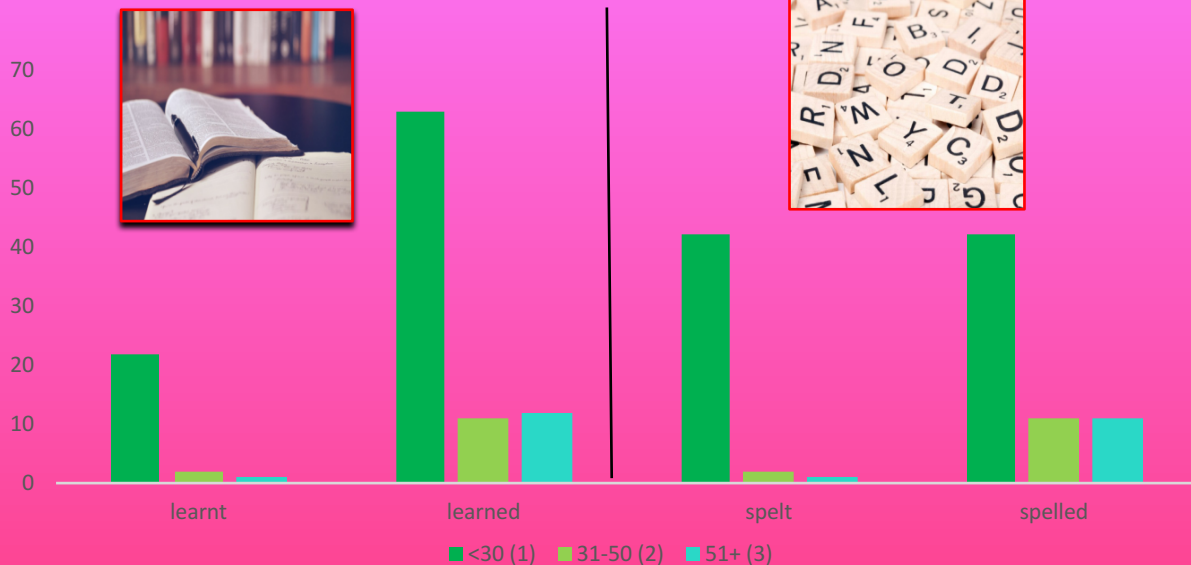


Survey Results!

Today, I _____ something very interesting
in Linguistics class.

I _____ the word incorrectly on the
exam.



Asking your preference for “learnt” vs. “learned” and “spelt” vs. “spelled” was not a grammar test! All forms are used and accepted in Canada.

There is a set of lexical verbs ending in /l, m, n/ that take the regular “-ed” past tense form in American English, /-d/, but an irregular /-t/ ending in British English, for example “dreamed” in American English but “dreamt” in British English. There have been few studies of these verbs in Canadian English, but anecdotally it is said that more variation is allowed.

Variation is indeed what we found in our study. Although more speakers across age categories use the regular /-d/ ending for both of these words, many still chose the irregular /-t/ ending. In the case of “spelt/spelled”, the youngest speakers were split 50-50. As in many other cases of variation we have explored, when it comes to deciding which form in Canada is “correct”, the answer appears to be: both! (A caveat here... you may have noticed that we didn’t ask for country of origin in our survey, so there are likely some answers from international respondents in the mix.)

To think about... Does your usage depend on what you are trying to say and in what context you are saying it?

Thank you to all who participated! 😊

Results from posters in two locations: Outside Strathy Language Unit office (Macintosh-Corry F406) and the 3rd floor of Kingston Hall. New surveys and results from previous surveys will be posted every 2 weeks.