Investigating the secondary school students' mastery in using the English inflectional suffixes plural and possessive (s)

التحقق من سيطرة طلبة الثانوية في استخدام اضافات الجمع والتملك في اللغة الانكليزية

مدرس مساعد: امنة محمد باسل الياس

ماجستير في علم اللغة وتدريس اللغة الانكليزية

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البريد الإلكتروني Email : amenahalani@uohamdaniya.edu.iq

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Investigating the secondary school students' mastery in using the English inflectional suffixes plural and possessive (s)

Submitted by: Asst.lect.: Amina Mohammed Basil Ilyas khudur

Linguistics and English Language Teaching

Ministry of Education/ The General Directorate of Education in Nineveh Governorate /AlTareeq Al modi High school for girls

الملخص

الهدف من هذه الدراسة هو التحقق من اكتساب وإتقان اضافات الجمع والتملك وكذلك تدقيق عدد مرات التكرار . بالإضافة الى سوء استخدام هذه الادوات في الانشاءات الإنجليزية لطلبة الصف الثالث المتوسط في العراق في مدينة الموصل .ولقد شارك في هذه الدراسة ستون طالبة من المرحلة الثانوية من قضاء حمام العليل من قرية العريج .وان البيانات التي استخدمت في الدراسة كانت عبارة عن انشاءات مكتوبة باللغة الإنجليزية بالإضافة الى تدريبات نحوية .ومن ناحية أخرى ، يريد الباحث معرفة ما إذا كان الطلبة المشاركون في الامتحان قد نجحوا في اختيار الأسماء وجمعهم أم لا وهل تؤثر لغتهم الام في استخدام لغتهم الثانية و ما هي المشاكل التي يواجهون في جمع الاسماء والتملك .و لقد تم عرض مجموعة من تمارين نحوية واختيارات لستون طالبًة وكتابة انشاءات لمعرفة ما إذا كانوا جيدين في إضافات التملك والجمع. بالإضافة الى ذلك ، كانت اعمار الممتحنون متقاربة ، وكانوا جميعًا من الإناث نتيجة لذلك اشارت النتائج إلى أن الطلبة لا يجيدون استخدام اداة التملك حيث يميلون إلى إضافتها

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وحـذفها عشـوائيًا ، كمـا حـدث نفـس الشـيء فـي اسـتخدام اداة الجمـع. لـذلك تـم تقديم بعـض الاقتراحات كما موضح في البحث.الكلمات المفتاحية : اضافات التملك و الجمع ، طريقة جمـع الاسماء ،وكذلك استخدام اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية .

ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to investigate the acquisition and mastery of the plural and possessive (s) suffixes with a view to the examination of the occurrences as well as the misuse of such suffixes in the English compositions of third intermediate class students in Iraq, Mosul . Those who participated in this study are sixty secondary school students at Al Areej town in Hamam Al Aleel locality. The data used for the study was written English compositions and grammar exercises. The written tasks of the subjects were analyzed for various occurrences and misuse of plural and possessive (s) in particular.

On the other hand, the researcher wants to find out whether their first language interact with their second language or what are the problems that they have in pluralization and possessing of nouns. Further, sixty students are composed to a number of multiple choice exercises and write a composition in order to know whether they are good in adding the possessive (s) and plural (s) suffixes. Furthermore, they were from the same class, nearly the same ages and gender, they were all girls. In fact, the researcher has got some other tests to know whether the participants are using the words correctly or not . As a result, the findings indicate that participants were more successful in the use of regular plural nouns than irregular ones.

1.1   Background of the Study

English as a foreign language (henceforth, EFL) has become one of the main lingua franca in the world. Its written and spoken forms have been used for communication everywhere. As a result, many people may feel that they need to speak and write in the English language. So that, in Iraq students especially those at the secondary school level are required to master English. However, they are not able to do so since they are not proficient in the grammar of the language as well. Touchie (1986) discusses that, students who are in the process of learning English, unfortunately, make many grammatical mistakes and could not correctly use suffixes in general and plural, possessive suffixes in particular. Ironically, the un mastery of using such suffixes prove to be significant source of information for language learners. Further, to language teachers, it is indications of a learner's progress. For researchers, as

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insights into how language is learnt. Finally, for educators who are learning a language, it causes them to automatically involved in hypothesis testing (Selinker, 1969 as cited in Touchie, 1986). Furthermore, it is known that, writing in English language is a difficult process in all its types even in the first language. In fact it is even more complicated to write and answer grammar exercises in a foreign language. So that, many studies indicate that , students tend to interfere from their first language in the process of writing in English and this lead to commit many errors. (Benson, 2002; Cedar, 2004; Chen & Huang, 2003; Collins, 2002; Jarvis, 2000; Jiang, 1995; Lado, 1957; Liu, 1998; Mori, 1998; Yu, 1996). Writing in English as a Foreign Language (henceforth, EFL) often presents the greatest challenge to the students at all stages of learning, particularly composition writing because in this activity, writing is usually extended and therefore it is more demanding than in the case of writing a short sentence, so this leads to the inability to master the plural and possessive suffixes since, they involve many exceptions.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The researcher of the current study agrees with the idea of Akande (2003) who finds in the course of English teaching as a second language that many EFL students were unable to use English suffixes correctly in their writing. For instance, when learners add suffix -s to make plural, the countable and uncountable nouns ,errors arise from determining whether a noun is an uncountable noun or countable noun like ......(*some equipments here....) which is made correct as in (a lot of equipment). The noun 'equipment' is a mass noun and there is no need to add the plural suffix -s to it at all. Similarly, according to Akande (2003), some errors have arisen from the double marking of nouns as in the case of (*The cattles were many) (cattle). The noun 'Cattle' is already in the plural form therefore, there is no need to add the plural -s to it. There are also cases where EFL students who were observed to omit suffixes from their own sentences, for instance, (* John father is kind) here is an omission of the possessive (s) from the noun (john) (Ahour and Mukundan, 2012).

Therefore, the researcher strongly asserts that there is a need to carry out this study in order to find out the types of errors and the mastery of students in the use of plural and possessive (s) that EFL students normally make in their writing.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The main objectives of the current research are;

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(a) The first objective is to identify the different types of errors such as omission, addition, misformation, substitution and misordering used by secondary school students in their composition writings.

(b) The second objective is to determine which of the types mentioned in (a) is the most dominant type of suffixes , and

(c) Last but not least, to ascertain how the interference of the first language of participants effects on their writing.

1.4 Research Questions

There are three research questions which are concerned in this study ;

(a) Are the plural and possessive (s) suffixes mastered by the third intermediate students in the secondary school of Alreej locality or not .

(b) What is the most dominant type of suffixes errors found in the students' composition writing?

(c) Is negative transfer/interference of the mother tongue the major cause for errors in the English writings of participants?"

2.LiteratureReview

A quite large number of researches have been conducted on the acquisition of English suffixes by both EFL learners and native speakers of English. Some of these will be reviewed here. Dulay and Burt (1973) who reveal that a study on the acquisition of English grammatical suffixes which are called functors where the participants used 151 Spanish speakers in the USA whose ages between 15 to 18 years. They consist of three groups: the Sacramento group, the East Harlem group, and the San Ysidro group. These groups have a different exposures to English. The researchers have analyzed the data collected from the participants through BSM and discover that, in each group those participants who were most accurate, and those who were least accurate consistently the same (Hawkins 2001:40). So, the study concluded that EFL speakers find that some grammatical suffixes are difficult to acquire regardless of their length of exposure . However, Akande 2001, also examines the competence of some pupils in the morphology of English. He carries out a study on eight morphological processes namely compounding, prefixation , clipping, conversion, acronym, blending, reduplication and suffixation with a view to find out which of these processes are mostly used by Nigerian learners of English. The elicitation technique used is written essays, which he analysed for occurrences of morphological processes and deviations. The findings of the study are summarized in the following words: "It was found that there is a discrepancy in the subjects' acquisition and mastery of word-formation processes. This is because some of the processes namely; acronym, chipping, blending, etc. are not regularly used, un like suffixation which

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is regularly used". (Akande, 2001:44). Furthermore, the study carries out that suffixation which is the most regularly used revealed the greatest difficulty to the participants. Akande (2003), In a related study, investigated the acquisition of the eight inflectional suffixes in English. The study found out the occurrences as well as the misuse of these grammatical suffixes. The data that have been used for the study is drawn from sixty Yoruba- speaking students of English who were selected from four secondary schools in Ondo State of Nigeria. The researcher has used two types of elicitation techniques namely, a grammar exercises and written compositions. The analysis of compositions revealed that the subjects have a poor mastery of the use of English plural and past tense suffixes. There are other researches which made by Babalola and Akande (2002) who assert that there are some linguistic difficulties facing Yoruba learners of English. Such difficulties are grouped into morphological, phonological, syntactic , and orthographic problems. So that, students' comments on the morphological–related problems are very relevant, they claim that English is inconsistent especially in the area of morphology and suffixation in particular.(Babalola and Akande 2002:250). Besides that, Ririn (2010) who made a research on the morphological errors especially in the plural suffix in the essays of the fifth semester students of English Department of UIN Malang in 2008 and found that his participants have made all the types of morphological errors in their writing such as omission, misordering ,addition, and misformation of suffixes.

Additionally a study on the errors and variations of students' writings involving twelve TESL students from the Faculty of Educational Studies at the University of Putra Malaysia was carried out by Ahour and Mukundan (2012) who revealed that the respondents had many problems in the surface structure of words like misformation and its subcategories, addition and omission. The omission errors were made because the participants have omitted certain grammatical suffixes especially that of verb or noun such as (* sisters book) or that of a verb as (* He work hard yesterday). Thus, in another study , in (2013) Ahmad Taufik Hidayah bin Abdullah has carried out a study on the acquisition of the Simple Past Tense in the writings of TESL College Students. He noticed that learners from college Ugama Sultan Zainal Abidin made errors in addition, omission, misordering, and misformation in their essay writing. Consequently , it can be concluded that the issue which leads to this study is secondary school students normally have difficulties in writing because they tend usually to make omission, addition, misformation and misordering errors as well .

2.1 Morphology

There are number of skills which must be mastered, namely listening, speaking, reading and writing respectively in the process of learning English as a foreign language (henceforth ,EFL). In order to master these four skills, four elements must be taught, vocabulary, pronunciation, structure and spelling. On the other side, structure is said to be divided into three elements: grammar, phonology and semantics . Out of the preceding grammar has been divided into syntax and morphology, Yule (2006: 64). Morphology as said to be is one of the traditional branches of grammar; in addition to the other branch being known as syntax which involves the arrangement of words in sentences. The term (Morphology) has been differently defined by scholars, for instance, Akande (2003) who defined it as the branch of linguistics that deals with the study of the internal structures of words and how new words are created from the existing ones through the use of various morphological processes, namely conversion, blending, affixation, chipping ,reduplication, compounding, etc. Akande (2003:310-326). Further, Morphology has been also defined as the term which refers to the process of how the words of a language are formed to create meaningful messages (Sharon, 2010,4). According to O'Grady and Archibald (2009), who defined the term morphology as the study of words and their formation. Similarly, Morphology is a part of the grammatical knowledge of a language as discussed by Fromkin et al. (2007: 77). On the other hand, Katamba and Stonham (2006) assumed

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that morphology is the study of word-structure. Further, Yule (2010) who said that the term of morphology, literally means "the study of forms" as it was originally used in Biology but during the middle of nineteenth century, it has also been used to describe the type of investigation that involves analyzing all basic "elements" of something as used in the study of a language (Yule, 2010:67).In addition to the fact that , the term Morphology has been built of two morphemes, morph + ology. The suffix –ology means "science of" or " branch of knowledge concerning." Thus, as mentioned by Booij (2005) Morphology stands for the "science of word forms." Based on this, the term (morphology) can be used in two ways, as a sub-discipline of linguistics on the one hand and as a part of the grammar of a language that subsumes the rules for inflection and word formation on the other hand Booij (2005: 23).

2.1.1 Morphemes

The term (morpheme) is differently defined by different scholars , one of them are O'Grady and Archibald (2009, p.110) who refer to morpheme as the smallest unit of language that carries information about meaning or function. For example, the word 'speaker', consists of two morphemes: 'speak' (a verb whose meaning is talking) and –er (which indicates a noun with the meaning of one who speaks). Similarly, Yule (2010, p.75) who defines the term morpheme as the 'minimal unit of meaning or grammatical function'. Morphemes are units of grammatical function which include forms that are used to indicate past tense, plurality, possession, etc. For example, the English word forms such as writes, writer, and writing are actually made up of the basic element 'write' and a number of other elements such as –s, -er and –ing that have been added to it. This is the meaning of morpheme as expressed by Deterding and Poedjosoedarmo (2010) and Katamba and Stonham (2006) which discussed earlier. Also, there are many words which are made up of more than one morpheme. For example,'drinking' consists of drink + ing where the first morpheme 'drink' means the act of putting something in the mouth and drinking it and the second morpheme -ing indicates the continuing nature of this action. Also it refers to the smallest unit of language that carries information about meaning or function. The word 'teacher', for example consists of two morphemes: 'teach' (a verb whose meaning is giving information to students) and –er (which indicates a noun with the meaning of one who teaches).

Last but not least, a morpheme is further defined by David Crystal as the minimal distinctive unit of grammar, and the central concern of morphology. Its original motivation is as an alternative to the notion of

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the word. Moreover, Words, could be quite complex in structure, and there was a need for a single concept to interrelate such notions as root, prefix, compound, etc. The morpheme, accordingly, was seen primarily as the smallest functioning unit in the composition of words as discussed in Crystal (2008: 313). Finally, as for its origin, a morpheme comes from the Greek term "morphe", which means (form or shape) McCarthy (2002: 16).

2.1.2 Kinds of morphemes

As explained earlier, The term 'morpheme' has been used to refer to the smallest unit which has a meaning in a language i.e it is the component with which words is built. Further, when we classify morphemes in terms of where they can be used, we find that they fall into two major kinds . Some morphemes are capable of occurring on their own as words, while other morphemes are only allowed to occur in combination with some other morpheme (s) but they cannot be used by themselves as independent words. Those morphemes that are allowed to occur on their own in sentences as words are called Free morphemes while those which must occur in combination with some other morphemes are called bound morphemes i.e. an affix that is of three main types:

(1) Prefix

It is known that, prefixes have been attached to the front of a base or it is a letter or a group of

letters that are attached to the beginning of a word which indicates its meaning.

For instance, the word (prefix) itself begins with a prefix (pre-), that generally means "before."So that, in order to understand the meanings of new words, the meaning of a common prefixes can help us to deduce the meanings of new words that we encounter. Further, Wynne who argues that a prefix is usually a sound or group of sounds which appear before the base in a word and can change its meaning, Wynne (2010: 4). In other words, a prefix precedes a root and makes the new word which has a different meaning from that of the root. Examples like:

The prefix (ante-) in the word (antecedent) which means (before), (auto) in the word (autopilot) which means (self),etc.

(2) Infix

Is another type of an affix which is inserted within another morpheme i.e in the middle of the base which attached to, it causes a change in form, meaning and sometimes in tense just like in the following verbs: sing – sang, write – wrote (Hartmann, 1972: 67)

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(3) Suffix

Bergmann, has argued that suffixes are attached to the end of a base. Or suffix is a letter or a group of letters attached to the end of a word to form a new word or to alter the grammatical function of the original word, Bergmann, et al. (2007:155). According to Wynne (2010: 4) who states that the term suffix means a letter or letters that is/are added to the end of the root, i.e. after the root, and can alter the meaning or tense of the root. Unlike prefixes whose number is (75) prefix which is very limited and specified to derivational morphemes, suffixes can be used for both derivational and inflectional morphemes. For instance, the suffix (-dom) which means (place or state of being) in the words (freedom, kingdom. Also the suffixes (er,or) in the words (speaker, writer) means (the one who),etc. As explained before, morphology identifies and classifies the suffixes and describes the types of combinations that build words in the language (Robert Lado,1986:13).A morpheme is the minimal unit of meaning or grammatical function that is divided into two types. They are free morphemes and bound morphemes. In bound morphemes, there are two categories. Those are inflectional suffixes and derivational suffixes. The latter are used to make new words in the language and sometimes make words of a different grammatical category from the root. Yule (2010) argues that inflectional suffixes are not used to produce new words, but rather to indicate aspects of grammatical function. Inflectional suffixes are used to show if a word is plural or singular, if it is a past tense or not, if it is comparative or superlative, etc. (George Yule, 2010 ,64)

2.1.3 Derivational suffixes

This type of suffixes is used to produce new words in English and is sometimes used to make words of a different grammatical category from the stem, unlike the Inflectional suffixes which are not used to produce new words; but rather to indicate aspects of grammatical function of a word. Such suffixes come at the end of the verbs, nouns and adjectives and make new words with new meanings (Yamin, 2006, 66).

According to Bergmann et al. (2007, 150-151), derivation is the process of forming words out of other words. (Akmajian et al. 1997 : 36-39) who said that derivational suffixes are those which change the meaning or lexical category of the words to which they attached; or they create new words from other words. It also changes the parts of speech or the meaning of the words. For example, the word 'happy' is an adjective where the suffix '–ness' is added to it, it will be changed from adjective to noun (i.e., happiness); further, the word 'use' is a verb and when the word 'able' is added to it, it will be changed from a verb to an adjective (i.e.,

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usable) even the word 'judge' is a verb and when the suffix '-ment' is added to it, it changes from

verb to noun (i.e., judgement).

It is important to mention that the derivational suffixes are characterized as is follows as mentioned by Hudson (2000: 62):

1.It is known that the derivational suffixes may be followed by other suffixes. i.e they do not close the word off to which they are added, they pile up in the word, for example the adjective real may be followed by abli+ity to become reliability

2.Derivational suffixes are able to change the part of speech of the words when they are attached to them, thus producing new ones. For example speak is a verb, but speak+ er yields a noun. It is worth to mention that the English derivational prefixes don't confirm to this generalization. For instance, possible is an adjective and im+ possible is still an adjective.

 On the other hand, Katamba (1993: 50) states that derivational suffixes are used to create new words by either:

 a. changing the meaning of the stem to which they are added, without necessarily changing its grammatical category for example, (happy and unhappy, legal and illegal)

 b. They make a shift in the grammatical class of a base as well as a notable change in meaning i.e they change the part of speech of the word to which they attached as in the example of sad (Adj) and sadness (N)

c. They may make a shift in the grammatical sub-class of a word without moving it into a new word-class. Furthermore, it is useful to distinguish two categories of derivational suffixes, Neutral and Non-Neutral suffixes. Neutral suffixes, such as -ize , -ment, -ness, -er , and have several characteristics which should make them relatively easy to learn. They attach to independent words; so, for example , when the suffix -or is removed from the word (actor), the result is an independent word, which is (act) . This type of suffixes does not cause changes in vowel quality or stress in the word to which they are added.

On the other hand, Non-neutral suffixes tend to cause changes of stress and vowel quality in the base to which they are added.

2.1.4 Inflectional   suffixes:

This type is totally different from the preceding type in which it is not used to produce new words but rather to indicate aspects of grammatical function of words as asserted by George Yule (Yule, 2014:68) while Deterding and Poedjosoedarmo (2001) who noted that an inflectional suffixes are normally serving to indicate the structure of sentences and

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they leave the word class of the words not affected. In other words, the function of inflectional suffixes are largely to help indicate the structure of a sentence as stated by DeCapua (2008) who asserts that they serve only grammatical functions such as marking plurality or tense, possession, etc. So that, such suffixes are represented as follows, the first suffix -s indicates plurality when it is attached to a noun such as 'box' which is a singular noun and plural (s) changes it into a plural noun 'boxes'. However, the second suffix (–s) is used to show possession when it is attached to a noun, for example "The girl's ring" shows that the ring belongs to one girl, while 'girls' rings' shows that the ring is a type of ring which usually worn by many girls i.e a plural noun , such suffix is different from the third (-s)which have the function of changing the verb into its present tense form like 'She talks'. The (-s) at the end of the word (talk) shows that the subject (she) is singular. The fourth and fifth suffixes (-ed) function to change verbs into their regular past tense and also regular past participle forms respectively. After that, the suffix -ing functions to indicate the present participle form of a verb. Last but not least, -er and –est serve to change adjectives and adverbs into their comparative and superlative form respectively.

However, Bergmann et al. said that, the process of inflection is a process of producing different grammatical forms of a word but these generated words are not new ones because the inflectional suffixes are bound morphemes that serve a purely grammatical function, never producing new words but only make a different form of the same word.Bergmann et al. (2007: 151).Finally, Lieber who has stated that suffixes which do not change the word class of a word and hence do not create new words are called inflectional. They rather change the forms of words and thus make them fit into different grammatical contexts or meanings that show number (singular and plural), person (first, second, third), comparison and tense (past and present), etc. Lieber (2009: 88)

2.1.5 Plural suffix (s)
Plural (s) is one of the inflectional suffixes which are added to nouns to make them in the plural form and the most common way to pluralize a noun is to simply add an -s suffix at the end of the word, just like the following examples:

a.teacher is (singular :hence forth, sg) becomes teachers (plural:hence forth, pl).

b.College (sg) becomes colleges (pl).

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There are number of rules which are followed in the addition of plural suffix (s) that are listed below:

1.Nouns that end in (y) and it is preceded by a vowel sound take an (-s) in the plural with no change like for example: monkey (sg.) becomes monkeys (pl.)

2.Nouns that end in (-y) and it is preceded by a consonant sound undergo a more dramatic change. First, the (-y) changes into (-i) and (es) is added.

Just like, Baby (sg.) becomes babies (pl.) , country(sg) changes into countries(pl).

3.Nouns that end in a sibilant (s, x, z, ch, sh, ss) pluralize by adding an -es. For example, box (sg) becomes boxes(pl), church is (sg) becomes churches (pl)

4.If the noun ends in an (-is) is replaced by -es in the plural. just like, Thesis (sg) becomes theses (pl).

5.Count nouns that end in -f are pluralized by changing –f into –v , and (es) is added like the following examples,calf (sg) becomes calves (pl), knife(sg) becomes knives(pl),etc.

6.Nouns that end in -o preceded by a vowel are usually pluralized by adding an –s while nouns that end in -o preceded by a consonant usually pluralized with an –es. The nouns that do not follow this pattern are often words imported from other languages and take their plural form according to the rules of that language. For example, tomato becomes tomatos, and Soprano (sg) becomes Sopranos (pl). (Stolley,2006).Concerning Ali mohammadi etal, who agrued that It is worth to mention that plurality in English is changing from time to time in writing and pronunciation, it requires more attention to be taken by students and the following spelling rules should be observed. The regular plural suffix -s is inflected to singular nouns for example: hands, flowers, bats , to denote more than one. While, the suffix -es is inflected to singular nouns ending in [s, ss, sh, ch, x , and z] e.g. roses, watches, etc. whereas it is incorporated to singular nouns ending in -y preceded by a consonant and the -y is dropped and -ies is added to form the plural as in fly, flies, opportunity, opportunities; etc. and, On the other hand, nouns ending with -y which are preceded by a vowel take the plural suffix -s without any change, as in boy, trays .While For nouns ending in -o, the suffix -es is attached to form the plural as in : vetoes tomatoes, potatoes, torpedoes and so on (Ali mohammadi & Khalili, 2006). On the other side, there are also several irregular ways of forming a plural as follows: There are seven nouns which their vowels are varied to represent plurality just like: ox, oxen, man, men, woman ,women , child, children, etc. The last but

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not least, several nouns are used only in the singular as in: music, advice, information ,mathematics, physics, linguistics, etc. further more, the grammarian Stageberg (1981:132) who stated the definition of plurality as, "a noun is singular if it means one and plural if it means more than one". Just like Quirk who discusses the fact that, It is important to note that there are some nouns in English that have irregular plurals that can take the (mutation , zero plural ,-en plural, or voicing), Examples are: My teeth are painful. (Mutation), The sheep are here (zero plural), The children were studying English (en plural), their wives are beautiful (Voicing). (Quirk et al, 1973:81-86).

To conclude that , it is important to note the pronunciation of the final suffix (s) in the plural words depending on the final sound before that (s). So, there are number of rules which are followed in such case where the plural ending (s) is pronounced as /s/ after a voiceless sound, while it is pronounced as /z/ after a voiced sound and is pronounced /ɪz / after a sibilant sound, for examples:

• Voiceless: tips /s/ , books /s/, sits /s/
• Voiced: words /z/ , crabs /z/ , gloves /z/
• Sibilant: buses /ɪz / , bridges /ɪz / , wishes /ɪz /

   The (s) sound is pronounced /ɪz/, if the last consonant sound of the word is a sibilant sound like (c, s, x, z, ss, ch, sh, g) as illustrated in the following examples:
Examples of words ending in the /ɪz/ sound:(races, places, dishes , hairbrushes, prizes, quizzes, fixes, boxes ,churches, witches, buses, pauses, ages , wages, bosses, glasses).

   While if the last consonant of the word is voiceless, then the plural (s) is pronounced as /s/. The following examples of words ending in the /s/ sound as: (books, snakes, hats, students ,cups, landscapes, cliffs, laughs, earths, myths, cloths, months, baths).

    Finally, if the last letter of words ends in a voiced consonant, then the plural (s) is pronounced like /z/. This sound is similar to the sound of bee .Examples of words ending in the /z/ sound as follows (crabs, tubes, cards, words, rugs, bags, calls, hills, plums, dreams, fans, pens, figures , fires, gloves, wives, clothes, bathes, plays, cries , buys, boys, says

2.1.6. Possessive suffix (s)

  Possessive inflectional suffix is the second type that concerned us in this study and it is represented by (-'s or -s') to show possession or belongingness as mentioned by Salim (2013) who argues that English nouns are marked in writing for the category possession by an inflectional suffix (-'s) in the regular singular nouns and by (-s') in the plural nouns.

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The pronunciation of the possessive suffix is similar to that of the plural suffix (s) as mentioned earlier. The apostrophe is attached to the end of the singular noun before (s) as in John's book. While in the plural nouns, the apostrophe /-'/ is added after the plural (s) in plural nouns as in girls' books. In addition, there is also another structure to represent possessiveness in English which is symbolized with (of) construction that denotes possession to inanimate objects such as the color of the wall; the name of the book etc. *(Internet1).According to Quirk(1985) the* possessive case of regular nouns is realized in speech only in the singular, where it takes one of the forms /IZ/, /z/, or /S/, following the rules for the plural -S suffix of nouns while in writing, the possession of regular nouns is realized in the singular by apostrophe + s (boy's), but in the regular plural is represented by the apostrophe following the plural -S (boys'). As a result, the spoken form /spaiz/ may realize three forms of the noun

spy as follows :

The spies were arrested. [plural, common case]

The spy's companion was a woman. [singular, possessive case]

The spies' companions were women. [plural, possessive case].

By contrast, some nouns with irregular plural like (child, children) ,the apostrophe is before the (s) in the singular noun (child) and before the (s) in the plural noun (children).

child – child's, children – children's (Quirk,1985:319).

3.Methodology and data analysis

This section attends to describe the misuse of the plural and possessive (s) suffixes by the students of the third intermediate class and the explanation of the reasons behind it. More specifically, it presents the population of the study (sample), the study instrument, and how the data for analysis have been collected, all for the sake of ensuring the reliability of the corpus and its analysis and the compatibility with the aims raised earlier.

 It is important to notice that the misuse identified in third intermediate class school students' performance in terms of the use of possessive and plural (s) have been identified, described and thoroughly explained .

3.1 The Population of the study

The population of the present study includes the students of the third intermediate class at Al Areej secondary school, Iraq, Mosul, hamam AlAleel locality. The population considered is targeted during the period of the academic year 2020- 2021 during the midterm examination.The major task that concerns us most here is to identify and analyze the mastery and misuse of plural and possessive (s) with regard to the

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performance of the students in their compositions papers. It is worth to note that the participants, i.e. the writers of the compositions, were equally exposed to the same techniques and principles of writing paragraphs or compositions, and the rules of using such suffixes, in their first and second classes of study at the school. In other words, they were aware of the requirements for writing a good English compositions by using suffix (s) correctly.

3.2 Collection of the sample

The corpus for the analysis includes sixty narrative compositions; written by sixty girls in the 3rd intermediate class during the mid-term exam and within a time limit of an hour and a half. The students had the opportunity to choose any one of the two topics given in the exam; they were asked to write a composition of a moderate size, i.e. between 150 and 200 words on any of the two topics. In addition, in observing the exam, the students were not allowed to get access to any books or any help from the teacher in answering the questions in order to identify their mastery of such suffixes. As such, they have to depend solely on their grammatical information and personal knowledge.

4. Data Analysis and Discussion of results

As mentioned earlier, the main aim of the current study is to observe the ability and mastery in students' writings in their use of the plural and possessive (s) suffixes, then investigating the reasons behind the misuse of them. In the following subsections, the researcher tries to find out the mastery of the concerned suffixes by the third intermediate class students through presenting some samples which are written by them. However, participants have committed a variety of deviant structures in pluralizing and possessing nouns . So, the researcher has called these deviant structures "errors" since their occurrence is systematic and recurrent . According to Dulay, Burt and Krashen (1982) who have mentioned that "the surface structure taxonomy (SST)is that; the general way the learners' sentences look different from what seems to be correct in the second language". In this study the researcher depends heavily on the context to decide about what seems to be correct in the target language. So through analyzing the data, the errors found in the participants' writings were first gathered. Then separated and categorized into addition , omission, substitution , misordering and misformation. . Then, all frequency (number of occurrence) is calculated and compared to each other in order to determine which is the most dominant.

4.1 Errors of omission

It is known that, omission is the absence of an element or letter or sound that its presence is necessary for the grammaticality of the structure and

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meaning of the word. They are characterized by the absence of an item that must be shown in a well-formed utterance .In certain contexts, the plural suffix (s) has been dropped while it is regular as in (1) or irregular as in (3). Here are some illustrative examples:

1) *I have two brother.

2) I have two brothers.

3) *My sister has three child.

4) My sister has three children.

5) *Ali and Ahmed were friend.

6) Ali and Ahmed were friends

Sentence (1) is erroneous, the error is committed as the regular plural suffix{ (s) is omitted at the end of the noun ' brother' . The sentence would be correct if it is added since it is preceded by the quantifier (two) which requires a plural form word as in sentence (2). However, in sentence (3), the participant does not know that the plural morpheme is to add the infix in the noun 'child' to become 'children' which is irregular plural form as in sentence (4) because it is preceded by a quantifier (three) which requires plural form. In addition to the error that is committed in sentence (5), where the participant has omitted the plural suffix (s) of the word (friend) which must be added because the subject consists of plural form (Ali and Ahmed). This sentence has been corrected as written in sentence (6). On the other hand, the participants tend to omit or drop the possessive (s) out of nouns which involves possession or belongingness as in the following instances:

7)*My brother wedding day was so amazing.

Just like the errors committed in the previous sentences,since the error in(7) is again represented by omitting the possessive ('s) suffix with the apostrophe from the noun brother. This type of error is made due to lack of grammatical knowledge and for simplification reasons. It can be corrected by adding the possessive suffix ('s) to the noun (brother) as indicated in (8) below:

8). My brother's wedding day was so amazing.

9).*I cannot study well because of my lttle brother criying.

Due to the tendency of students for omission in order to save time and effort, three errors which exist in sentence (9), the first error that is represented by omitting the possessive suffix ('s) with the apostrophe from the noun brother is like the previous instance. The second and third errors are irrelevant to our main point of discussion and is represented by the words (*lttle and criying) which have wrong spelling. Sentence (9)

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can be corrected by adding the possessive suffix ('s) to the noun brother and by writing the wrong spelled words in their correct form as in sentence (10) below:

10). I cannot study well because of my little brother's crying.

Hence, it is thought that Table (1) shown can be used to sum up the discussion on the errors of omission above:

Table (1) the number of errors for the omission of plural and possessive suffixes:

Types of errors	Number of errors
Omission of plural suffix (s)	95
Omission of possessive suffix s	64

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4.2Errorsofaddition

In this study, the analysis of the data has shown that the majority of the participants' errors are in the tendency of students to add such suffixes where they are not needed. i.e, different types of addition errors are committed by learners through adding an unnecessary suffixes which makes the structure ungrammatical and meaningless. This addition is of three types: (i) simple addition, (ii) regularization and (iii) double marking.

4.2.1 Simple addition

Most of the addition errors found are in this type. Thus, such types are committed when the learners try to add the regular plural suffix to a NP that is not needed at all as in sentence (11).

11.* Doing this things is very beautiful.

In sentence (11), due to the lack of grammatical information, the plural suffix (s) is added to the NP (thing) in a wrong manner since the demonstrative pronoun (this) should be followed by a singular form, but here is the opposite. So, the sentence could be made correct if the suffix (s) is omitted as in (12).

12. Doing this thing is very beautiful.

Participants committed such error not only with regular noun phrases in the plural form but also with those who cannot have plural forms at all as in (13).

13 . * Suha helped my sister in homeworks

14 . Suha helped my sister in homework.

Due to the effect of the first language, the NP (homework) is an uncountable noun that cannot have a plural form thus (13) is ungrammatical but can be made correct as preceded in (14).

In short, the plural suffix (s) cannot be attached to NPs preceded by a singular determiner such as (a(n)) or to NPs that cannot be made plural. Thus , a possible explanation for this is that students try to over-generalize the rule where (s) is added to all plurals where it is not needed.

4.2.2 Double marking

The second type is called double marking which refers to a situation where a marker of a feature is erroneously added to a form which is already marked for that feature, in other words, it can be described as the result of a failure to omit certain items that are required in certain linguistic instruments , but not in others, this because of students' tendency of adding a redundant suffixes, they commit such type of errors. So that, the data analysis has revealed instances of the double addition , here are some illustrative examples:

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15) * The childrens are playing in the garden.

16) The children are playing in the garden.

In sentence (15), the participant has committed an error which is adding the plural suffix (s) to the word (child) which has an irregular plural form. So, it is wrong because the noun (children) is double marked for plural; one for being an irregular plural and the other is the attachment of the plural suffix(s) .Thus, it can be corrected as made in sentence (16) once the plural (s) is omitted. Another example of double marking for plural is in the plural noun (teeth) in sentence (17) follows;

17) *She washes her teeths every day.

This sentence is erroneous since the participant has double marked the noun (*teeths) for plural which is already in the plural form (teeth). It can be made correct if the plural suffix (s) is omitted from the word (teeth) as in sentence (18)follows;

18) She washes her teeth every day.

On the other side, the possessive suffix may be double marked, as made in sentence (19) where the participant has added the apostrophe with (s) twice in one sentence which is in correct since it is meaningless just as follows:

19) *My sister's ring's is beautiful.

In this sentence, the apostrophe and possessive suffix (s) has wrongly been added twice to the word (ring) which must be corrected by omitting (s) and the apostrophe as made in sentence (20)

20) My sister's ring is beautiful.

Furthermore, the following sentence shows the redundancy in using the possessive suffix (s);

21) *Layla's 's is studiing herd.

Sentence (21) is erroneous, since the participant has added a redundant possessive (s) and apostrophe to the noun (layla) which is in the subject position and is of no need for possession at all ,on the other hand, in this sentence, it is noticed that, there is a spelling mistakes especially in the words (*studiing and herd) which made it meaningless and un grammatical. It can be corrected as follows:

22) Layla is studying hard.

4.2.3 Regularization

It is the third type of addition errors , in which learners use a regular plural form in a place of an irregular one and vice versa. These errors occur as a result of applying a rule to the class of exceptions. Participants are often confusing when they find a few nouns which have the same singular and plural forms such as (deer), (fish) and (sheep). For instance,

the regular plural suffix is used instead of the irregular as in sentence (23).

23) *She had four childs only.

This sentence is ungrammatical, since it has an error in the addition of the plural suffix where it is added to the word (child), that has an irregular plural, this is due to the overgeneralization of students in making words in the plural form and it is clear that he is not able to distinguish between regular and irregular plural, thus he treated the word (child) as a regular noun, but it can be corrected as in (24) :

24) She had four children only.

To sum up, the following table presents the number of addition errors in the use of the plural and possessive (s).

Table (2) the number of addition type of plural and possessive suffixes

Type of Errors	Number of errors
Simple addition	46
Double marking	77
Regularization	28

4.3   Errors of misformation

Due to the incomprehensibility of the rule or the lack of training such type of errors may occur. It occurs in the competence of learners of a language. They involve replacement of either an existing morpheme or a wrong formation of a morpheme for the correct one, but in both cases this causes the ungrammaticality of the structure.

25) * Most of the familyes were in the partys .

In this sentence, there are two misformation errors, the first one is shown in the plural form of the noun (family), where the participant has added the suffix (s) to (family) with no change, since the rule says that, if the noun ends with the letter (y) and it is preceded by a consonant sound (y) changes into (i) and add (es). The same case happened with the noun (party).Thus it can be corrected as in (26):

26) Most of the families were in the parties .

Another misformation error is committed in sentence (27) where the student has misspelled the plural form of the noun (tooth) just as follows:

27) *Ali brooshes his toothies.

This sentence is full of spelling mistakes, where the participant has misspelled the verb (brush), further he added the plural suffix to the noun

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(tooth) which has an irregular plural, thus it may be corrected as made in sentence (28)

28) Ali brushes his teeth.

However, the researcher has found misformation in the use of the possessive suffix, this is because of the negative transfer from Arabic to English which causes such errors.

29) Alis' brother took the childrens' book.

Due to the fact of overgeneralization in students' use of the possessive (s) with the apostrophe, the breaking of rules happens just as made in the sentence precedes in which the participant has added the possessive in a wrong way in the nouns (*Alis' and childrens') because it is known that, if the noun is singular, the apostrophe must be before the possessive (s) but it is plural, the apostrophe after the (s), this can be made grammatical and meaningful if it is written as follows:

30) Ali's brother took the children's book.

To conclude, the following table will show the number of occurrence of misformation type.

Table (3) the number of the misformation of the plural and possessive suffixes

Type of Errors	Number of errors
Misformation of plural (s)	57
Misformation of possessive (s)	28

4.4   Errors of substitution and misordering

The analysis of the data has revealed instances of the substitution of suffixes which seems to be caused by either, the students' mother tongue interference or the influence of the target language itself as in:

31) Ahmeds car is new.

In (31), the learner substitutes the plural suffix {s} for the possessive {s} which makes the structure ungrammatical, it is known that definite nouns can not be pluralized but may be possessed . So, if the substitution is altered, the result will be meaningful and grammatical as in (32).

32) Ahmed's car is new.

In short, errors of such type seem to be random in what substitutes what. Thus, it can be said that the occurrence of these errors is not governed by any rule. Another examples have been selected by the researcher to show the confusion between the countable and in countable nouns such as follows:

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33) *He helped me with all this a advices ….

It is clear that the preceding sentence is incorrect because the learner has marked the uncountable noun (advice) by the plural suffix (s) ,but it is uncountable, so he must not say "an advice or this advices". He would usually say just "advice" (without an article), or, if it is necessary to emphasize that he must think about it as one piece of information, saying " a pieces of advice" like :

34) He helped me with all pieces of advices.

In addition, Misordering type also appears because of the incorrect placement of a suffix or group of suffixes in an utterance. This is found in the data where the participants have misordered the words just as: 35) She went to house s' Ahmed. It is known that, the definite nouns can be possessed, while in sentence (35),the matter is different, here the participant has added the possessive (s) and the apostrophe in a wrong way. It can be corrected by putting the apostrophe before the (s) and attaching it to the noun (Ahmed), just as follows: 36) She went to Ahmed's house.

In sum, table (4) which shows the number of errors for the substitution of the plural and possessive suffixes just as follows:Table (4)

Type of Errors	Number of errors
Substitution of plural (s)	20
Substitution of possessive (s)	36
misordering	41

5.A Summary of Causes

There are number of causes for such types of errors that can be summarized as follows:

1) Due to the inconsistency of English Language rules which is one of the main causes of errors committed by the participants, and this because of the polysystemic nature of English Language. For instance, the plural of the nouns calf, knife, and thief , are claves, knives and thieves in sequence, unlike the plural of the noun chief that is chiefs, here is the difference why not (chieves), so that it is noticied that there are some exceptions for each rule which must be taught by teachers for their students.

Similarly, if the plural of fox is foxes, why is ox not pluralized as oxes? there are no rules to tell the learners which suffix goes with which words, in which ways teachers can be able to teach their students where the plural suffix (s) is used with some nouns and not used with others. The

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main problem is that , how can the students be able to master numerous rules with their exceptions?Such inconsistency has made a serious problem in the learning of English for students.

2) The course of learning English Language is selective and not compulsory especially in the secondary school plan, this is another important cause of such types of errors . So that, some students do not take it into consideration. As a result of this, such students may have poor mastery in possessing and pluralizing nouns.

3) Another important cause of the misuse of such suffixes is the overgeneralization and misapplication of rules. In many cases, participants

misapply or overgeneralize certain rules, for instance, the suffix –es is used to make nouns in the plural form. Thus, some students overgeneralize this rule and write *childs, *womans and *mens, which have irregular plural forms like, children, women and men respectively, etc. The same happens with the possessive (s) where some students tend to add the apostrophe after (s) in the irregular possessed nouns like for example, the *womens' bags.

4) Last but not least, the most important cause is the negative transfer. Many students tend to transfer from Arabic to English during their writing. In other words, they translate from Arabic to English, thus it affects not on grammar only but on meaning as well.

6. Suggestions for Remedy

As this poor level of the participants that is revealed in the current study, the course of English must not be selective. In other words, it should be a compulsory course at the secondary schools in particular. What is needed here, is a practical suggestions, pedagogical approaches, different exercises (activities), and notes which have been used by the teacher to remedy the misuse of the suffixes in general and our concerned ones in particular, such types of remedy can be used specifically in the light of students' progress and levels. In addition to the fact that teachers must focus on the differences between 1st and 2nd languages in order to help their students mastering the uses of such suffixes with their exceptions . Further, the researcher' thoughts go side by side with Lado's (1957) and Fries's (1945) especially on the point that interference is a major source of learning difficulty and committing errors.

7.Conclusion

In this study, the researcher has made an attempt to identify, classify the causes of misuses of the plural and possessive (s) suffixes in the written English of some secondary school students in English. This research also shows that there are many causes of such errors, as interference from

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Arabic to English and vice versa, the inconsistency of English language itself, and overgeneralization, the tendency of simplification and misapplication of rules. As a result, depending on the findings of the study, the researcher suggested the preceding remedies.

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