally internalize and acquire language rules.

The Natural Order Hypothesis in language acquisition explores the sequence of morpheme acquisition in both first and second language learning. Besides, “the processes in the acquisition of morphemes in learning particular L1 and L2, clear conclusions to come up with through scientific analysis of the morpheme order is one of the current tasks of linguistics. The natural order hypothesis is the acquisition of grammatical rules and units in a certain order. In acquiring the first language, one affix is acquired earlier than another. For example, in English, the present tense the morpheme -ing, the plural morpheme -s, and the definite article -s are acquired earlier than the third person morpheme”. (Azimova & Mavlonova, 2023, p.2). In conclusion, understanding the natural order of morpheme acquisition provides crucial insights into how languages are learned, aiding our comprehension of developmental stages in both first and second language acquisition.

#### **6.2.14. English language productions skills: Writing and Speaking**

In the realm of English language production skills, particularly in writing and speaking, mastering grammatical rules plays a pivotal role in effective communication. One such fundamental rule, the use of the third-person singular "s", is a cornerstone of English grammar that significantly influences language proficiency, especially among young learners.

One of the most important English skills is writing. Writing is referred to as a productive language ability. Since it truly reflects a replication of all language skills together, it demands greater caution, attention, and linguistic refinement (...) In this regard, it's clear that writing is a crucial skill that significantly impacts the process of learning English. It influences learners' abilities to understand, communicate, and present themselves to the world (Hameed, 2022).

## **7. METHODOLOGY**

### **Approach**

The current study adopted a mixed-method (qualitative and quantitative) design to investigate the acquisition of the third-person singular "s" in young learners. Creswell et al. (2011) highlight the importance of this, because it “incorporates multiple methods to address research questions in an appropriate and principled manner” (p.26). According to this perspective, the quantitative aspect involved analyzing written and oral productions to determine correct and incorrect usage percentages, and providing numerical insights. Simultaneously, the qualitative component incorporated teacher interviews to explore teachers perspectives on the underlying causes of errors in students' usage of the third-person singular "s," offering a deeper and contextual understanding.

### **Type**

The investigation into the acquisition of the third-person singular "s" in young learners employed a descriptive method. Descriptive research, as emphasized by Lockesh (n.d), stated that descriptive research studies were designed to “obtain pertinent and precise information concerning the current status of phenomena and to draw valid general conclusions from the facts discovered (...) they involved measurement, classification, analysis, comparison, and interpretation” (p. 117). This aligned seamlessly with the research questions, which asked specific percentages of correct and incorrect usage of the morpheme '-s' in written and oral production.

Furthermore, performance analysis (study of both errors and non-errors) refers to the “approaches to study the competence of the learners based on the study of their linguistic performance. So, operationally it had a very wide perspective. One of the components of Performance Analysis is morpheme studies” (Ataullah, 2012, para. 1). The research method allowed for a detailed analysis of the processes and causes influencing morpheme acquisition,

addressing the broader context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) for young learners. Moreover, it described findings from such a study that could serve as a foundational resource for future research, inform educational practices, and contribute to a better understanding of how young learners acquired inflectional morphemes in an EFL context.

### **Research context and participants**

The research took place at the Internacional Cotopaxi Educational Unit in Latacunga city. The participants were a total population of 20 seventh-grade students, including 10 girls and 10 boys, aged 11-12 years, who had been studying English for three school years, about five hours per week. Purposive sampling was used to select participants based on age and academic level, ensuring a representative sample of young EFL learners. In the same way, two English teachers who have been teaching at the institution were interviewed. The first teacher has two years of experience, while the second has one year of experience.

### **Data collection techniques**

To develop this investigation registration forms were utilized as a method to gather information, with separate forms designed for written and oral expressions. The written component involved a form specifically tailored for written expression, while the oral aspect used a registration form, both to elicit spontaneous application of the morpheme.

Additionally, the research instrument included a set of questions as part of a structured interview guide. This approach to interviews was influenced by Billups (2019), who emphasizes interviews as an interchange of views between two or more people on a topic of mutual interest, recognizing the centrality of human interaction for knowledge production. So, it was conducted to identify the underlying causes of correct and incorrect use of the -s morpheme.

### **Data analysis process**

The data were analyzed using tabulation and descriptive statistics. Summation formulas were utilized to differentiate between correct and incorrect sentences and to ascertain the total number of sentences. Subsequently, division formulas were employed to compute the overall percentage of errors and correct usage of the third-person singular morpheme '-s' in both written and oral production.

For the analysis of teachers interview, thematic analysis was employed to identify and interpret qualitative data, enabling the identification of causes. This analysis provided a foundation for drawing comprehensive conclusions regarding the factors contributing to students' errors.

In the data analysis process, a methodological triangulation was used that combined quantitative and qualitative approaches to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the use of the third-person singular morpheme "s." In the quantitative part, written and oral assessments were conducted with the students, which allowed for the collection of numerical data on the frequency of errors in applying the grammatical rule. On the other hand, in the qualitative part, interviews with teachers were carried out, which provided deeper insights into the educators' perceptions and experiences regarding the challenges students face in the use of the "s" morpheme. This data triangulation, combining quantitative results from assessments with qualitative perspectives obtained through interviews, ensured greater validity and richness in the findings.

## 8. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSS OF RESULTS

### WRITTEN PART

In the written part, the students were instructed to create affirmative sentences using the present tense with specific verbs already added to the instruction.

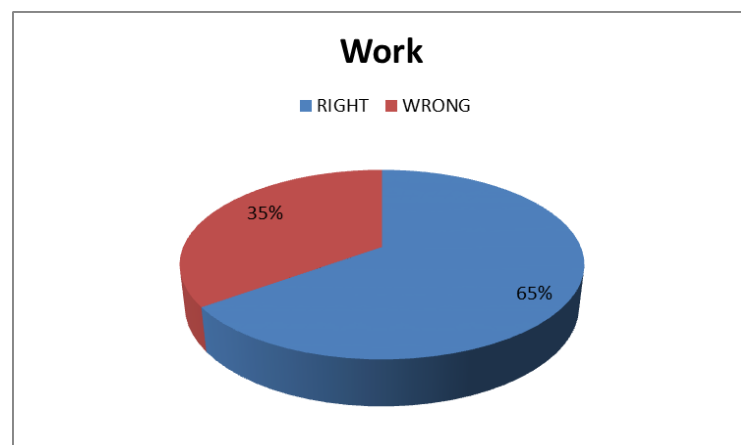
**Table 1**

*Total number and percentage of right and wrong sentences in writing activity*

<i>Verbs</i>	<i>Right</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Wrong</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Total %</i>
<i>Work</i>	13	65%	7	35%	20	100%
<i>Cook</i>	12	60%	8	40%	20	100%
<i>Watch</i>	6	30%	14	70%	20	100%

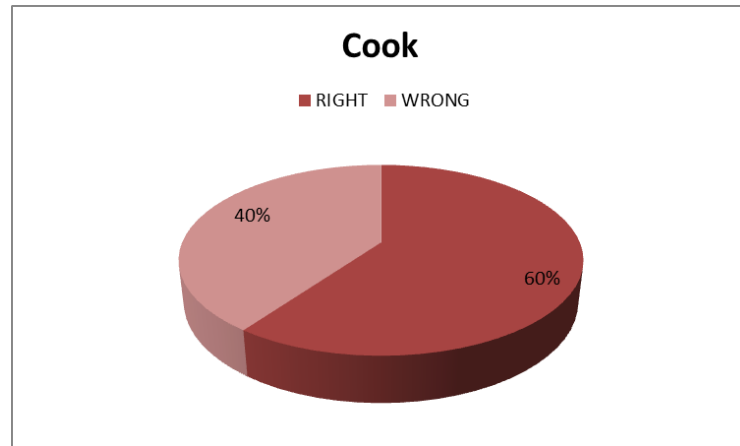
<i>Relax</i>	14	70%	6	30%	20	100%
<i>Sleep</i>	13	65%	7	35%	20	100%
<i>Play</i>	15	75%	5	25%	20	100%
<i>Study</i>	8	40%	12	60%	20	100%
<i>Wash</i>	13	65%	7	35%	20	100%
<i>Like</i>	17	85%	3	15%	20	100%
<i>Finish</i>	8	40%	12	60%	20	100%

**Figure 1** The following graphics illustrate each verb's application of morpheme as students form



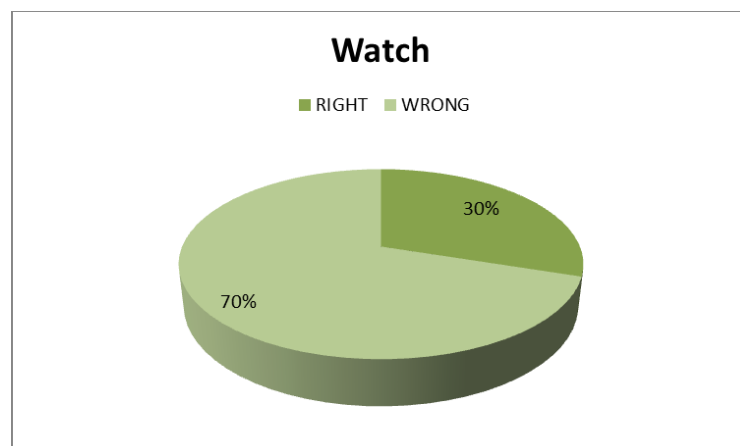
Out of the evaluated students, 65% demonstrated a higher level of proficiency in verbal conjugation in the present tense, while 35% encountered difficulties, indicating areas for improvement in linguistic precision.

**Figure 2.**



In this situation, 60% of the students correctly applied the rule for this verb, whereas 40% misused it, indicating challenges in using it.

**Figure 3.**



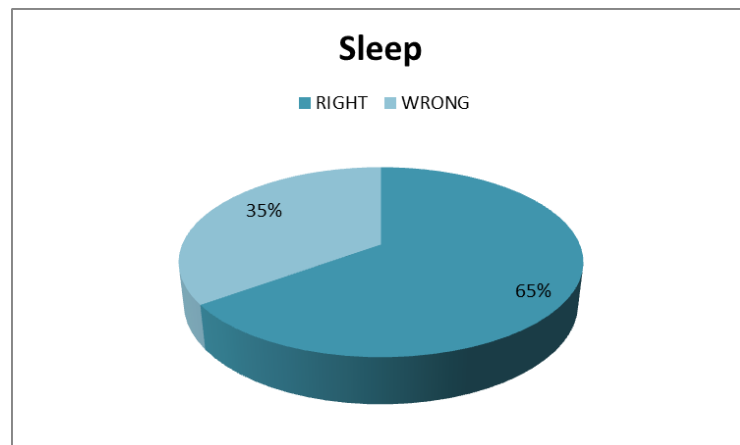
In this case, it was found that 30% of students demonstrated precise application, reflecting certain difficulties for the remaining 70% in the application correctness rules of this verb.

**Figure 4.**



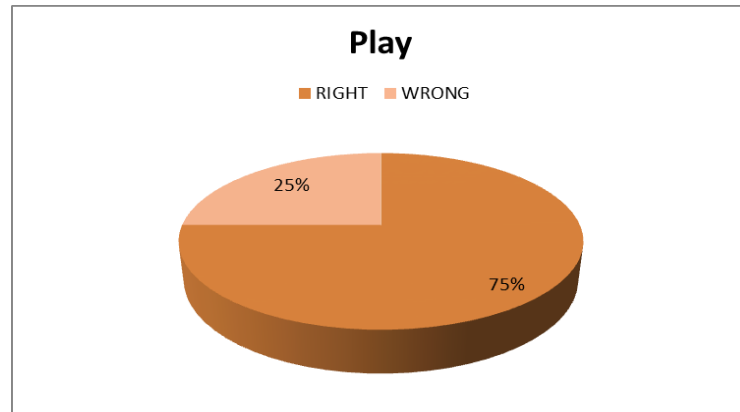
Out of 100%, 70% of students showed a solid understanding, indicating an advanced level of linguistic competence. On the other hand, the remaining 30% faced difficulties, suggesting the need to consolidate proper usage.

**Figure 5.**



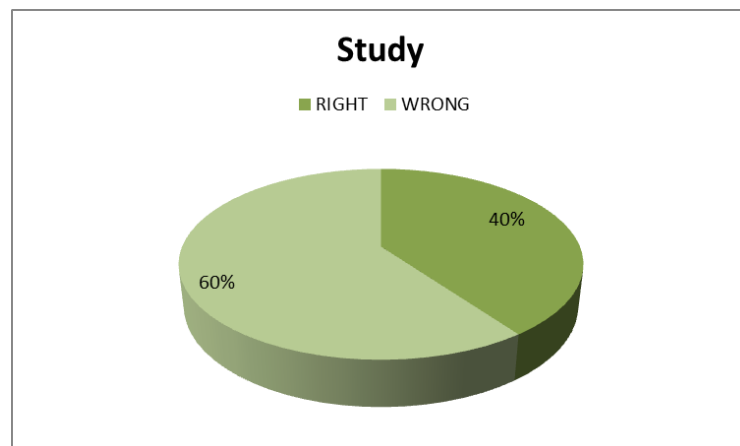
According to this verb, 65% of students correctly employed their knowledge, while 35% experienced difficulties, demonstrating a moderate level of proficiency.

**Figure 6.**



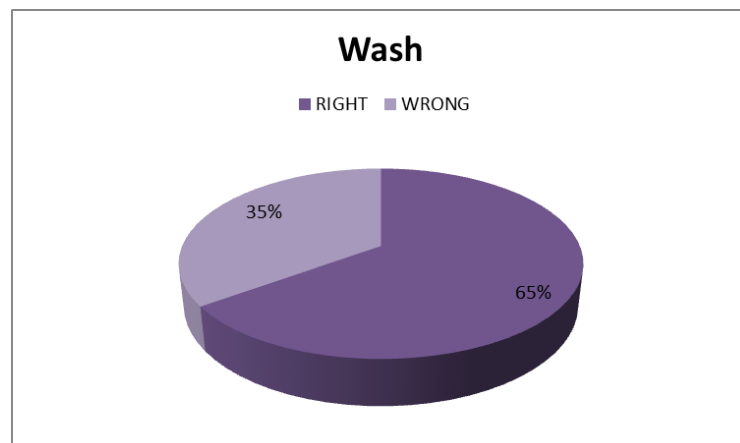
Out of 100%, 75% of students exhibited adequate comprehension, indicating a good understanding. However, 25% made errors, pointing to areas for improvement.

**Figure 7.**



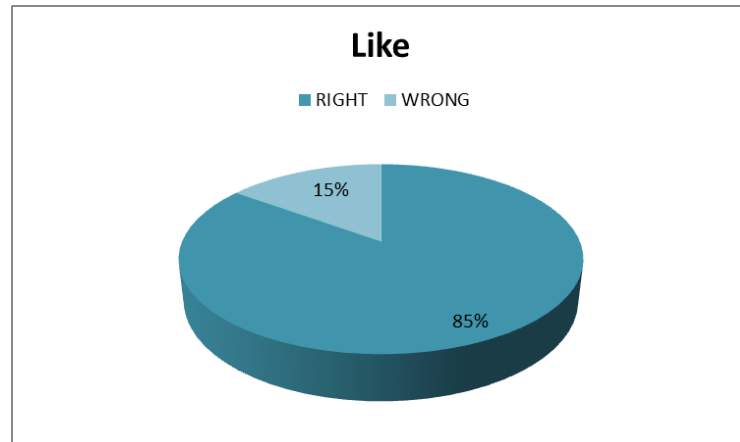
In this situation, it was found that 40% of students applied it correctly, while 60% made errors, indicating challenges in verbal precision and the need for more focused practice.

**Figure 8.**



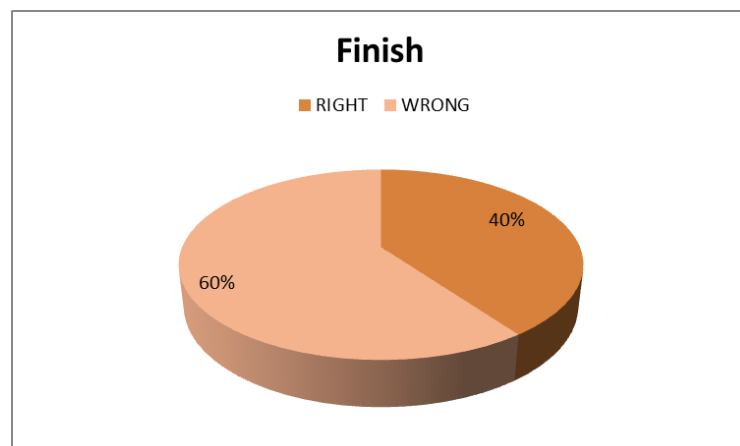
Based on this verb, 65% of students correctly employed their knowledge, while 35% experienced difficulties, demonstrating a moderate level of proficiency.

**Figure 9.**



Out of 100%, 85% of students employed this verb correctly, showcasing a strong understanding. However, 15% made errors, highlighting areas for improvement in precise application.

**Figure 10.**



Out of 100%, 40% of the students correctly applied the verb in the present tense as required by the task, while more than half struggled to do so accurately, suggesting difficulty in precise usage.

**Table 2**

*An overview of the errors made by students in producing the third-person singular morpheme (-s) in the written exercise, categorized by the verbs provided*

	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>PORCENTAGE</b>
<b>Wrong sentences</b>	144	72%
<b>Right sentences</b>	54	28%

The data revealed significant challenges in the correct application of the third-person singular "-s" morpheme in verbs such as "cook," "watch," "study," and "finish."

- He cook [*cooks*] rice.
- Erick studys [*studies*] French.
- Jenny watchs [*watches*] tv.

These emphasized difficulties observed among students in correctly using this grammatical rule. In a similar study by Buldiharto (2021), some students also struggled with mastering the use of the "-s" morpheme in the present singular, as evidenced by errors like "My father like to ride bicycle" instead of [**likes**]. These errors suggested difficulties in applying the morpheme correctly, as seen in instances such as "Fatin studyes in school every day" instead of [**studies**]. Additionally, there was a tendency to overgeneralize the "-s" morpheme, as shown in constructions like "My teacher would teachs [teach] me about English lesson", indicating challenges in understanding English grammar rules as a second language.

Hence, according to the most errors examples, interlanguage was evident in the sentence 'He cook [cooks] rice,' where the learner's negative transfer from their mother tongue led to the omission of the third-person singular '-s.' This occurred because, in Spanish, verbs like "cocina" did not change form for the third person singular, unlike in English where "he, she, or it" required the addition of "-s or -es" to the verb.

Additionally, overgeneralization happened in "Erick studys [studies] French" because the learner applied the regular '-s' rule without recognizing the irregular spelling change needed for verbs ending in '-y'.

## ORAL PART

In this part, the students were instructed to make affirmative descriptions in the simple present tense, according to the flashcard and the verb below each one, so the table below shows the total number and percentage of verbs that students correctly used, according to the grammatical rule during the description of each flashcard.

**Table 3**

*Total number and percentage of right and wrong sentences in oral activity.*

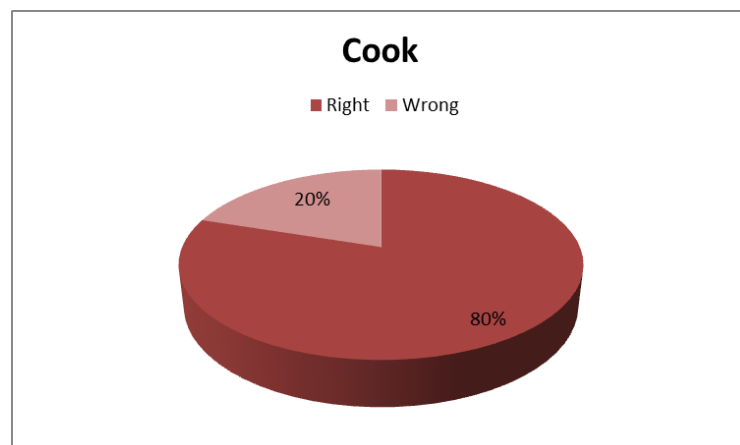
<i>Verbs</i>	<i>Right</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Wrong</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Total %</i>
<i>Work</i>	17	85%	3	15%	20	100%
<i>Cook</i>	16	80%	4	20%	20	100%
<i>Watch</i>	12	60%	8	40%	20	100%
<i>Relax</i>	13	65%	7	35%	20	100%
<i>Sleep</i>	18	90%	2	10%	20	100%
<i>Play</i>	14	70%	6	30%	20	100%
<i>Study</i>	16	80%	4	20%	20	100%
<i>Wash</i>	14	70%	6	30%	20	100%
<i>Like</i>	17	85%	3	15%	20	100%
<i>Finish</i>	14	70%	6	30%	20	100%

**Figure 2** *The following graphics illustrate each verb's application of morpheme as students form affirmative descriptions about flashcards in the simple present tense using the third person singular (-s).*



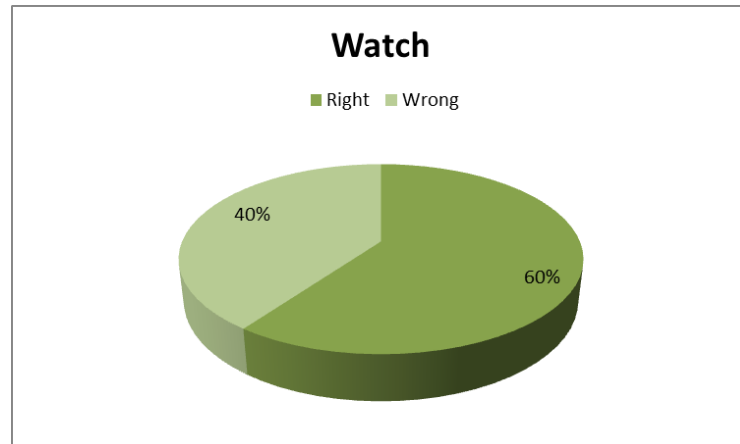
The majority of students effectively showed a strong understanding of verb conjugation. Just 15% of descriptions contained errors, indicating a robust grasp of this verb's conjugation rules.

**Figure 2.**



Most students demonstrated solid competence by using the correct form of the verb in 80% of cases. However, 20% of sentences exhibited mistakes, suggesting areas for minor improvement in conjugation accuracy.

**Figure 3.**



Of 100%, 60% of descriptions were accurate and 40% contained errors. This highlights the need for further practice and reinforcement of grammatical rules in oral expression.

**Figure 4.**



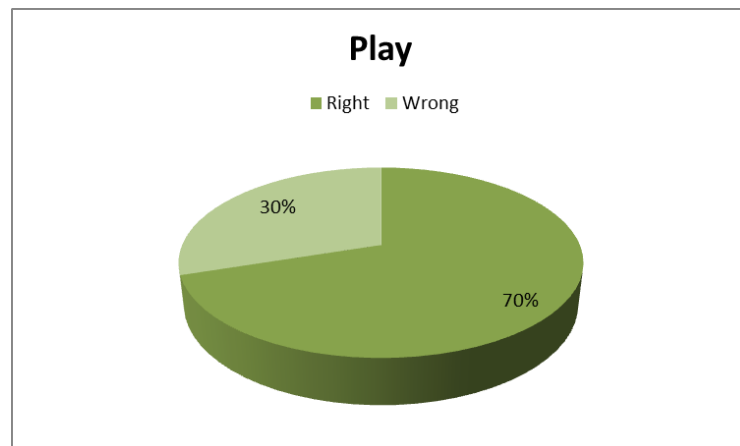
In this case, 65% of the students conjugated correctly using the grammatical rule during the flashcard description, while 35% made errors. Indicating that a considerable proportion of students still need more practice to master this specific verb form.

**Figure 5.**



Based on this verb, out of 100%, 90% of the students demonstrated a high level of accuracy suggests that the majority of students have a solid understanding of conjugation in the third person singular, with minimal errors.

**Figure 6.**



Based on that one, 70% of the students showed that can describe the flashcard using the grammatical rule correctly. While most demonstrated understanding, the 30% error rate indicates that a significant portion still needs improvement in consistently applying this grammatical rule.

**Figure 7.**



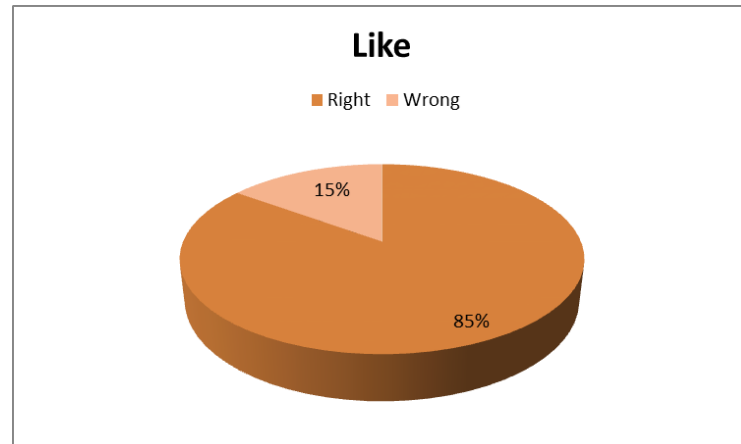
Students demonstrated proficiency levels with an 80% accuracy rate, indicating a solid understanding of the verb's usage, but 20% of students made errors, highlighting improvement in oral expression with this particular verb.

**Figure 8.**



Of the 100% of students assessed, 70% showed great management during the description part, while 30% still needed to solidify their knowledge and application of this grammatical rule in verbal contexts.

**Figure 9.**



Most students 85% applied well the grammatical rule, indicating a solid grasp of third-person singular conjugation. However, 15% made errors, suggesting a need for more practice to improve grammatical accuracy in this area.

**Figure 10.**



In this case, while 70% of students correctly applied the "-s" morpheme with the verb, the 30% error rate suggests that some students may benefit from further practice in this particular grammatical skill.

**Table 4**

*A general summary of the usage of the third person singular '-s' morpheme in the oral production of English as a Foreign Language students.*

	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>PORCENTAGE</b>
<b>Wrong sentences</b>	53	27%
<b>Right sentences</b>	147	73%

The oral activity data showed how well students used the "-s" ending on verbs and affirmative descriptions, as seen on the flashcards they were given. According to the analysis, it was observed that most of students correctly used the '-s' morpheme in verbs and affirmative descriptions during oral activities, however, notable errors were observed with specific verbs such as "watch" and "relax," highlighting the need for more practice to enhance grammatical accuracy in more varied and spontaneous contexts.

- Mary watch [*watches*] tv.
- Joel relax [*relaxes*] by listening to music.

In another study, Buldiharto (2021) revealed that students frequently omit the "-s" morpheme in communicative descriptions, influenced by grammatical differences with their native language. This discrepancy underscores the importance of addressing linguistic interference in teaching English as a second language to improve the precise application of the "-s" morpheme in diverse oral contexts. These findings emphasize the necessity for educational strategies or activities that teach grammatical rules in a real context.

These observations highlighted the influence of insufficient practice, the complexities of grammatical exceptions, and the impact of first language interference in this case from Spanish, which does not have a similar structure for grammar.

### **Table 5**

*Analysis of Errors in the Use of the Third-Person Singular "-s" Morpheme made by women and man*

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Written errors</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Oral errors</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Women</b>	6	46%	4	40%	10
<b>Man</b>	7	54%	6	60%	13

In analyzing the errors made by 20 students (10 men and 10 women) the following observations were made:

### **Written Production:**

In this part, 7 out of 10 male participants made errors in the use of the "-s" morpheme, while 6 out of 10 female participants exhibited similar errors. This indicates that a higher number of men experienced difficulties compared to women, suggesting that men had a greater challenge in written production.

### **Oral Production:**

In this case, 6 out of 10 male participants committed errors, whereas 4 out of 10 female participants made it too. This demonstrates that men had a higher frequency of errors in oral production compared to women.

The data suggests that men made more errors in the use of the third-person singular "-s" morpheme than women, both in written and oral production. Specifically, men made a higher number of errors in both contexts compared to women, indicating that they face greater difficulties with this grammatical rule.

## **INTERVIEW PART**

### **Transcription**

#### **(TEACHER 1)**

- Absolutely! The morpheme 's' in the present simple is often a headache for many students. I believe this is often due to insufficient practice and also because Spanish, our native language, plays a trick on them, as we don't have such a strict rule for that.

Additionally, some students tend to get confused with the exceptions to the rule, such as verbs ending in '-o', '-x', '-s', '-sh', etc. The fact is that this often leads students to generalize a rule, which can be one of the main causes.

- Exactly! Without a doubt, there are exceptions, right? But personally, I think there's more trouble in the written context because it can be like a minefield for some students. They have time to analyze the sentence structure, and that's when they sometimes overuse the 's'. The pressure to write correctly can generate more anxiety and, consequently, more errors.
- Mmh, interesting. Let's see... To teach my students the grammatical rules of the present simple in the third person or any other, I use methods like Total Physical Response, where students learn grammar through physical actions associated with language. For example, when teaching a sentence like 'he walks,' we can have the students stand up and walk while saying the phrase out loud. Or we have each student perform an action and their classmates describe it out loud, and so on with other examples. The idea is to promote the correct use of the 's' morpheme or the grammatical rule in general.
- I have implemented strategies such as role-playing games, fill in the blank activities in the book, music, and even memes to help them remember the correct use of 's'. I want them to see grammar as something fun and not as a punishment. Additionally, I give them the opportunity to practice in groups, where they can correct each other constructively.
- Well, personally, I recommend dynamic and stimulating activities to reinforce the use of the 's' morpheme because grammar shouldn't be a nightmare, especially this one which, despite its apparent simplicity, is quite complex. So, as a teacher, I would recommend activities that include role-playing with character cards, fictitious interviews, question-and-answer games, describing images, completing sentences, or even creating stories on topics that interest them. This way, they can practice actively and become familiar with this grammatical rule in a fun and participative manner.

- Of course! As I am present throughout this process, I would say that I have definitely observed improvements. They have become more aware of the importance of the 's' morpheme in the present simple and are more precise in its use in affirmative sentences with the third person singular.
- Definitely! It is a grammatical rule that seems simple but is fundamental in the development of English because it affects clarity and precision in both oral and written communication.
- My advice for other teachers facing similar challenges is to be consistent in the teaching and practice of this grammatical rule, specifically in applying the 's' morpheme. It is always good to use contextualized examples and interactive activities like role playing and, provide constant feedback to correct errors through worksheets, and be patient and willing to adapt teaching methods according to the individual needs of the students.
- Absolutely! Revisiting and reinforcing the 's' in later stages of learning is like giving a song you really like another listen. Although it is initially addressed at basic levels, it is essential to continue practicing and reinforcing its application at advanced levels to ensure a solid and lasting mastery of this key grammatical rule.

#### **(TEACHER 2)**

- Yes, definitely, many students struggle with the use of this rule, which I believe is largely due to the fact that their native language does not have a similar structure. Moreover, the pace of classes sometimes doesn't give them enough time to practice and consolidate this rule. Also, the focus is often more on learning new vocabulary and communication skills, sometimes leaving grammar in the background.
- I have observed that errors are more common in the oral context. When students are speaking, they tend to focus more on fluency and less on grammatical accuracy. In contrast, in the written context, they have more time to think and correct their mistakes, which reduces the frequency of these errors.

- I actually use an integrated approach that includes clear explanations with everyday examples, practical activities, and interactive exercises. For instance, I first explain the rule in the context of daily routines, then students complete fill-in-the-blank exercises in the book, or worksheets, and finally, they engage in pair or group activities where they practice talking about other people's activities.
- That's a great question. I have implemented a series of strategies, such as role-playing games where students must describe the daily routine of a famous person, listening activities where they identify and correct errors in the use of the 's' morpheme, and using stories or songs that repeat the correct grammatical structure. I also place a strong emphasis on constant practice and reviewing common mistakes in class.
- Excellent question, I recommend recreational activities like role-playing games where students play characters with daily routines. They can also do simulated interviews and participate in board games that require describing daily actions. For written practice, I suggest writing fictional diaries of famous characters, creating comics, and error correction activities in stories they invent themselves. Additionally, using popular songs and writing or completing lyrics can be a fun and effective way to practice.
- Yes indeed, I have observed significant improvements in the students. They have become more aware of the importance of this rule and have started to apply it correctly, although I believe there should be continuous and autonomous practice on their part.
- Of course, I consider it a very relevant part. The correct use of the 's' morpheme is not only a sign of good grammar but also improves clarity and precision in communication. It is essential for students to feel more confident and natural when speaking and writing in English.
- I would recommend being patient and consistent in teaching this rule. Using a variety of methods and activities to keep students interested is key. It is also important to provide constant feedback and create a supportive environment where students are not afraid to make mistakes and learn from them. Regular practice and error review are essential for progress.

- From my point of view, I think it is crucial to revisit and reinforce this rule in later stages. Although it is introduced at initial levels, students need to review and practice continuously to ensure a solid mastery. Grammatical rules, such as the use of the 's' morpheme, need to be reinforced throughout the entire learning process to ensure an effective understanding and application at all levels.

## **ANALYSIS OF INTERVIEW PART**

According to the interviews, both teachers agreed that using the "s" morpheme in the third person singular of the simple present tense posed a significant challenge for students. This difficulty stemmed from the absence of a similar grammatical rule in Spanish, causing interference and confusion. Additionally, students lacked sufficient practice and struggled with exceptions to the rule, often leading to incorrect generalizations with less common verbs.

To address these challenges, the teachers employed different methods and activities. Teacher 1 utilized Total Physical Response, linking physical actions with language learning to make grammar more tangible. Meanwhile, Teacher 2 preferred clear explanations, practical exercises from the textbook, and interactive activities. Both emphasized role-playing, songs, and group activities to enhance the enjoyment and effectiveness of grammar learning.

Teacher 1 noted more errors in writing, attributing this to the pressure to write correctly, the influence of students' native language, and incorrect generalizations when applying the rule to verbs that did not require it. To address this issue, Teacher 1 recommended activities such as role-playing and consistent use of worksheets for ongoing practice. Contrarily, Teacher 2 believed that errors were more common in oral expression due to speaking anxiety and translation errors from the native language. Teacher 2 suggested incorporating role-playing, worksheets, and storytelling in a supportive environment to improve oral proficiency.

Both teachers emphasized the need for contextualized examples related to students' daily lives to facilitate comprehension and application of grammar rules. Continuous practice, with regular oral and written exercises and consistent feedback, significantly helped students internalize grammar rules and reduce errors over time.

## **9. RESEARCH IMPACT**

The study on the use of the third-person singular "-s" morpheme in English provides significant insights in educational contexts, because it identifies specific areas where improvements in English language learning can be made, emphasizing the necessity to use effective grammar strategies to enhance students' learning experience in this key grammatical area.

## **10. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Conclusions**

When the registration form for the written part was applied in affirmative sentences, students demonstrated a low level (29%) in correctly applying the "-s" morpheme, often resulting in the production of incorrect sentences. Certain verbs were identified as particularly challenging, influenced by negative transfer from their mother tongue, and giving way to overgeneralization of the grammatical rule too. Also, when the registration form for oral expression in affirmative descriptions was applied, students generally presented correct usage of the "-s" morpheme in verbs and affirmative descriptions with (73%), demonstrated a high level of application of this grammatical rule, in this case some errors were observed with less common verbs due to the influence of negative transfer from the first language.

The use of the linguistic feature was a significant challenge for young English learners. This difficulty not only impacted their language proficiency and communication skills but was also closely linked to gender differences in performance. A significant finding of the study was that male students consistently made more errors than females in both written and spoken production.

Interviews with teachers revealed that students had difficulty with this grammatical rule due to negative first language influence, this difficulty manifested because this especial grammar rule of Spanish language is different to English, so it means, Spanish does not have a morpheme structure where the "s" is added when using the third person singular, so the students completely missed to add the target morpheme in the verb, along with insufficient practice and the complexity of the rule's exceptions causing overgeneralization in verbs, it also highlighted that the third-person singular rule in English, while it may seem simple, but in reality presented significant challenges for learners.

## **Recommendations**

Since students showed more difficulties in using the morpheme "-s" in written form compared to oral expression, it is recommended to use examples from students' daily lives to aid understanding. Integrating dynamic strategies such as songs, role-playing, and group activities can make grammar learning more engaging and relatable. This approach will help students connect physical actions with language use, reinforcing correct morpheme application in various contexts.

The use of the third-person singular 's' rule presents a significant challenge for young learners, directly impacting their linguistic development and communicative skills. This challenge is further compounded by gender differences in performance, with male students, in this case, educators should focus on providing targeted exercises and feedback, specifically designed to improve accuracy among male students, thereby enhancing their overall linguistic competence

Teachers should emphasize the difference between this grammatical rule and its difference in Spanish language and ensure that students master it before moving on to teach another one, in the same way, continuous and constructive feedback on the use of the "-s" morpheme is crucial, correcting errors in a supportive manner and offering consistent practice opportunities will help reduce the impact of negative transfer, understand how to apply the English morpheme and reduce common errors.

This reinforces the importance of addressing this complexity in language teaching and learning, underscoring the relevance of contextualized examples, constant practice, and constructive feedback to help learners internalize grammatical rules and minimize errors over time.

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