

OVERGENERALISATION OF DERIVATIONAL RULES BY EFL SECONDARY
STUDENTS: THE CASE OF 'MABATHOANA HIGH SCHOOL

A dissertation submitted to the Department of English in partial fulfillment of requirements
of Master of Arts degree in English Language and Linguistics

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|---|-----|
| CERTIFICATION | i |
| DECLARATION..... | ii |
| ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS | iii |
| DEDICATION..... | iv |
| ABSTRACT..... | v |
| | |
| CHAPTER ONE | 1 |
| Background to the Study | 1 |
| 1.0 Introduction..... | 1 |
| 1.1 Defining Morphology | 1 |
| 1.1.1 The Goals of Morphology | 2 |
| 1.1.2 Two Kinds of Morphology | 3 |
| 1.1.2.1 Inflectional Morphology | 4 |
| 1.1.2.2 Derivational Morphology | 4 |
| 1.2 Morphemes | 5 |
| 1.2.1 Bound and Free Morphemes..... | 6 |
| 1.2.2. Lexical and Functional Morphemes | 7 |
| 1.2.3 Inflectional and Derivational Morphemes..... | 7 |
| 1.3 English Word Formation System | 8 |
| 1.4 Morphological Rules..... | 8 |
| 1.4.1 Word Formation Rules (WFRs) | 9 |
| 1.4.2 Derivational Rules (DRs)..... | 11 |
| 1.4.2.1 Prefixation | 11 |
| 1.4.2.2 Suffixation | 13 |
| 1.5 Defining the Phenomenon Overgeneralisation..... | 15 |
| 1.6 Problem Statement | 17 |
| 1.7 The Purpose of the Study | 18 |
| 1.8 Research Questions..... | 18 |
| 1.9 Research Objectives | 18 |
| 1.10 Research Hypotheses | 19 |
| 1.11 Significance of the Study | 19 |
| 1.12 Delimitation of the Study | 20 |
| 1.13 Organisation of the Study..... | 20 |
| 1.14 Conclusion | 21 |

| | |
|--|----|
| CHAPTER TWO | 22 |
| Literature Review and Theoretical Framework | 22 |
| 2.1 Literature Review | 22 |
| 2.1.1 Overgeneralisation in Early Child Second Language Acquisition (SLA) | 22 |
| 2.1.2 Mostly Overgeneralised Morphological Rules | 25 |
| 2.1.3 Causes of Overgeneralisation in Morphology | 31 |
| 2.2 Theoretical Framework | 35 |
| 2.2.1 Mark Aronoff (1976) | 35 |
| 2.2.2.1 Syntax Restrictions | 37 |
| 2.2.2.2 Semantic Restrictions | 37 |
| 2.2.2.3 Morphological Restrictions | 37 |
| 2.2.2.4 Phonological Restrictions | 38 |
| 2.2.3 Blocking | 38 |
| 2.2.4 The Unitary Base Hypothesis (UBH) | 38 |
| 2.3 Conclusion | 38 |
| | |
| CHAPTER THREE | 40 |
| Methodology | 40 |
| 3.0 Introduction | 40 |
| 3.1 Research Design | 40 |
| 3.2 Research Context | 41 |
| 3.2.1 The English Language Situation in Lesotho | 42 |
| 3.2.2 The Context of the School | 42 |
| 3.3 Population and Sampling | 43 |
| 3.4 Data Collection Methods | 44 |
| 3.4.1 Online Interviews | 44 |
| 3.4.2 Online Focus Groups | 45 |
| 3.4.3 Documents (Compositions) | 47 |
| 3.5 Data Analysis | 48 |
| 3.6 Ethical Considerations | 50 |
| 3.6.1 Informed Consent | 50 |
| 3.6.2 Beneficence | 51 |
| 3.6.3 Anonymity and Confidentiality | 51 |
| 3.6.4 Privacy | 51 |

| | |
|---|----|
| 3.7 Conclusion | 51 |
| | |
| CHAPTER FOUR | 53 |
| Data Analysis and Findings | 53 |
| 4.0 Introduction | 53 |
| 4.1 Data Analysis Procedure | 53 |
| 4.1.1 Online Focus Groups (Word Formation Exercises) | 54 |
| 4.1.2 Documents (Compositions) | 55 |
| 4.1.3 Online Interviews (Questionnaires) | 55 |
| 4.2 Presentation of the Findings | 56 |
| 4.2.1 Online Focus Groups (Word Formation Exercises) | 56 |
| 4.2.2 Online Teacher Interviews (Questionnaires) | 60 |
| 4.2.3 Documents (Compositions) | 62 |
| 4.3 Discussion | 63 |
| 4.3.1 Online Focus Groups | 63 |
| 4.3.1.1 Prefixes | 63 |
| 4.3.1.2 Suffixes | 66 |
| 4.3.2 Online Teacher Interviews | 71 |
| 4.3.3 Documents | 73 |
| 4.3.4 Summary of Analysis per Research Question and Hypothesis | 76 |
| 4.4 Conclusion | 78 |
| | |
| CHAPTER FIVE | 79 |
| Conclusions | 79 |
| 5.0 Introduction | 79 |
| 5.1 Summary | 79 |
| 5.2 Implications | 80 |
| 5.2.1 Implications for EFL Teachers | 80 |
| 5.2.2 Implications for the EFL Curriculum Designers | 81 |
| 5.3 Limitations | 82 |
| 5.4 Suggestions for Future Research | 82 |
| 5.5 Conclusion | 83 |
| References | 84 |
| | |
| Appendix One | 92 |

| | |
|-----------------------------|----|
| Appendix Two | 93 |
| Appendix Three | 94 |
| Appendix Four | 95 |
| Appendix Five | 96 |

TABLE OF FIGURES

| | |
|---|----|
| Figure 1: Presents the scope of morphology adapted from Bauer (1983:34). | 3 |
| Figure 2: Presents the classification of English Morphemes. | 6 |
| Figure 3: The summary of the overgeneralised prefixes. | 66 |
| Figure 4: The summary of overgeneralised suffixes. | 71 |

CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this dissertation has been approved as having met the requirements of the Department of English in the Faculty of Humanities, National University of Lesotho for the award of Master of Arts Degree in English Language and Linguistics.

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DECLARATION

I declare that this dissertation entitled ‘Overgeneralisation of Derivational Rules by EFL secondary students of ’Mabathoana High School’ is my original work and contains no material that has been submitted previously, in whole or in part, for the award of any other academic degree to any institution. All sections that describe an argument or concepts developed by other authors have been referenced and acknowledged fully.

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Date: July 2020

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this study to God Almighty, the sole provider of life, knowledge, wisdom, and grace. As it is written in Psalm 127:1; ‘Unless the Lord builds the house, its builders labour in vain’, this study is a clear manifestation of God’s promises. I also dedicate this research to my late mom. It is said that good parents make a difference, well, you made a significant difference because you were not only good but you also taught me that there is no life without God. Your enthusiasm for education continually inspires me.

ABSTRACT

This study investigated overgeneralisation of derivational rules by EFL secondary learners at 'Mabathoana High School. The study used a triangulation of three instruments to collect data: online focus groups, online interviews, and documents (compositions) with a qualitative research design. Premised on Aronoff's (1976) word formation theory and EA procedures, the study examined and analysed a corpus of one hundred learners (30 grade 9, 30 form E, 40 form E students) and nine (9) English teachers. The findings revealed that students mostly overgeneralised the derivational prefixes *un-*, *in-*, and *dis-* which are reversative and negative prefixes. The suffixes that were mostly overgeneralised were *-ness*, *-tion*, *-ment*, *-ful*, *-able* *-ify* and *-ise* which are nominal, adjectival, and verbal forming suffixes. The study further discovered that the causes of these overgeneralisations are that EFL teachers and learners do not know derivational rules and restrictions of these rules. Another cause is that students lack a reading culture and therefore are not familiar with the English vocabulary, hence the overgeneralisations of the rules. The corpus also evidenced that these overgeneralisations have a detrimental effect on the students' language proficiency as such errors are regarded as very serious.

Keywords: Overgeneralisation, Derivational morphology, Derivational rules, Morphemes, Affixation

CHAPTER ONE

Background to the Study

1.0 Introduction

The current study examines overgeneralisation of derivational rules by EFL secondary school learners in Lesotho. It particularly investigates the commonly overgeneralised derivational rules, the causes and how they affect the students' language proficiency. This chapter provides information on the background to the study, with focus on morphology, morphological rules which comprise derivational rules and the phenomenon of overgeneralisation. In addition, it gives an overview of the statement of the problem, the purpose, the research questions, the main objectives and the hypotheses. Furthermore, it presents the significance of the study, the delimitation and lastly the organisation of the whole study.

1.1 Defining Morphology

The understanding of a language is to a very large degree determined by one's vocabulary in the language. Words play an enormous part in our lives since we use them to convey meaning, thus, they deserve to be studied. In the introduction to her study, Kolobe (2014:2) posits that one interesting characteristic of language is its ability to grow. This phenomenon is achieved through word-formation which is a very crucial aspect in the study of morphology. The present study emanates from morphology as it investigates overgeneralisation of derivational rules.

The fundamental branch of linguistics which deals with creativity of language is *morphology*. The term morphology is generally attributed to the German poet, novelist, playwright and philosopher, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832), who coined it early in the nineteenth century in a biological context. Its etymology is Greek: *morph-* means "form or shape", while *-ology* means "the study of". In biology, morphology refers to the form and structure of organisms. In linguistics, morphology refers to the study of the form and structure involved in word formation or the branch of linguistics that deals with words, their internal structure and how they are formed (Aronoff & Fudeman, 2011).

Morphology is one of the major components of a language which studies the internal structure of words, how they are formed and their relationship with other words in the same language. Leiber (2009) defines morphology as the study of word formation, including the ways new words are coined in the languages of the world, and the way forms of words are varied depending on how they are used in sentences. Fasold and Connor-Linton (2013:59) point out that morphology is the branch of linguistics that is concerned with the relation between meaning and form, within words and between words. In simpler terms, morphology studies the structure of words. The next section explains the goals of morphology.

1.1.1 The Goals of Morphology

The task or goal of morphology according to Aronoff (1976) as cited in Bauer (2003) is to tell us what sort of new words a speaker can form. In other words, the function of morphology, through its rules, is to inform the language users what kind of new words they can create. Frey (2000) points out that morphology is not just concerned with a mere description of that what already exists- it is also aimed to show how far a language may be viewed as potentially creative with regard to the invention of new words on the basis of a given set of rules. Booij (2005: 23) asserts that there are four goals of morphology:

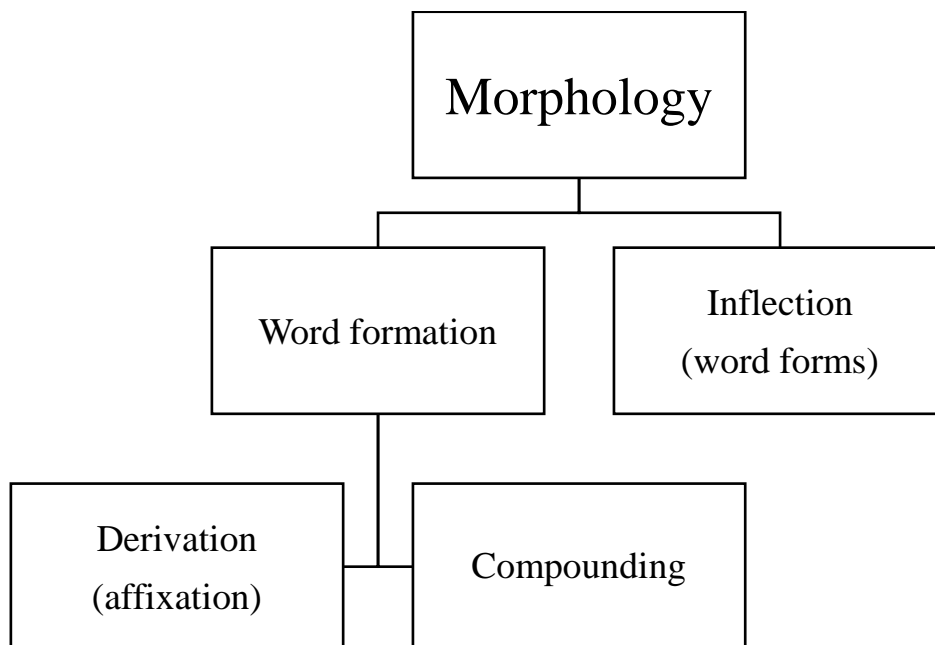
- i. The reason why linguists study morphology is to describe and analyse the languages of the world as accurately and as insightfully as possible. Hence, they have to deal with the morphological phenomena of a language, and therefore need a set of tools for description.
- ii. The goal of linguists is developing a typology of languages: what are the dimensions along which languages differ, and how are these dimensions of variation related and restricted.
- iii. Morphology is a probe into the nature of linguistic systems, and hence into human, natural language. It serves to get a better understanding of the nature of linguistic rules and the internal organisation of the grammar.
- iv. Morphology can be used to get a better insight as to how linguistic rules function in language perception and production, and how linguistic knowledge is mentally represented. Thus, morphology contributes to the wider goals of cognitive science that explores the cognitive abilities of human beings.

In essence, other than the main goal of formation of words stated by Aronoff (1976), morphology covers issues that other fields of linguistics namely phonetics and phonology, syntax, semantics and pragmatics do not or cannot cover. The following section highlights the two kinds of morphology with the purpose to clarify the component of ‘morphology’ more.

1.1.2 Two Kinds of Morphology

There are two kinds of morphology which are *derivational* and *inflectional* morphology. Hayes (2015:41) concurs that most linguists acknowledge at least a rough distinction between two kinds of morphology: *derivational* vs *inflectional* morphology. Hayes (2015) further states that inflection is morphology that deals with grammar (grammatical morphology) while derivation is morphology of the system of rules used to expand the stock of words, by forming new words from the old. Plag (2003:14) uses the terms inflection and derivation to distinguish between *word forms* and *lexemes*. According to him, word forms are created with inflectional suffixes, while lexemes are produced by derivational affixes. The scope of morphology maybe represented in the following way according to Bauer (1983):

Figure 1: Presents the scope of morphology adapted from Bauer (1983:34).



In the above figure, Bauer (1983) asserts that the two major branches of morphology are *word formation* and *inflection*. The scope of word formation includes the direct

terminological counterpart to inflectional morphology, *derivational* morphology. This field of word formation deals with patterns and rules guiding the formation of new words (rather than just word forms of existing words). In addition to derivation, word formation encompasses the study of *compounding* and also those word formation types that do not use morphemes as their basic building blocks like *blending*, *clipping*, *conversion* and *back-formation*. Malkinjaer (2002:358) explains the above figure by indicating that *derivation* and *compounding* are different from inflection in that they enable new words to be formed, they are examples of word formation while inflection is merely concerned with grammar which yields word forms. The following section discusses morphemes as a base of word forms and word formation.

1.1.2.1 Inflectional Morphology

Inflectional morphology is the study of processes including affixation and vowel change that distinguish word forms in certain grammatical categories. Inflection changes a word's form, maintaining the word category as in *apple* - *apples*. The inflectional categories include number, tense, person, case, gender and others, all of which usually produce different forms of the same word rather than different words as in derivation. According to Schmid (2015:4), inflectional morphology is highly productive as its morphemes can be attached to vast majority of the members of a given class like verbs, nouns or adjectives.

1.1.2.2 Derivational Morphology

Derivation is the process of adding an affix to a stem, or a bound lexical morpheme to a free one, in order to create a new lexeme. Derivational morphology basically involves two general processes, affixation and compounding. The main forms of affixation are: prefixation, where the bound morpheme precedes the free morpheme, and suffixation where the order is reversed. There are other types of affixation which are infixation and circumfixation which are not common in English morphology. Under derivation there is also zero – derivation or derivation by zero – morpheme which is postulated as a further type of derivation producing new lexemes by the addition of a formally empty zero – morpheme (Hansen et al., 1982). The following examples are some zero derived forms from adjective to verb:

- i) This bin is *empty*. (adjective)

- Empty* this bin. (verb)
- ii) The door is *open*. (adjective)
- Open* the door. (verb)

Not all derivational affixes change the word category, in particular, negative affixes like *un-* or *dis-* serve merely to create nouns, adjectives, or verbs that mean the opposite of the nouns, adjectives or verbs they were formed from as in: *honest – dishonest, happy - unhappy, like - dislike*. In its broadest sense, however, derivation refers to any process which results in the creation of a new word.

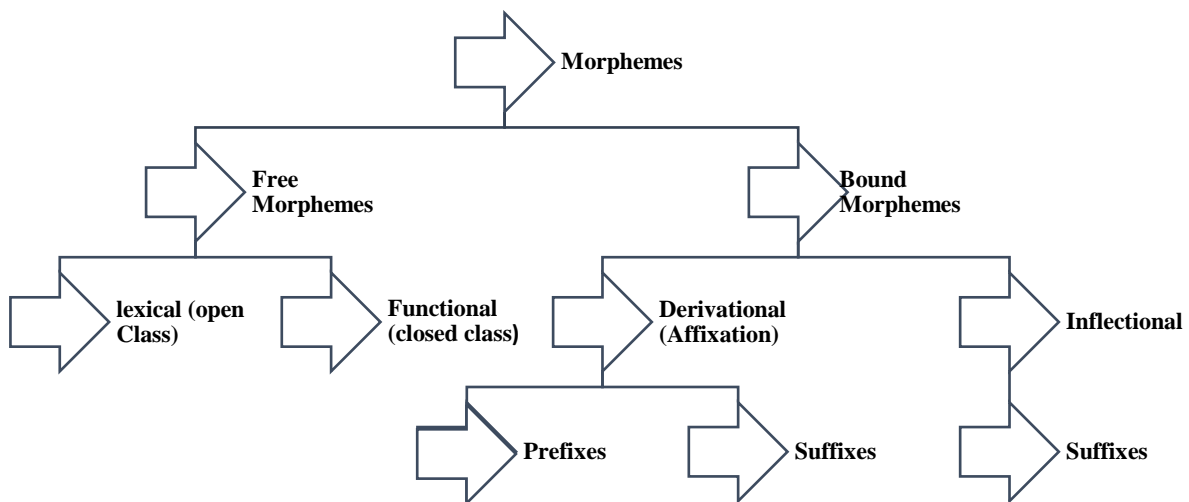
1.2 Morphemes

Any discussion of word-formation makes two assumptions: that there are such things as words, and that at least some of them are formed (Bauer, 2000:7). Words are made up of smallest units called *morphemes*. Booij (2005:8) demonstrates that morphemes are the morphological building blocks of words defined as the minimal linguistic units with a lexical or grammatical meaning. Lieber (2009:3) claims that the term *morpheme* helps in defining the term *word* in a more precise and coherent manner. Lieber (ibid:3) further states that *word* can be defined as one or more morphemes that can stand alone in a language. Unlike phonology where words are analysed in terms of sounds, morphology analyses words in terms of morphemes. It is befitting, therefore, that the concept of ‘morpheme’ be discussed at length since it is the core aspect of this study.

English forms like *dances, dancer, dancers, dancing* and *danced* can be split into pieces in which they are made up of one base *dance* and a number of elements. These elements are called morphemes. Morphemes are the smallest forms (spoken or written units) in a language that have meanings or grammatical functions (Delahunty & Garvey, 2010:76). When explaining morphemes, Lieber (2009:32) states that they are minimal units of meaning or grammatical function that are used to form words. The word *act* consists of one morpheme *act*, the word *actor* consists of two morphemes *act* and *-or* and *reactor* consists of three, *re-*, *act* and *-or*. Words that consist of one morpheme like *act, thief, help* are called *simple* words while those that are made up of more than one like *actor, helping, helper* are called *complex* words.

However, there are morphemes that create ambiguity, for instance, *carpet* is a single morpheme. The words *car* and *pet* are independent morphemes, but the word *carpet* has nothing to do with the meanings of *car* and *pet*. Consequently, Fasold (2006: 61) highlights that morphemes are the smallest units of language that combine both form and *meaning*. The following figure shows the classification of morphemes which will be discussed immediately below the figure.

Figure 2: Presents the classification of English Morphemes.



1.2.1 Bound and Free Morphemes

Morphemes are classified into two, broad types: *free* and *bound* morphemes. The former are morphemes that can stand alone as single words, for example, *sing*, *know*, *open*. The latter are morphemes that cannot stand alone but are attached to free morphemes, for example, the comparative morpheme *-er* can only occur when it is attached to adjectives or the plural morpheme *-s* can only occur when it is attached to nouns. Therefore, it could be stated that all prefixes and suffixes are bound morphemes as they only occur when they are attached to other morphemes.

Some bound morphemes are called *bound base* morphemes as they are not meaningful in isolation, for example, *cran-* must occur with *berry* because it is not meaningful in isolation, instead it has meaning when it is combined with other morphemes (Oz, 2014:89). In essence, every morpheme is either a base or an affix. A base morpheme is one that gives a word its meaning, while an affix is a morpheme that comes at the beginning (prefix) or ending (suffix) of a base or stem morpheme.

1.2.2. Lexical and Functional Morphemes

All free morphemes can be divided into two categories which are *lexical* and *functional* morphemes. On the one hand, English lexical morphemes consist of nouns, adjectives, verbs and adverbs. Examples of such morphemes are *boy*, *happy*, *sing* and *frankly*. Such words form a set of *open class* because they are open to new words. Celik (2007: 94) defines open class words as words which allow the addition of other morphemes in formation of new lexical words. English functional morphemes, on the other hand, consist of articles, prepositions, conjunctions, pronouns and determiners (quantifiers). Examples of such morphemes are *a/an*, *the*, *on*, *when*, *he*, *few* and they are referred to as *closed class* because they cannot be extended by word-formation patterns.

1.2.3 Inflectional and Derivational Morphemes

Bound morphemes can be categorized into *inflectional* and *derivational* morphemes. Hayes (2015) claims that inflectional morphemes are morphemes that show grammatical function of a word and that English inflection has only eight (8) affixes which are:-

| | | |
|-------------------------|------|--------|
| (i) Plural | -s | girls |
| (ii) Possessive | -’s | girl’s |
| (iii) Comparative | -er | older |
| (iv) Superlative | -est | oldest |
| (v) Present (agreement) | -s | plays |
| (vi) Past | -ed | played |
| (vii) Past participle | -en | eaten |

(viii) Present participle -ing eating

In short, these inflectional suffixes mark grammatical categories and do not form new lexical words, in other words, they are more relevant to syntax than to morphology.

Derivational morphemes, on the contrary, are morphemes that create new words. For example, the addition of the derivational morpheme *-er* changes the verb *read* to the noun *reader*. Sari (1988:82) asserts that derivational morphemes are bound morphemes which derive (create) new words by either changing meaning or part of speech or both. In support of Sari's definition, Yule (2010:69) reiterates that derivational morphemes are used to make words of a different lexical class from the stem. Derivational morphemes are a very significant aspect of this study; therefore, there is a separate section which discusses derivational affixes later in this chapter. The next part briefly discusses the English word formation system as it is crucial to do so before embarking on the rules of morphology since the current study deals with English derivational morphology.

1.3 English Word Formation System

According to Rith-Kasari (2013:6), there are two main processes of word formation in English, namely affixation by *derivation* and *compounding*. Bauer (1983) concurs that English word formation is subdivided into compounding (combination of more than one root, *tooth paste*) and derivation (affixation), which in turn can be class-maintaining (typically with prefixation, *do*→*undo*) or class-changing (typically with suffixation, *play*→*playful*). There are other word formation patterns or processes such as *blending*, *back-formation*, *clipping*, *conversion* which this study is not keen on. The following sections dwell on rules of morphology and word formation rules which are linguistic rules for the formation of words.

1.4 Morphological Rules

Morphological rules are both inflection and word formation rules. Morphological rule, according to Booij (2005), is a systematic abstract pattern used for the coinage of new words. Booij further indicates that morphological rules have two functions:

- i. They specify the predictable properties of the complex words listed in the lexicon.

- ii. They indicate how new words and word forms can be made.

In other words, apart from the words that are stored in a person's lexicon, there are new words that one can form using morphemes. With regard to the second function of morphological rules according to Booij, inflection is responsible for the formation of word forms while word formation processes are responsible for the creation of new words. This study concentrates primarily on derivational rules which will be introduced by word formation rules below.

1.4.1 Word Formation Rules (WFRs)

Word formation rules are principles that enable a speaker of a language to create and understand new words from old ones. In support of this definition, Yule (2006) states that other than borrowing from other languages, the vocabulary stock of a language is formed by means of what is usually known as word formation rules and, particularly, of word formation mechanisms: derivation, coinage, compounding and others. According to Hippiusley (1999), the notion of WFR has been central to approaches of derivational morphology since Chomsky's article 'Remarks on Nominalization' (Chomsky, 1970), and his emphasis on a structured lexicon. Following on the heels of Chomsky, a number of different versions were offered, (Halle, 1973; Jackendoff, 1975; Aronoff, 1976) all with a common aim. This section will briefly dwell on Halle (1973) and Aronoff (1976) models as they differ slightly and are comprehensible.

Halle's 'Prolegomena to a Theory of Word Formation' (1973) is concerned with the internal structure of morphologically complex words. In his article, Halle notes that grammars must contain word formation rules which must fall into two groups:

- i. WFRs which specify possible linear strings of morphemes, and
- ii. WFRs which derive words from other words.

Aronoff (1976) introduced the Word-Based Hypothesis, completely rejecting the idea of a morpheme as a unit used in grammar. Aronoff (1976:19) states explicitly that, just as there are syntactic rules for the creation of sentences, there must be rules for the creation of new words, rules which he terms word formation rules or WFRs. According to Stekauer and Lieber (2005), Aronoff points out that WFRs can have the following form:

a) Suffixation: $[\text{WORD}]_x \rightarrow [[\text{WORD}]_x + \text{Suf}]_y$

happy → happiness

b) Prefixation: $[\text{WORD}]_x \rightarrow [\text{Pre} + [\text{WORD}]_x]_x$

happy → unhappy

c) Compounding: $[\text{WORD}]_x, [\text{WORD}]_y \rightarrow [[\text{WORD}]_x + [\text{WORD}]_y]_z$

apron, string → apron string

In the above formulation, suffixation is supposed to change the lexical category of the base ($X \rightarrow Y$) while prefixation is not supposed to do so ($X \rightarrow X$).

Stekauer & Lieber (ibid:166) summarize a list of WFRs properties as follows:

WFRs

- take as their input only lexical items (they are thus lexical rules)
- have access to all the information associated with a given lexical item
- they consist of a formal part (attachment of an affix) and of a semantic part
- they form new words but can also be used to analyse existing words
- they can operate on possible but not existent words
- they can be more or less productive
- apply to one another's outputs (for example, *inflect-tion-al*)
- they can change all the information associated with their base

WFRs are subject to restrictions:

- on their base (they take words only as their base)
- their output (it belongs to a major lexical category and has compositional meaning)
- they select a single category they can attach to (Unitary Base Hypothesis)

One important concept relating to WFRs is *blocking*. Blocking was developed by Aronoff which he stated as “the non-occurrence of one form due to the simple existence of another” (Aronoff, 1976:41). **Oxes*, for example, is blocked by *oxen*, **stealer* is blocked by *thief*.

From the given examples, it is clear that it is a word stored in the lexicon that blocks a rival formation such as **stealer*. The main aim of blocking according to Aronoff (ibid) is to prevent the listing of synonyms in a single stem. For example, the existence of *glory* blocks the formation of **gloriosity*.

The following section outlines derivational rules which are based on WFRs and form the basis of this study.

1.4.2 Derivational Rules (DRs)

Derivation is one kind of word-formation processes which is sometimes referred to as *affixation*. At the heart of this study are derivational rules which are a set of principles that comprise affixes enabling language users to create new words. Hayes (2015) defines derivational rules as a system of rules used to expand the stock of words by forming new words from the old. In this section, the word ‘morpheme’ will be used to mean the affixes, suffix and prefix as explained by Halle (1973). Below is an example of the suffix *-able* rule which attaches to transitive verbs to form adjectives:

$$[X]_V \rightarrow [[X]_{\text{abl}}]_{\text{ADJ}}$$

break → breakable

In the above example, the adjectival derivative *breakable* has been formed from the verb base *break*. In other words, once the learner or the speaker is aware of these rules, they can be able to produce an unlimited number of words. Morphology gives us an idea about the source of words with rules and regulations on how to form new words. These derivational rules will be outlined and discussed under the categories *prefixation* and *suffixation* as they form the English affixation. It should be noted that there are numerous affixes that form the derivational rules, but this study discusses only twelve (12) rules which are commonly used.

1.4.2.1 Prefixation

Prefixation is a pattern of word-formation where a bound morpheme is attached to the front of the base morpheme. Most of the prefixes are word class-maintaining rather than word class-changing.

Rule 1. The prefix *dis-* rule attaches the morpheme *dis-* at the beginning of verb bases to form new verbs:

$$[X]_V \rightarrow [dis[X]_V]_V$$
$$[obey] \rightarrow [dis[obey]]$$
$$obey \rightarrow disobey$$

In the above rule, the attachment of the prefix *dis-* brings the basic meaning ‘not’ to the verb obey. However, this suffix can also be attached to nouns (advantage) to form new nouns (disadvantage). Again, it can be attached to adjectives (honest) to form new adjectives (dishonest). Bauer (1983:220) indicates that the prefix *dis-* attached to verbs is more productive than when it is attached to nouns and adjectives.

Rule 2. The prefix *pre-* rule attaches the derivational morpheme *pre-* to verb bases to form new verbs. The new meaning brought by this prefix is ‘before’. The rule is as thus:

$$[X]_V \rightarrow [pre[X]_V]_V$$
$$[arrange] \rightarrow [pre[arrange]]$$
$$arrange \rightarrow prearrange$$

Rule 3. The prefix *a-* rule attaches the morpheme *a-* to adjective bases to form new adjectives. Though this prefix *a-* may have numerous meanings, the basic meaning of the prefix *a-* is ‘not’.

$$[X]_{ADJ} \rightarrow [a[X]_{ADJ}]_{ADJ}$$
$$[moral] \rightarrow [a[moral]]$$
$$moral \rightarrow amoral$$

Rule 4. The prefix *mis-* rule attaches the derivational bound morpheme *mis-* to verb bases to form new verbs. The new meaning created by this prefix is ‘wrong’.

$$[X]_V \rightarrow [mis[X]_V]_V$$
$$[understand] \rightarrow [mis[understand]]$$
$$understand \rightarrow misunderstand$$

Rule 5. The prefix *re-* rule attaches the derivational morpheme *re-* to verb bases to form new verbs and the meaning of the prefix is ‘again’.

$$[X]_V \rightarrow [re[X]_V]_V$$
$$[consider] \rightarrow [re[consider]]$$

consider → reconsider

Rule 6. The prefix *in-* rule attaches the derivational bound morpheme *in-* mostly to adjectives to form new adjectives with the meaning ‘not’.

$$[X]_{ADJ} \rightarrow [in[X]_{ADJ}]_{ADJ}$$
$$[accurate] \rightarrow [in[accurate]]$$

accurate → inaccurate

1.4.2.2 Suffixation

Suffixation is a word-formation pattern which attaches a bound morpheme at the end of a base morpheme. Unlike in prefixation, in suffixation most suffixes are word class-changing in that the output changes the lexical category.

Rule 7. The suffix *-ness* rule attaches the derivational morpheme *-ness* to adjective bases to form nouns expressing a state or a condition.

$$[X]_{ADJ} \rightarrow [[X]_{ADJ} \text{ness}]_N$$
$$[sad] \rightarrow [[sad]ness]$$

sad → sadness

Rule 8. The suffix *-ment* rule attaches the morpheme *-ment* to verb bases to form abstract nouns.

$$[X]_V \rightarrow [X]_V \text{ment}]_N$$
$$[argue] \rightarrow [argue]ment]$$

argue → argument

Rule 9. The suffix *-ity* rule attaches the morpheme *-ity* to adjective bases to form abstract nouns.

$$[X]_{ADJ} \rightarrow [[X]_{ADJ} ity]_N$$
$$[obese] \rightarrow [[obese]ity]$$

obese → obesity

Rule 10. The suffix *-er* rule attaches the *-er* morpheme to verb bases to create nouns. The new meaning created by this suffix is ‘one who performs an action’.

$$[X]_V \rightarrow [[X]_V er]_N$$
$$[play] \rightarrow [[play]er]$$

play → player

Rule 11. The suffix rule *-ly* attaches the derivational morpheme *-ly* to adjective bases to form adverbs. However, there are adjectives such as (*brotherly and friendly*) which are formed by this rule.

$$[X]_{ADJ} \rightarrow [[X]_{ADJ} ly]_{ADV}$$
$$[quick] \rightarrow [[quick]ly]$$

quick → quickly

Rule 12. The suffix *-en* rule attaches the derivational morpheme *-en* to adjective bases to form causative verbs.

$$[X]_{ADJ} \rightarrow [[X]_{ADJ} en]_V$$
$$[black] \rightarrow [[black]en]$$

black → blacken

Asher (1994) summarises the derivational rules as having the following features:

DRs

- change the syntactic category of the base (sing/verb+ *-er* → singer/noun)
- apply before inflectional rules (sing + *-er* + *-s*)

- change the conceptual meaning of their base
- are more powerful than inflectional rules
- they are not fully productive

It is apparent, therefore, that derivational rules enable us to form an infinite number of words, however, there are errors that are observed in connection with the production of new words. Overgeneralization errors of morphological rules have been recorded in students learning many different languages which suggest that there are challenges related to word formation. The next section provides the reader with an overview of the concept ‘overgeneralisation’ which is what the present study is examining.

1.5 Defining the Phenomenon Overgeneralisation

To overgeneralise is to make a statement that is too general and may not be true. In linguistics, overgeneralisation, according to Ellis (1994:30), is a first and second language learning strategy, the concept of *interlanguage*, which is considered to be an interim grammar that learners build on their way to target language competence. According to scholars like (Richards, 1971; Littlewood, 1984 & Touchie, 1986), overgeneralisation is *psycholinguistically* based as it is classified under *intralingual errors* which are errors that reflect general characteristics of learning rules and are caused by a partial exposure to the target language. Mishra (2005) lists the five possible subdivisions of intralingual errors:

- Overgeneralisation
- Simplification
- Over teaching of English forms
- Overdrilling of English forms
- Exposure to the competing variety of English available

Overgeneralisation is a developmental phenomenon that results from the overly broad application of a rule. This developmental error is observed in second language learners, who overgeneralise rules as they acquire a grammar. Apart from forms such as **runned*, **womans*, there are occasional mixed forms such as **felled*, a blend of *fell* and **falled* may be used, (O’Grady et al., 1996:23). According to Ellis (1999:301), language learners in both first

and second language acquisition have been observed to produce errors like **comed* which can be explained as extensions of some general rule in the target language. Ellis (ibid) further notes that, such a process is referred to as overgeneralisation. In support of Ellis' view, McKercher (2018) concurs that overgeneralization is a phenomenon in which language - first, second or additional - apply a rule or pattern in a situation where it does not apply in the target language, resulting in a nonconventional form.

It is apparent, therefore, overgeneralisation is a phenomenon when one overextends one rule to cover instances which that rule does not apply exists and it is common in human language. Other scholars equate overgeneralisation to *overextension*, but O'Grady et al. (1996) claim that the two phenomena are different as the latter is the situation in which the meaning of the child's word is more general or inclusive than that of the corresponding adult form. For example, the word *dog* is frequently overextended by children to include *horses*, *cows* and other four legged animals, the word *daddy* is used to refer to any adult male and the word *ball* is sometimes used to refer to any round object including a *balloon*, *an egg* or a small, round *stone*.

McKercher (2018) posits that overgeneralisation is most obvious in morphology, where it is often referred to as *overregularization*, but it can also be found in the domains of argument structure, syntax and phonology. Bernferdi (2015:23) agrees that the two terms *overgeneralisation* and *overregularization* appear to mean relatively similar things or can be considered as synonymous or closely related in meaning. Bernferdi (2015) further points out that the two terms are both used in VanPatten and Benati's book (2010:120), "Overgeneralisation, a concept related to overregularization, is the extension of a rule or linguistic form to domains where it is not appropriate". In essence, the two terms are similar for most scholars, in some cases, one term is preferred over another, in other cases, the two terms are used synonymously or interchangeably. However, the present study will stick to the term *overgeneralisation*.

Research on overgeneralisation and morphological errors reveals that the learners' competence in English morphological system is low due to some factors such as inconsistency in the morphological system, overgeneralisation and misapplication of rules. It further reveals that overgeneralisation errors are caused by the rules of the target language itself (Ramadan, 2015 & Akande, 2003). In his study, Touchie (1986) claims that overgeneralisation errors involve almost all language components: the phonological,

morphological, lexical and syntactic components. However, Matiini (2016) reveals that previous studies emphasize more on the grammatical rules than the rules of morphological patterns. Matiini further states that studies of overgeneralisation on morphological rules have not been studied in detail by researchers. It is such evidence that motivated the researcher of the current study to investigate overgeneralisation of derivational rules by secondary school learners in Lesotho.

Basotho students, as second or foreign language learners of English are not an exception to this phenomenon of overgeneralisation as they tend to overgeneralise some of the English rules in their language use. In addressing this problem, this study aims to investigate overgeneralization of derivational rules by EFL secondary school learners in Lesotho and their causes. The next section presents an account of the problem which is a very key part in this research.

1.6 Problem Statement

The mastery of English as a global and target language has become highly necessary as English is one of the subjects being studied and a medium of instruction in Lesotho secondary schools. According to Ekanjume-Ilongo (2015: 1157), teaching students who have a limited understanding of English is a very demanding and scary task. This similar situation faces the teachers of English at secondary schools.

Learning English as a foreign language encompasses a lot of difficulties and challenges as the context in which the process of learning takes place is not conducive enough. Students only hear and practise the language in the classroom but not outside the classroom. Gebhard (2009:40) reiterates that in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) settings, there are fewer chances for students to use English outside the classroom as they live in places where English is neither used as the first nor the native language.

Having to internalise or learn the English rules and its structure comes as a great challenge to both the teachers and learners. One of the tools they need to master the language is the morphological knowledge, which is the knowledge that helps them to form and analyse words. In the attempt to produce these words, however, students seem to overgeneralise word formation rules. The researcher, as an English teacher at a secondary school, has

observed for some years that students overgeneralise both inflectional and derivational rules producing possible, according to the rules, but unacceptable words in the language in question.

Previous research reveals that this issue of overgeneralization is a global problem though much more attention has been given to inflection than to derivation. It is crucial, therefore, to carry out this research to find out which derivational rules are commonly overgeneralised by EFL secondary school students, their causes and how these overgeneralisations affect the students' language proficiency.

1.7 The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the present study is to identify the derivational rules which secondary school students mostly overgeneralise when forming words, and their causes. The study further examines how these overgeneralisations affect the students' language proficiency. This study also aims at improving the morphological knowledge of both the students and teachers as Tahaineh (2012) rightly points out that knowing morphology and its rules is basic for the development of learners, especially concerning vocabulary production, creativity, understanding and proficiency of a language.

1.8 Research Questions

This study intends to address these questions:

- i. Which derivational rules are commonly overgeneralised by EFL secondary school learners?
- ii. What are the causes of these overgeneralisations?
- iii. How do these overgeneralisations affect students' language proficiency?

1.9 Research Objectives

This study intends to achieve the following specific objectives:

- i. To examine the derivational rules that are commonly overgeneralised by EFL secondary school learners.
- ii. To determine the causes of these overgeneralisations.

iii. To establish how these overgeneralisations affect students' language proficiency.

1.10 Research Hypotheses

This study assumes that:

- i. The affixes which are mostly overgeneralised by EFL secondary students are noun and adjective forming affixes.
- ii. These overgeneralisations are caused by lack of both morphological knowledge and the constraints on derivational rules.
- iii. These overgeneralisations have a detrimental effect on the students' language proficiency.

1.11 Significance of the Study

This study is intended for students of English in general and English teachers as it may provide an exciting opportunity to advance their knowledge on word formation, since it introduces a variety of morphological issues such as the distinction between inflections and derivations. As it dwells much more on word formation through derivation, the study may equip teachers with strategies that can be used in word formation process so that they build their language lexicon. It may also create awareness to English students and teachers that morphological rules are not generalisable.

In addition, the study may become a powerful contributing factor to the development of English morphological awareness in the Lesotho national curriculum, as it draws the attention of curriculum developers to recognise morphology as a fundamental component of secondary school English textbooks. If the students are aware of morphological structure, they may be able to employ the English affixes correctly and their literacy skills may improve as previous studies have proved that morphological awareness is a strong predictor of the development of literacy skills, (Deacon & Kirby, 2004; McBride-Chang et al., 2005; Kuo & Anderson, 2006).

Furthermore, students may understand how English words are formed by combining affixes and roots and therefore will acquire more vocabulary which in turn may assist them in comprehending written texts and avoid overgeneralisation. Again, instruction may easily be facilitated as learners will be able to recognise the relation among words, for example, the relation between the root *educate* and the complex words *educator*, *education*, *educational*, *educated*, *uneducated*, *educating*, *educationist*, *educationally* and *educative*.

Lastly, this study may also significantly contribute to future linguistic studies, particularly in the area of teaching derivational morphology in Lesotho secondary schools and elsewhere.

1.12 Delimitation of the Study

The scope of the present study is limited to overgeneralisation of derivational rules by EFL secondary school learners in Lesotho. Under morphological rules, there are rules such as inflectional rules, compounding rules, derivational rules but this study focuses mainly on English derivational rules.

1.13 Organisation of the Study

This study is divided into 5 chapters. Chapter 1 discusses the background to the study, statement of the problem, the objectives of the study, the research questions, the hypothesis, the significance of the study and the delimitation of the study.

Chapter 2 presents the discussion on review of previous studies on overgeneralisation in morphology and how they influenced the current one. Furthermore, the chapter explains the theoretical framework of the study and outlines the tenets of the theory and their relevance to the study.

Chapter 3 provides the methodology adopted by the study as follows: the design, context and participants, data collection, data analysis and ethical considerations.

Chapter 4 analyses data collected from the students and teachers of 'Mabathoana high school. Again, the findings of the study are discussed in relation to both the research questions and the hypotheses of the study.

Chapter 5 presents the conclusions of the study, the limitations, the implications and suggestions on future.

1.14 Conclusion

This chapter has provided an overview of the background to the study by unpacking the key terms in the topic. The chapter has dwelled much on morphology as well as its rules which form the basis of the study, and overgeneralisation as the driver of the current study. The chapter has also highlighted and discussed the statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, the research questions that the study seeks to answer, the specific objectives and the research hypotheses. The significance of the study, the delimitation and the organisation of the whole study have also been stipulated. The next chapter presents the literature review and the theoretical framework which this study is premised upon.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

2.0 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the literature review and the theoretical framework which underpin the present study. It begins with review of previous studies related to the present study. The literature is thematised under different headings on overgeneralisation and derivational morphology. The chapter then delves into the theoretical framework which this dissertation is premised upon.

2.1 Literature Review

The studies below discuss overgeneralisation which seems to have been given due attention in the past years. Although the phenomenon of overgeneralisation has been widely studied over the past years, most of the attention has been on inflectional morphology than derivational morphology. This section gives an overview of the related studies detailing the setting of the study, the sample used, the methodologies employed as well as the findings of the studies. The review below is categorized into three sub-sections which are: overgeneralisation in early child second language acquisition, mostly overgeneralised morphological rules and causes of overgeneralisation in morphology.

2.1.1 Overgeneralisation in Early Child Second Language Acquisition (SLA)

Preliminary work has demonstrated that overgeneralisation is a concept of psycholinguistics mostly common in language acquisition as it is seen as a common feature of language development (Richards, 1971; Littlewood, 1984 & Touchie, 1986). The significance of the present study emanates from the fact that previous studies fail to emphasize overgeneralisation in affixational derivation and only scant work has been done in regard to derivational morphology.

One of the recent studies was conducted by Muriungi et al. (2017). The study examined the linguistic structures resulting from the interlanguage rule of overgeneralisation carried out in MirigaMieru West Division Meru County. The study employed descriptive survey method of research. The target population comprised class five pupils totaling to 720 and a sample size of 72 pupils was selected by use of random sampling. Data was analysed within the tenets of interlanguage theory.

The study established that pupils develop a system for themselves in the process of learning English known as *interlanguage* which according to Selinker (1972) is a temporary grammar which is systematic and composed of rules which are a product of five central processes namely overgeneralisation, strategies of second communication, transfer of training, strategies of second language learning and language transfer. These were found in children's utterances:

- a) I **taked* my breakfast.
- b) I **putted* my things in my bags.
- c) I met two **mens*.
- d) The *cookers* had prepared very good food.
- e) The vehicles **unappeared* from the road
- f) The **talkers* told them to cut the cake.
- g) The women **was* cooking.

The findings of Muriungi et al. are found to be essential to the current study as they affirm that students overgeneralise as a strategy for communicating in class. Sentences in (a to g) above clearly indicate that the children overgeneralise both inflectional and derivational rules. The findings presented in (d, e, f) are very crucial to the present study as they denote overgeneralised derivational suffix and prefix rules (*-er*, *un-*) respectively.

There is no doubt that this study informs the present study as the objective of the current study is to find out the mostly overgeneralised derivational rules. However, its population includes class five pupils while the current study draws data from secondary school students in Lesotho. Furthermore, Muriungi et al. analysed the study within the tenets of interlanguage theory but the present study is premised upon the tenets of Aronoff (1976) word formation theory since derivation is a word formation process.

One of the studies which investigated overgeneralisation in early child L2 acquisition is Harakchiyska (2011). In his study, Harakchiyska provided an overview of overgeneralisation

as a path of development in the acquisition of Bulgarian (as L1) and English (as L2) by Bulgarian children of two age groups. The study presented and analysed a corpus of overgeneralisation of L1 and L2 errors related to the acquisition of the inflectional morphology of the category of number of Bulgarian and English nouns. The methodology followed in the research was a combination of quantitative and qualitative means of data collection. The overgeneralisation errors in the L1 interlanguage of Bulgarian children aged 2 to 4 were collected through a longitudinal study of the speech patterns of six children, while the overgeneralisation errors in the L2 interlanguage of Bulgarian young learners of English aged 8-10 were gathered through the examination of the written works of 312 primary school children from state schools in the town of Ruse.

The presented results suggest that children do not follow the constraints of the language and tend to apply the already acquired rules of language when they form new plural forms of nouns. Most of the overgeneralised rules were about 40% seen in sentences like:

- a) I write my **homeworks* at home.
- b) I like my **foods*.
- c) My dog eats **meats*.
- d) My friend has long **hairs*.
- e) His **luggages* are here.

The above errors indicate that children overgeneralise the rules they already know as a strategy for the acquisition of L1 and L2 nouns. The present study concurs that children overgeneralise rules as a strategy to acquire a language. It however, argues that this phenomenon of overgeneralisation is not only common among children but among adults and senior students as well, hence it must be studied at secondary school level as well. Furthermore, the results presented in Harakchiyska's study denote inflectional and not derivational overgeneralisation which the present study seeks to examine.

In 2011, Saidat and Baldawi conducted a study which was a case study that described a single child's language acquisition who came from a family in which the parents were from different countries and cultures. The findings reveal that the child seemed to have established a unique way of communicating with people surrounding him who spoke English. The study shows that the child had semantic, syntactic, and morphological overgeneralised structures. Although the study does not clearly indicate those structures which were overgeneralised by the child, its importance lies in the fact that there were morphological structures which the

child overgeneralised. The aim of the current study, therefore, is to find out derivational rules which are mostly overgeneralised by secondary pupils.

In addition to the above findings, the data showed that overgeneralisation and language acquisition were primarily an innate faculty of the human mind and that imitation did play a primary role in language acquisition. The results went in favour of an Emergentist approach of language acquisition where both innateness and imitations were crucial constituents of children's acquisition of linguistic forms.

The studies reviewed in this section obviously show the existence of overgeneralisation in early child language. In the domain of morphological overgeneralisations, the cases mostly found are inflectional such as the English present and past marker (-s, ed/d), and plural noun marker (-s) as clearly seen in the studies of Muriungi et al. (2017) and Harakchiyska (2011). Some of the derivational overgeneralised rules were also seen in Muriungi et al. It is apparent, therefore, that the studies reviewed above have been beneficial to the current study as this study intends to find out the mostly overgeneralised derivational rules. Nevertheless, the present study is the departure from the above studies as it argues that overgeneralisation is not only found in children but also in secondary school students. Furthermore, this study focuses mainly on affixational derivation not morphology in general. Thus, it is imperative that it must be carried out. The next section discusses the mostly overgeneralised morphological rules.

2.1.2 Mostly Overgeneralised Morphological Rules

Altarawneh and Hajjo (2018) recently analysed the extent to which Arabic - speaking EFL learners are aware of the English plural morphemes in their acquisition of the language and whether the participants' English proficiency level may play a role in their ability to recognise these morphemes. The study designed a Grammaticality Judgement Task (GJT) which was administered to sixty (60) students from Al Ain University of Science and Technology, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to elicit data.

The sentences used in the test were adapted and modified from the corpus of contemporary American English in order to suit the students' English proficiency level. The results reveal that there is little awareness of the English plural morphemes among the Arabic - speaking EFL learners. In addition, the participants' English proficiency level had a little effect on the

participants' use of English plural morphemes. The errors produced by both groups of participants are attributed to the differences between the English morphological system and that of Arabic, overgeneralisation of certain rules related to the formation of English plural nouns such as **phenomenons* and **sheeps*.

This study informs the present study as it touches on overgeneralisation of certain rules related to the formation of English plural nouns. However, the focus of the present study is on derivational rules and not inflectional as indicated that the morpheme (-s) was overgeneralised in the words **phenomenons* and **sheeps* which is the inflection plural marker.

Similarly, Kusumawardhani (2018) examined derivational morphological errors which Grade XI SMA Negeri High school in Tengereng learners committed in their English narrative compositions. There were about 30 pieces of the students' English narrative composition used as the sample. The study used a descriptive observation method: observation, case study and survey. The findings included the following:

- i) Derivation of noun - (father was filled with *angry* with my brother)
- ii) Derivation of adverb - (the shepherd boy screamed *loud* for help)
- iii) Derivation in gerund after preposition – (walk around before *ate* porridge)
- iv) Derivation gerund after a verb – (finally they stopped *fought*)
- v) Derivation in to infinitive – (Anastasya tried to *stole* the fairy)
- vi) Derivation in present participle – (her mother hugged her *cry* baby)
- vii) Derivation in adjective – (they were getting *hungrier*)

Although the above findings indicate that the mistakes found in the learners' English narrative compositions are related to derivational morphology, the study imparts from the present study as the present focuses mainly on affixational morphology. Furthermore, although the study was conducted at high school level, the data was collected through observations, case study and survey while the current study uses online interviews, online focus groups and documents as students' compositions. It is apparent, therefore, that Kusumawardhani's study has benefitted the present study as it adopts the use of compositions for collecting data.

Another study was carried out by Tizazu in (2018) with the objective to study the nature, type, and magnitude of the errors that Arba Minch University (AMU) students committed in their

written productions. A systematic random sampling method was employed and six hundred (600) compositions were considered for the purpose of the study. The students' essays were collected and thereafter the errors and possible sources of the errors were identified. The EA framework with both qualitative and quantitative designs for data analysis and interpretation.

The findings of the study reveal the errors of the following nature: addition of the third person singular marker (-s) to verbs where the subject was in the second and first persons respectively, thus, overgeneralising the rule of third persons to other persons (*I sings*) instead of (*I sing*). Again, students used auxiliary verbs to mark grammatical information and not compound verbs. Furthermore, students marked tense on the adjective (*she is illed mentally*), whereas in English tense is marked on the verb. Lastly, students' productions had errors of adjectival double marking as in (*brightful*).

The significance of Tizazu's study to the present study lies in its findings. There was overgeneralisation in the third person singular marker (-s) and the derivational affix (-ful) was also overgeneralised. Although this study was conducted at university level, the findings clearly show that students overgeneralise, therefore, it is fundamental that the current study be carried out in order to find out the derivational rules that students mostly overgeneralise and their causes.

One study was conducted by Matiini (2016) which investigated morphological overgeneralisation of IELTS students in singular/plural nouns and suffixed nouns and whether learners can recover from them. The participants were IELTS students and the sample size was 3 students and their writing exercises were the data collection tool of the study. These students were chosen randomly as the participants of the study and their writing exercises were collected from different, several weeks. The results revealed that students overgeneralised the rules of singular/plural nouns and suffixed nouns (**peoples, *informations*).

The findings of the above study arguably affirm that students overgeneralise the noun forming suffix (-s) which is an inflectional morpheme. Nevertheless, the study fails to indicate the research design the study employed while the present study follows the qualitative approach as it seems appropriate for the stated research questions. Furthermore, the sample size looks relatively small which could have afforded Matiini an opportunity to have a wider analysis. Again, although it indicated that the plural morpheme (-s) was mostly

overgeneralised, Matiini's study, just like Altarawneh and Hajjo's study (2018), focused on inflectional morphemes while the current study dwells on derivational morphemes.

Abdelrady and Ibrahim (2015) on the other hand, conducted a study to investigate the problems that face Saudi preparatory year students at Al - Jouf University in relation to their use of grammatical and inflectional morphemes. The main focus was to investigate the occurrence of errors in inflectional morphemes and to find out the types of errors and the errors which have the highest rate of occurrence or the most frequent errors that were made by the students. The participants of this study were chosen from two groups of students who were studying English during the academic year 2013 - 2014 at Al - Jouf University. The sample of the study was both males and females who studied the same textbooks and sat for the same examination. The scripts of the students in the final examination were used to collect the data for the purpose of the study. The selection of the sample of twenty (20) male and twenty (20) female students was made randomly. In this study, the researcher referred mainly to the theory of Error Analysis.

The findings of the study revealed that the number of all error sentences was fifty-three (53) out of seventy-five (75) sentences in the data. Out of the 53 error sentences found in the data, twenty-seven (27) error sentences were omission errors (50.9%), 24 error sentences were overgeneralisation errors (45.3%) and 2 transfer errors (3.8%). There were six (6) types of errors that frequently occurred in overgeneralisation error, and those were overgeneralisation in:

- a) third person singular present
- b) past tense
- c) progressive
- d) past participle
- e) plural marker
- f) comparative adjective or adverb

While this study's findings report that 45.3% of the errors committed are overgeneralisation errors, the errors in (a to f) above which frequently occurred are all attributed to inflectional morphology. Furthermore, this study imparts from the present study in that it was conducted

at the university while the present study draws data from secondary school students in Lesotho.

In 2015, Faisyal conducted a study focusing on errors in narrative English written by students of grade 5 of KMI Islamic boarding school in Klaten (equal with grade eleven of senior high school) in order to know their classification of errors. The study followed a descriptive qualitative approach and the written narrative compositions were analysed as data. The researcher used a sample of 14 students who wrote several texts within six months from November 2013 to April 2014. The study also followed the procedure of Brown (1980) which is identification, classification, and explanation of errors in analysing the data.

After analysing the data, the researcher found 388 errors, 138 of them were morphological errors. Those errors were found in bound and free morphemes. Some of the errors found were:

- i) All **student* in the boarding school...
All students in the boarding school ...
- ii) My sisters eat **foods*.
My sisters eat food.
- iii) Do you promise to leave **lieness*?
Do you promise to leave the lie?
- iv) He is **ten* son from eleven brothers
He is the tenth son of the eleven brothers.

Just like many studies which have been reviewed above, most of the morphological errors found in this study are inflectional. However, the errors presented in (iii) and (iv) above are derivational. The finding in (iii) informs the present study as it is an indication that students overgeneralise the derivation suffix rule *-ness*. Looking at the nature of the study, which investigated errors, one cannot conclude that students overgeneralise only the derivational rule *-ness*. It is imperative, therefore, that the present study be carried out to find out more derivational rules which are overgeneralised by students.

Equally important, Akande (2003) conducted a study whose purpose was to investigate the morphological errors in both the spoken and written English usage of some Nigerian learners. The study also intended to identify the causes of learners' errors as well as suggest remedies to such errors. The sample was drawn from 250 senior secondary school students. The study employed both qualitative and quantitative designs as well as EA for data collection and data

analysis, respectively. The data collection techniques included essay writing and errors observed in the learners' spoken English.

Having analysed the data, the study revealed errors related to affixation, compounding, inflection as well as conversion. Affixation related errors included the wrong use of prefixes. Some of the errors of this nature found in the English usage of the subjects were:

- i) You are **inhonest* (dishonest).
- ii) It is **unsignificant* (insignificant).
- iii) The girl do not agreed because she is **inmatured* (immature).

In addition to the above errors, there were incorrect insertions of the past tense marker, (*the stupid boy broadcasted the news to everybody*) in place of (*the stupid boy broadcast the news to everybody*), as well as the analogous use of certain suffixes seen in (*they did the work fastly*) when they had to say (*they did the work fast*). These findings, particularly the affixational related errors in (i, ii and iii) above are very important to the current study as they seem to touch on overgeneralised derivational (*in-* and *un-*) affixes by students. Furthermore, what makes this study more crucial is that it was conducted in a secondary school. However, Akande's study investigated all morphological errors while the current study seeks to examine overgeneralisation of derivational rules and their causes.

The study further discovered that learners' errors were caused by various factors ranging from interference from learners' mother tongue, and intralingual factors in the form of misapplication of rules, overgeneralisation as well as the inconsistency of the English language caused by the polysystematic nature of the English language.

The studies reviewed in this section revealed that mostly overgeneralised morphological rules are inflectional rules as explicitly manifested in the studies of Altarawneh and Hajjo (2018), Matiini (2016) and Abdelrady and Ibrahim (2015). However, there are some studies which discovered that there were some derivational affixes that were overgeneralised by students. Akande's (2003) study discovered that senior secondary students mostly overgeneralised the derivational prefix rules (*in-* **inhonest* and *un-***unsignificant*). Similarly, Tizazu (2018) discovered that the derivational suffix (*-ful* **brightful*) was overgeneralised double marking the adjective *bright*. Equally Faisyal's (2015) study revealed that the derivational suffix (*-ness* *lieness*) also double marking the nominal *lie*. There is no doubt that these studies are beneficial to the present study as this study seeks to discover the mostly overgeneralised derivational rules. However, most of these studies did not incorporate theoretical framework

except those that used EA in their analysis. Since derivation is a word formation process, the present study is premised on Aronoff (1976) theory. The present study also adopts the EA for analysis of students' compositions in identifying overgeneralisations. The following section discusses the causes of overgeneralisations in morphology.

2.1.3 Causes of Overgeneralisation in Morphology

One of the most recent studies was carried out by Naseeb and Ibrahim (2017) which explored the learning difficulties encountered by public secondary school students in morphological derivations in Jordan. This study adopted two different research approaches: a quantitative approach in which students were pre - tested and tested in order to fulfill the reliability and validity of the results and a qualitative approach was used where six (6) teachers of those students and a supervisor working in Amma Third Educational Directorate were interviewed individually in an attempt to pinpoint and then diagnose the nature and dimensions of the dilemma from which the students were suffering. The study was composed of sixty (60) students in the 12th grade who were selected randomly from two public secondary schools for boys and girls.

The results revealed that students of public secondary schools encounter different morphological problems manifested in a great number of errors and mistakes committed in the realm of derivations and derivational suffixes, such as (repeated misuses of common derivational suffixes). It was also recorded that the problem of committing mistakes in derivational suffixes can obviously be regarded as being an accumulative problem resulting from other problems which students are encountering in relation to, for example, parts of speech, word order or sentence patterns. These obstacles, which are classified as the most serious, have the greatest effects on students' intelligibility since some derivational affixes are attached to wrong words or syllables.

This study also established that the causes of these problems are:

- a) Students are not only poor in derivations and derivational affixes, but also in other linguistic topics.
- b) Teachers are not fully qualified in teaching English courses in general and English derivations in particular and this forms the major part of the obstacles students face.

- c) Students are not given enough drills and exercises on derivations and derivational suffixes.

This study is in many ways found to be beneficial to the present study. Although the examples of the misused derivational suffixes were not listed in the research, the findings clearly affirm that secondary students overgeneralise derivational affixes. The causes of the committed derivational errors in (a, b and c) above inform the current study in an exceptional way as the present study seeks to find out the causes of derivational overgeneralisations done by students in the school in question. However, Naseeb and Ibrahim failed to identify those derivational rules which students overgeneralise. Again, the idea of not including the population sample of junior grades could arguably have afforded them the opportunity to have more cogent results and wider analysis. Therefore, it is vital that the present study must be carried out.

Usha and Kader (2016) examined the syntactic and morphological errors which secondary school students created when learning English. The study was conducted in Kerala and the sample was 280 secondary school students and 30 secondary school English language teachers who were selected randomly. Language acquisition test and questionnaire were the tools used in the study. The results of the study revealed that concord in auxiliaries, SVO pattern, articles and prepositions were the major types of syntactic errors, whereas, affixation and compound related errors, failure to use the marker (-er), and conversion related errors exemplified morphological errors. Some of the morphological errors the students made were:

- i) You are **diskind*.
- ii) She is **unhonest*.

Usha and Kader's study is essential to and significantly informs the current study since some of its findings clearly indicated that secondary students overgeneralise derivational rules as seen in (i and ii) above where the prefixes (*dis-* and *un-*) have been wrongly used.

Their study also found out that intralingual factors such as attitude of students towards language and inconsistency of English, as well as interference from L1 were the chief sources of errors as revealed from the perceptions of the teachers. The researchers also pinpoint certain suggestions to overcome the syntactic and morphological errors among secondary students. Although their study discovered the causes of the syntactic and morphological errors, it does not clearly specify the causes of the derivational overgeneralisations in (i and ii) above which the present study seeks to establish.

Another study was carried out by Ramadan (2015) with the purpose to identify causes of the morphological errors resulting from overgeneralisation. The data was drawn from the fourth-year university students majoring in English in Jordan. The students who participated in the study were twenty (20) students from Al-Zaytoonah Private University of Jordan. A writing activity was administered for twenty students and the findings resulting from this sample were analysed through the use of error analysis procedure.

The errors made in the inflectional morphemes include omission of noun plural (-s) marker – (*to our parent*) instead of (*to our parents*), addition of the (-s) marker, (*in this days*) instead of (*in this day*) which can be classified as performance errors caused by learners' carelessness. There were also double plurality errors observed through addition of plural marker (-s) to irregular plural nouns (**childrens*) resulting from overgeneralisation. Errors related to derivation include wrong use of the (-er) suffix, use of wrong prefixes and finally learners demonstrated incompetency in the use of compound words.

The findings further demonstrate that the students' competence in English morphology is poor and that the errors are caused by inconsistency in English and misapplication of rules. Although the findings of this study are key to the present study as they reveal the causes of the overgeneralised morphemes, the data was collected from university students in Jordan while the present study focuses on secondary school students in Lesotho. Furthermore, the sample size of the current study is relatively small compared to the sample size of the current study as it draws data from three secondary levels (Grade 9, Form C and E students) and from English teachers as well.

Yusuf (2012) conducted a study to examine grammatical overgeneralisation made by Level 1 learners of Firduas English Course, Pitianrowo, Nganjuk and the factors causing them. The study was designed as a descriptive qualitative research and it was a case study conducted to six (6) students who were selected using criterion - based selection technique, which means that the respondents selected must meet criterion of young learners (the level 1 students of FEC Patianrowo Nganjuk) and these respondents were taking an English course at Firdaus English Course (FEC), Patianrowo Nganjuk. The respondents were Junior High School students whose age ranged from 14-16 years old. The data was sourced from the respondents' written tasks and the results of the interview with the respondents. The instruments used to gather the data were the forms of the written tasks like composition writing.

The findings reveal that overgeneralisation does occur in the production of written tasks made by the level 1 learners of FEC, Patianrowo Nganjuk. The errors found were categorized into twelve kinds of errors: tense related errors (*my mother doesn't buys rice*), be verb-related errors (*I was felt happy*), modal-related errors (*I won't ever forgot him*), infinitive-related errors (*I went to followed*), gerund-related (*after arrived in my home*), present participle-related errors (*when arrived there*), noun clause-related errors (*my father asked who is this?*), pronoun-related errors (*he invited we to went*), article-related errors (*I will visit in a Singapore*), singular and plural-related errors (*two foots*) and word order-related errors (*steep slope river bank*). These findings from Yusuf's study arguably attest to the fact that there is overgeneralisation in students' productions and this is clearly manifested in the above errors committed by students.

The study also establishes that the causes of these overgeneralisations are inductive reasoning, which is the process in which the learners take some specific instances and then induce to a general conclusion as in the case of past tense markers -ed/-d and deductive reasoning, which is the process in which students infer general principle to specific instances as in the case of noun clause. Using mainly the qualitative approach, this study is similar to the present study as its data is also sourced from high school students. What makes this study more vital is that it also examines the causes of the overgeneralisations made by students. Nevertheless, it focuses on grammatical overgeneralisation while the current study maintains that overgeneralisation of derivational rules occurs among secondary students and that it has not been given due attention hence the existence of the current study.

The above reviewed studies are similar to the present study in different aspects. First, the three studies by (Yusuf, 2012; Usha & Kader, 2016; Naseeb & Ibrahim, 2017) were carried out at secondary schools which is the academic arena this study wishes to explore. Second, Yusuf, 2012; Naseeb & Ibrahim employed qualitative design which this study follows. Naseeb and Ibrahim interviewed English teachers in their study which is the intention of the present study to include teachers in the sample so that they can pinpoint the causes behind overgeneralisation of derivational rules. Lastly, all the studies reviewed in this section investigated the causes of morphological errors found in the students' writing. Some of the causes the studies found are:

- a) Inductive and deductive reasoning of the students
- b) Inconsistency in English

- c) Misapplication of linguistic rules
- d) Bad attitude of the learners towards English
- e) Interference from L1
- f) Teachers not qualified in teaching English as a language and English derivation
- g) Students are not given enough exercises on derivations
- h) Students' competence in English morphology is poor

It is obvious that the studies reviewed under this section greatly benefit the current study. Nevertheless, all these studies investigated morphological errors in general while the present study focuses mainly on overgeneralisation of derivational rules in a particular secondary school in Lesotho.

The next section discusses the theoretical framework which is a grounding base for the method and the analysis of this study.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

This section discusses the theoretical framework which this research is based on. According to Leedy & Ormrod (2010), a research theoretical framework refers to the conceptual underpinning of a research based on either theory or a specific conceptual model. Leedy & Ormrod further add that a theory is an organized body of concepts and principles that are intended to explain a particular situation or phenomenon. The theory and theoretical models which make up the theoretical framework of the present study shall be unpacked and broken down to relate them to the current study. The basic tenets of the theory will also be highlighted.

2.2.1 Mark Aronoff (1976)

The present study is premised on the word formation theory of Aronoff proposed in 1976 as a reaction against Halle (1973) *Prolegomena to a theory of word formation* and Jackendoff (1975). The researcher chose this theory as it is distinct from other morphological theories in addressing derivational morphology. In his monograph, Mark Aronoff outlines some of the vital concepts such as *blocking* which will later be of great benefit to this study in the analysis section.

Reacting against Halle (1973) and Jackendoff (1975) who explored the relation between the formal and semantic parts of morphological operations by means of Redundancy Rules, Aronoff established the foundations of the whole discipline of word formation. Aronoff (1976) was the first comprehensive monograph on morphology in the framework of generative grammar. Focusing on derivational processes, Aronoff improved the notion of rule and developed an articulated system of restrictions in order to constrain the excessive power of Word Formation Rules; he also envisioned the relevance of the notion of productivity and proposed a word-based morphology. The topics developed in Aronoff's work are based on the Lexicalist approach.

Lieber and Stekauer (2005) state that Aronoff (1976) argues against morpheme-based theories of morphology such as Halle (1973). According to Aronoff, morphemes cannot serve as the basis of word formation process because the very notion of morpheme is problematic in that if words are to be analysed exhaustively in morphemes, one is often left with isolated strings that cannot be interpreted as 'meaningful elements'.

In contrast to Halle, in Aronoff's model, words and affixes are represented in different levels: words are in the lexicon while affixes are parts of rules, that is to say, affixes are not lexical items. A WFR is a sort of 'instruction' to change the category of the base into another category (for example $A \rightarrow N$) and it is at the same time a phonological and semantic operation on the base (the former typically adding an affix to the base, the latter changing its meaning). In other words, Aronoff introduced the notion of word completely rejecting the idea of a morpheme as a unit used in the grammar. Aronoff emphasizes that WFRs are rules of the lexicon and as such operate completely within the lexicon.

2.2.2 Restrictions on Word Formation Rules

In his monograph, Aronoff (1976:19) states explicitly that just as there are syntactic rules for the creation of sentences, there must be rules for the creation of new words which are word formation rules. He further provides a series of restrictions to eliminate a class of possible but not actual words.

2.2.2.1 Syntax Restrictions

The base is always specified syntactically- it is always a member of a major lexical category: the adjective, verb, noun. For example, the rule which attaches the suffix *-ness* operates only on adjectives, for example, *redness*, *happiness*. The output, syntactically, must be a member of some major lexical category, the exact category being determined by the WFR which produces the word: *-ness* produces nouns while *-able* produces adjectives.

[+[X]+ness]

[+[red]+ness]

[redness]

In the above derivational rule, the output can assume the form of a labelled bracketing in which the syntactic category of both the base and the output are specified and the base is represented by a variable. So, the WFR above attaches *-ness* to form nouns from adjectives.

2.2.2.2 Semantic Restrictions

Semantically, the meaning of the output of WFR will always be a function of the meaning of the above. This function is the meaning of the WFR itself, for example, the agentive occupational suffix *-er* can be roughly paraphrased as in V+er; (one who Vs habitually or professionally as in;

V+er

Sing+er

Singer (one who sings habitually or professionally)

2.2.2.3 Morphological Restrictions

It has long been recognized that the vocabulary of English is divided, for purposes of morphology into two distinct parts, *native* and *latinate*. Thus, one sort of morphological condition on the base of a WFR is a condition on abstract morphological feature like *latinate*.

2.2.2.4 Phonological Restrictions

As it has been stated, the WFR specifies a base, as well as some operation on the base which results in a new word. This operation will usually have some phonological reflex, some morpheme which is added to the base. This operation is called the phonological operation of the WFR. The WFR specifies the phonological form of the affix and its place in relation to the base. The rule of the suffix *-ness*, for example adds *re-* to the beginning of the base, while the rule for the prefix *re-* adds *re-* to the beginning of the base. WFRs are subject to phonological restrictions when the ungrammaticality of their outputs depends exclusively on the phonological shape of the base. For example, the English noun-forming suffix *-al* attaches only to verbs with main stress on the last syllable (try [^ˈtraɪ]= trial).

2.2.3 Blocking

Aronoff (1976) developed a model of blocking which can be defined as the non – occurrence of some linguistic form, whose existence could be expected on general grounds, due to the existence of a viral form. **Oxes* for example, is blocked by *oxen*, **angerness* is blocked by *anger*. This word which does the blocking is a word which is stored in the mental dictionary.

2.2.4 The Unitary Base Hypothesis (UBH)

Aronoff (1976) proposed the Unitary Base Hypothesis which states that a given affix can only be applied to a certain word class and one affix can only create a single word class. Serrano – Dolader (2005) postulates that the UBH states that each derivational affix can be applied to bases belonging to one, and only one, of the major lexical categories. Briefly, this principle says that a given derivational affix can only be applied to a certain word class and one affix can only create a single word class.

2.3 Conclusion

This chapter has provided an overview of the literature review related to the research problem and based on research questions. These previous studies are integral because they demonstrate that this study falls within what is currently being explored while at the same time demonstrating that this study is original. Most of the studies which have been reviewed focus on either inflectional morphemes or morphological errors, while the current study

centres on overgeneralisation of derivational rules by secondary school students. As a result of this evident gap, the researcher finds it befitting to investigate this phenomenon of overgeneralisation of derivational rules. The chapter has also deliberated on the theoretical framework which guides the researcher in analyzing the data for the present study and explains further the concept of word formation rules. The next chapter presents the methodology that this study adopts.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

3.0 Introduction

This chapter outlines, in detail, the methodological measures followed in this study. In particular, it discusses the research design, the research context and the participants who partake in this study. Again, it presents the data collection methods, the data analysis procedures and finally, the ethical considerations undertaken in the study.

3.1 Research Design

The present study adopted the qualitative approach to gather data on the derivational overgeneralisations done by secondary school students. This design helped the researcher to plan and implement the study in a way that the researcher obtained intended results. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2005), qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. Denzin and Lincoln (ibid) further state that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. In other words, this approach enabled the researcher to understand derivational overgeneralisations from the perspective of the students and the English language teachers since the qualitative design describes the participants' thoughts and feelings.

The current study was informed by qualitative design which was used by most of the researchers in the reviewed related studies. Holbrook and Park (2017) purport that qualitative design in linguistics has been viewed as the most appropriate methodology in providing rich data and describing language in its natural setting. Creswell (2007) outlines characteristics of qualitative research which the present study has followed:

- a) *Natural settings* - qualitative researchers tend to collect data in the field at the site where participants' experience the issue or problem under study. This up-close information gathered by actually talking directly to people and seeing them behave and act within their context is a major characteristic.

- b) *Researcher as key instrument of data collection* - qualitative researchers collect data themselves through examining documents, observing behaviour and interviewing participants. They may use a protocol - an instrument for collecting data - but the researchers are the ones who gather the information.
- c) *Multiple sources of data* - qualitative researchers typically gather multiple forms of data, such as interviews, observations and documents, rather than rely on a single data source.
- d) *Emergent design* - the research process for qualitative researchers is emergent. This means that the initial plan for research cannot be tightly prescribed and that all phases of the process may change or shift after the researchers enter the field and begin to collect data.
- e) *Participants' meaning* - in the entire qualitative research process, the researchers keep a focus on learning the meaning that the participants hold about the problem or issue, not the meaning that the researchers bring to the research or writers from the literature.

Apart from these general characteristics, Creswell (2014) posits that there are several types of qualitative research namely: narrative inquiry, ethnography, case study, grounded theory, interview and focus groups. The current study is a case study. Lucas et al. (2018) advocate for the use of 'case study' as a methodology as opposed to a method which may be a single case or a small number of cases. A case study is a descriptive analysis of a person, group or event. Creswell (2014) demonstrates that a case study is a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed data collection involving multiple sources of information such as observations, interviews, audiovisual material, documents and reports a case description and case - based themes. The current study is a case study as it focuses on a particular secondary school in the city of Maseru in Lesotho.

3.2 Research Context

As it has been demonstrated, qualitative researchers study things in their natural context as its aim is to provide an in-depth understanding of the real-world problems. Context is therefore

crucial in qualitative research phenomena since it is explained or explored in real-world contexts. According to Starman (2013), context is very important as it:

- a) gives the readers “a thick description” of the participants’ contexts you render their behaviour, experiences, perceptions and feelings meaningful,
- b) enables the\ readers to consider whether and how the findings of your study can be transferred to their contexts.

This study drew data from a secondary school at both junior and senior levels. The school is situated in the city of Maseru, in Lesotho. The sample of the study is both the English language teachers and the students. The next section presents the situation of English Language in Lesotho secondary schools which forms part of the context.

3.2.1 The English Language Situation in Lesotho

English is one of the dominant world languages. It is spoken in five countries (Australia, Canada, New Zealand, United States of America and England) as a native language. Kachru (1985) refers to these five countries as the inner circle, while the countries where English is not the native language are referred to as the outer circle. Such countries include former British colonies in Africa and Asia. Lesotho is one of these countries, therefore, English in this country is used as an imported language not as the first language.

Lesotho is one of the EFL teaching settings. EFL is an acronym for English as a Foreign Language and it is studied by people who live in places where English is not the first language. Gebhard (2009:40) indicates that ESL (English as a Second Language) learners are different from EFL learners in that ESL learners live in places where English is used as the first or native language such as England, while EFL learners have fewer chances of using English outside the classroom since EFL settings are not settings where English is spoken as a native language. In other words, EFL learners use and hear English while they are in the classroom but not outside the classroom.

3.2.2 The Context of the School

’Mabathoana High School is a church school owned by the Sisters of the Holy Names located in Lesotho in the central area of Maseru town. The school roll is well organised into different

four departments (English, Mathematics and Science, Commercial and Technology and Sesotho) each led by a head of department. The English department in particular has ten (10) teachers including the researcher, who are evenly distributed among twenty - five (25) class streams. Each of the classes contains between forty - five (45) and fifty - five (55) male and female students as it is a mixed school.

English language in this school is studied as one of the subjects prescribed in the curriculum. It is also used as a medium of instruction and a tool of communication in the school campus. The school is a generally well performing school, both in the Junior Certificate (JC) and Lesotho General Certificate of Secondary Education (LGCSE). It must be noted, therefore, that this school is an EFL teaching setting as explained by Gebhard (2009).

3.3 Population and Sampling

The population of this study is 'Mabathoana High School students and the teachers. Pilot and Hungler (1999:37) define population as totality of all objects, subjects or members that conform to a set of specifications. The sample of the current study is the grade 9 (30), form C (30) and form E (40) students. The targeted department is the English department as word formation is partially taught as part of grammar both at the junior and senior level. Cropley (2019) warns the case study researchers that inadequate sampling poses a serious threat both to internal and external validity while an appropriate sample is important in qualitative study.

Therefore, the researcher has used purposive sampling as the goal was to find participants that provide some insight into this situation of overgeneralisation of derivational rules regardless of the general population. Ishak and Abu Bakar (2014) posit that purposive sampling refers to strategies in which the researcher exercises his or her judgement about who will provide the best perspective on the phenomenon of interest and then intentionally invites those specific perspectives into the study. This being a case study, Neuman (2009) reiterates that purposive sampling is useful for a case study in three situations:

- a) when a researcher would like to select unique cases that are especially informative,
- b) when a researcher would like to select members of a difficult-to-reach, specialised population, and

c) when a researcher wants to identify particular types of cases for in-depth investigation.

The study purposely chose grade 9 students as this is the level at which students are taught to form new words using prefixes and suffixes, so the researcher believed that these participants would help in answering the first research question which is about those affixes which are commonly misused by learners. Apart from the Grade 9 pupils, the researcher selected the Form C students, with the aim of achieving the first objective. Form E students were also selected as at this level students write continuous essays where they probably make use of such overgeneralised words. Also, the teachers who teach these classes formed part of the sample in order to avoid biased selection of sampling. The teachers' role in this research was to provide their opinions on the causes and the effects of overgeneralised words in students' written work.

3.4 Data Collection Methods

This study used qualitative inquiry methods to collect data on overgeneralisation of derivational rules. Method refers to the tools, techniques, or procedures used to generate data (Kaplan, 1964). Qualitative data is mostly non - numerical and usually descriptive in nature, that is, it is collected in the form of words and sentences. This study, therefore, used the online interviews, online focus groups and documents.

3.4.1 Online Interviews

Interview is a data collection method which involves asking questions and getting answers from participants in a research study. Kabir (2016: 202) points out that data collection is the process of gathering and measuring information on variables of interest, in an established systematic fashion and that enables one to answer stated research questions, test hypotheses and evaluate outcomes. Interviews are highly convenient for the researcher as they are a great way to learn detailed information from a single individual or several individuals.

According to Gill et al. (2008), the three common forms of interviews are *open* or *unstructured interviews*, *semi-structured* and *structured interviews*. Since the researcher wanted to get detailed data on the causes of derivational overgeneralisations from both the teachers, the semi - structured interviews were used in this study. Cropley (2019:87) concurs

that a semi-structured interview is partly structured as the researcher will already have some knowledge about the key issues and some expectations of what might emerge. Again, this approach is more flexible compared to structured interviews as according to Gill et al. (2008), semi-structured interviews allow for the discovery or elaboration of information which is important to participants but may not have previously been thought of as pertinent by the researcher.

As interviews are believed to provide a deeper understanding of phenomena than other methods, the present study used the *online interviews* to achieve that. According to Salmons (2010), there are four types of online interviews:

- a) Text based- communication is done through typed words, connection on phone, mobile device or computer with limited use of images through emotions or exchange of pictures.
- b) Video conference or video call- communication is done through audio and video, connection in video conferencing facility, computer or mobile device.
- c) Multichannel Meeting- communication through audio, video, text and shared applications.
- d) Immersive 3-D Environment- communication through audio or text and visual exchange.

This study adopted the *text based online interview* as it is cheaper than these other types. Since interviews can be conducted through questionnaires, the researcher designed an online questionnaire and sent it in the teachers' WhatsApp group for teachers to access it and answer the interview questions. The teachers then sent back the completed questionnaires through the electronic mail of the researcher.

3.4.2 Online Focus Groups

The current study also employed online focus groups technique to collect data. Focus groups according to Morgan (1996: 130) are an established method of collecting research data, bringing together people with mutual characteristics or interests to offer individual and collective insights into particular topics. According to Stone & Logan (2018), this method has proved to be a highly flexible and adaptable tool which can collect data across a wide range

of research topics and cultural settings. With this method therefore, the researcher organised students into manageable groups and created WhatsApp groups for both levels (grade 9 and form C students). Barrett & Twycross (2018) concur that in this method, the researcher speaks with a group of participants about issues related to the research question.

Due to the fact that the population of this study was geographically dispersed, the researcher made use of *online focus groups*. Online focus groups technique emerged as a qualitative data collection approach which capitalises on the increasing use of the internet as a communication tool. They currently take two forms: synchronous, involving real-time live chat comparable to conversational interactions of face-to-face focus groups or asynchronous, using ‘static’ text-based communication such as forums and email lists (Fox et al., 2007). It is on account of the following advantages stipulated by Oringderff (2004) that the current study adopted the online focus groups:

- a) There are no time limits, so a focus group can run as long or short as required.
- b) Online focus groups can be assembled and disassembled quickly.
- c) Online focus groups are less expensive to run and can often be conducted using free or inexpensive software.
- d) As for the sample and selection, many more respondents can be included because the online environment is not affected by the size of the group.
- e) Also, wider geographical access is possible because the internet is available in urban and remote locations.
- f) In a case where the software can capture real-time discussions, there is no need to manually transcribe the session. This does not only save time, but it also enhances accuracy in the written transcripts.

Between the two types of online focus groups, the current study used the *synchronous online focus groups*. This type was suitable for this study as it is closest to face-to-face focus groups. According to Oringderff (2004), synchronous online focus groups are similar to traditional face-to-face focus groups as they feature real time interaction between the moderator and participants, though they use chatrooms or focus group software packages instead of real classrooms.

In order to collect data from students through online focus groups, the researcher used the WhatsApp as it was an affordable communication tool for students and the researcher as well. The researcher prepared word formation exercises and then sent them in the groups for the participants to access and answer them. In return, students sent back the answers to the researcher's WhatsApp mobile in order to avoid copying from others. In other words, individual answers were only seen by the researcher and no other participants. It should be pointed out that only participants who possess mobile devices participated in this method.

3.4.3 Documents (Compositions)

In this study, the researcher supplemented online focus groups and interviews with documents of form E students' written compositions which had previously been marked by the researcher herself. The researcher was of the belief that the choice of written compositions would be effective particularly in analysing derivational overgeneralisations done by students. According to Denzin (1970: 291), analysing documents is often used in combination with other qualitative research methods as a means of *triangulation* which is the combination of methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon. In other words, by triangulating data, the researcher attempted to reduce the impact of potential biases that could exist with the use of one method in this study. Bowen (2009) asserts that documentary evidence is combined with data from interviews and observations to minimise bias and to provide a confluence of evidence that breeds credibility. Bowen further states that there are many reasons why researchers choose to use document analysis:

- a) Documents are an efficient and effective way of gathering data because they are manageable and practical resources.
- b) Documents come in a variety of forms, making them very accessible and reliable sources of data collection.
- c) Documents are stable 'non-reactive' data sources, meaning that they can be read and reviewed multiple times and remain unchanged by the researcher.
- d) Obtaining and analysing documents is often far more cost and time efficient than conducting one's own experiments.
- e) Documents can also contain data that can no longer be observed, provide details that informants have forgotten and can track change and development.

Although Denzin (1979) argues that some documents may only provide a small amount of useful data or sometimes none at all, the researcher felt that it was vital to also examine the amount of overgeneralisation occurrences in students' continuous writing, therefore compositions were an effective way of collecting such data. Besides, the researcher did not mainly rely on documents as there were some exercises which had been organised to gather such data. In other words, the researcher did not rely solely on the compositions for all the necessary information required.

These compositions were selected from a sample of 40 compositions, which is the number of form E students. As this was the class taught by the researcher herself, the compositions that were analysed had already been marked by the researcher as assessment for February monthly test in the year 2020. In order to identify derivational overgeneralisations, the researcher used the EA procedure which enabled classification of errors into intralingual and interlingual categories. When the errors had been categorized, the focus became on intralingual errors as overgeneralisation is the source of those errors. Lastly, the researcher identified compositions that had those sentences in which derivational overgeneralisations had occurred.

3.5 Data Analysis

The qualitative data collected in this study was analysed in a descriptive way as the collected data was in the form of words. Marshall and Rossman (1999:150) describe data analysis as the process of bringing order, structure and meaning to the mass of collected data. In other words, after gathering large amounts of data, the researcher reduced it to make sense of it. The researcher used the descriptive method of analysis since this study is qualitative in nature. The study employed two analytic tools which are the theoretical framework analysis by Aronoff 1976 stipulated in his monograph, and error analysis (EA) which was developed by Corder in the 1970s. The role of the theoretical framework approach to qualitative data analysis according to Nawaz (2017) guides the researcher to organise, interpret and present the findings effectively.

The students' word formation exercises were marked by the subject teacher (the researcher as an English teacher) using a specific rubric¹ for assessing students' written work. This rubric

¹ Rubric refers to a set of instructions or rules according to Hornby (2010).

comprised of the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary to evaluate the correctness of the words that had been formed by the students and the composition marking descriptors which is based on content and language. Focusing mainly on the language, the researcher concentrated on grammatical mistakes where wrongly formed words would be identified. The marking was also guided by the base and output principles of word formation stipulated in Aronoff (1976). These principles specify that the base and the output should be the members of the four (verb, adverb, noun and adjective) main lexical categories. Influenced by a number of researchers such as (Abdelrady & Ibrahim, 2015; Wardhani, 2018) who applied the procedural analysis of EA, this study also applied the EA steps as stipulated by Ellis (1994):

- a) Collection of data
- b) Identification of errors in the data
- c) Classification or description of the types of errors
- d) Evaluation of errors

One reason behind using the EA in this study is that Brown (1994) advocates that error analysis has great value in classroom research and it is useful in second or foreign language learning as it reveals problematic areas to teachers. EA was later defined by James (1998) as "the process of determining the incidence, nature, causes and consequences of unsuccessful language". It was for this reason that the researcher found this tool appropriate for the current study as some of the objectives were to determine the incidences of overgeneralised rules and find the causes of the commonly overgeneralised rules.

The classification or description of the types of errors which is step three (3) according to Ellis (1994) were data specific. That is to say, the errors were traced to one of the major sources of errors which is overgeneralisation as the researcher was not interested in other sources of errors such as ignorance of rule restrictions and incomplete application of rules as stipulated by Richards (1971). In essence, the data was analysed within the tenets of the outlined theoretical framework by Aronoff (1976) and some steps involved in undertaking EA. Aronoff's (1976) tenets are as follows:

- a) A derivational rule is an operation on a *base*, accompanied by various conditions on the base.
- b) The base is always a *word*, a member of a *lexical category*.

c) The operation assigns a boundary to the affix it produces, this is where the concept of *blocking* comes in to restrict unacceptable words.

d) The *output* must be a specific major lexical category.

The next section presents the ethical considerations undertaken in this study.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

The researcher has presented a range of methods used in this research. In addition to the selection of appropriate research methodology and methods is the importance of the ethical considerations around conducting a research. In the present study, the researcher further considered the fundamentals of ethical research involving human participants. This research involved secondary school students and it is therefore strongly emphasized that children's rights should be cautiously protected throughout the entire research process. Bearing this in mind, the researcher was fully aware that the participants, who are students, were central people in this research and therefore had to protect their rights. According to Fouka and Mantzourou (2011), the following are major ethical issues in conducting research which the researcher abided by in this research:

- a) Informed consent
- b) Beneficence
- c) Respect for anonymity and confidentiality
- d) Respect for privacy

3.6.1 Informed Consent

According to Armiger (1997), informed consent is the major ethical issue in conducting research and it means that a person knowingly, voluntarily and intelligently, and in a clear and manifest way, gives his consent. The researcher therefore informed the participants (both the students and the teachers) about the research to make them aware about the process they were engaging in and why their participation was required. Again, the researcher also informed the participants of the objectives of the study in order to influence willingness to participate.

3.6.2 Beneficence

The ethical principle of beneficence refers to “*be of benefit, do not harm*” and it includes the professional mandate to do effective and significant research so as to better serve and promote the welfare of our constituents (Beauchamp & Childres, 2001). During the data collection process, the researcher ensured that neither the students nor the teachers got harmed, socially or emotionally while participating, and conscious attempts were made to encourage voluntary participation.

3.6.3 Anonymity and Confidentiality

The researcher collected confidential data with the permission of the principal and the participants. Anonymity is protected when the subject’s identity cannot be linked with personal responses while confidentiality is the management of private information by the researcher in order to protect the subject’s identity (Fonka & Mantzorou, 2011). The researcher preserved the anonymity and confidentiality of the participants by not revealing their names and identity. Again, the researcher kept the data confidential and in presenting the findings of the study, the participants’ names were not used.

3.6.4 Privacy

According to Armiger (1997), studies based upon people’s perceptions must respect the privacy and psychological well-being of the individuals studied. The researcher conducted the research with the consent of the head of the department and the concerned teachers. The participants were also made aware that the private information collected would only be accessible to the researcher, the supervisor and the department of English Language and Linguistics at the National University of Lesotho. On completion of the study, all the data was disposed of as it had already informed the topic under study.

3.7 Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the strengths of the chosen methodology and methods of data collection which this study has followed. Particularly, the researcher has highlighted the

reasons why the selected qualitative design and the triangulation of the three methods of data collection (online focus groups, online interviews and documents in the form of written compositions) were relevant to the current study. Moreover, the context, population and sample of the study have been discussed. The study has also articulated the ethical considerations which this study has followed. The next chapter presents a detailed analysis, findings and discussion of the collected data.

CHAPTER FOUR

Data Analysis and Findings

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the analysis, the findings and the interpretations of the data collected from online interviews, online focus groups and documents. It begins by highlighting the purpose of the study which is generated from the research problem. It then explains the procedure followed in the analysis of the data, then the presentation of the findings from three data sets. It then offers a discursive analysis and interpretation of the findings and analysis per research question and hypothesis. The next section presents the data analysis procedure.

4.1 Data Analysis Procedure

The main purpose of this study is to investigate which derivational rules are commonly overgeneralised by EFL secondary students, the causes and effects of these overgeneralisations on the students' language proficiency. As part of the implementation of this purpose, students (grade 9=30, form C=30 and form E=40 students) and English language teachers at 'Mabathoana High School participated in the study as respondents. Three data sets collected from 100 students and 9 English language teachers from online focus groups, documents (compositions) and online interviews were analysed. The data sets used in the analysis are shown in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Data sets analysed in the study.

| Instrument | Purpose | Targeted research question |
|--|--|---|
| Online focus groups: grammar exercises | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● To gather data from grade 9 and form C students ● To identify overgeneralised derivational rules | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Which derivational rules are commonly overgeneralised? |
| Documents: compositions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● To collect data from form E students ● To determine which overgeneralisations mostly occur in students' continuous writing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Which derivational rules are commonly overgeneralised in continuous writing? |
| Online interviews: questionnaires | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● To gather data from English Language teachers ● To determine the causes and effects of derivational rules overgeneralisations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What are the causes of the overgeneralisations? ● How do they affect the students' language proficiency? |

4.1.1 Online Focus Groups (Word Formation Exercises)

The researcher began by creating two WhatsApp groups. The first one was the Grade 9 English Language group which consisted of 30 students, while the second one was the Form C English Language group which was made up of 30 students. For each group, there were two different pieces of work on word formation based on the level of their grades. After setting the exercises, the researcher then submitted them to the supervisor for examination. When the supervisor had examined them, the researcher then posted them in the groups with very clear instructions of forming words using appropriate suffixes and prefixes and for each exercise there was an example to guide the students.

The students were warned not to copy either from their dictionaries or from the internet. The researcher made the students aware that they should use their exercise books to answer the questions and then individually submit the picture of their completed work in the researcher's

inbox, that is to the teacher's WhatsApp mobile phone number. The researcher made the learners aware that they should feel at ease as the responses they submitted were confidential since they did not have to display their work in the group.

After the learners had all submitted their work to the researcher's WhatsApp mobile number, the researcher then printed all the pictures of the completed work in order to mark them. The researcher used the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary to mark the students' work, paying attention to all errors including misspelling. The process of marking helped me to identify whether there were any instances of overgeneralised words.

The next phase of this data set was to group these marked scripts according to common characteristics. According to Ibrahim (2015), this stage is called classification or categorisation of data which is the process of arranging in classes according to some resemblance. After classifying the marked scripts, the researcher then studied them carefully to determine whether any themes can be identified. The themes that emerged which are word classes are discussed later in this chapter.

4.1.2 Documents (Compositions)

There were 40 compositions gathered from the form E students and copies of originals were made since the compositions were in the students' exercise books. The researcher explored the content to determine whether there were any instances connected to overgeneralisation. It should be noted that it was very easy to organise this data set as the compositions had previously been marked by the researcher herself in her capacity as the subject teacher of the group in question. I then organised the compositions in relation to the central question of the research (See Table 1).

4.1.3 Online Interviews (Questionnaires)

The online interviews were conducted after the online focus groups data collection was done. The researcher began by drafting and setting 9 questions for the English teachers and then presented the questions to the supervisor for approval. Most of these questions were designed in such a manner that they addressed the research questions while others were general questions on word formation. When the questions had been approved, an online questionnaire composed of the set questions was created through an online link. In other words, in

conducting the interviews, the researcher used an online questionnaire. Using our English Language department WhatsApp group, the researcher then posted the link so that the teachers could access the questions. The WhatsApp group consisted of 11 English language teachers who taught all the levels from Grade 8 to Form E.

The questionnaire was structured in a manner that the first part was a very brief summary of the objective of the study, whose main purpose was to give the teachers an idea of what the study is about. The first two questions covered information on overgeneralised suffixes and prefixes based on the exercises that were set for the students. The other 8 questions that followed were based on the factors which were associated with the learning of English word formation at secondary school. These questions were set in such a way that the respondents selected (yes or no) option.

When the teachers had individually attempted the questions through the link they had accessed in the group, they submitted the questionnaire through the electronic mail of the researcher. The researcher then downloaded the completed questionnaires together with a clear report and printed them in order to interpret it and to determine whether there were any emerging themes. The next section presents the findings of the study.

4.2 Presentation of the Findings

This section presents the findings of the research carried out in the case study secondary school. As it has been stated earlier, the researcher gathered data using three data collection methods which are: online focus groups for students, online interviews for teachers and documents. The data is therefore presented in a form of tables according to the order of the listed instruments.

4.2.1 Online Focus Groups (Word Formation Exercises)

It should be noted that there were two groups (Grade 9=30 and Form C=30 students) and each group attempted two different word formation exercises. In this subsection, findings from two exercises which were attempted by grade 9 students are presented first and findings from two exercises from form C students follow. All the four (4) exercises were assessed and marked using the dictionary. Below is the presentation of the findings of exercise 1 attempted by grade 9 students.

Table 2: Findings of exercise 1 (grade 9 students) of wrongly formed words.

| Prefix un- | Freq. | Prefix in- | Freq. | Prefix dis- | Freq. |
|----------------|-------|----------------|-------|-----------------|-------|
| *untrust | 6 | *inpolite | 1 | *disresponsible | 4 |
| *unregular | 1 | *impossible | 4 | *disunderstand | 1 |
| *unresponsible | 3 | *inresponsible | 1 | *dispolite | 1 |
| *unpolite | 4 | *inattractive | 1 | | |
| *unpossible | 1 | | | | |
| *illegal | 2 | | | | |
| *uncontinue | 1 | | | | |
| *unhonest | 1 | | | | |
| TOTAL | 19 | | 7 | | 6 |

The above table presents the summary of the derivational morphemes that were generalised by grade 9 students. All the words that were marked wrong were examined closely to determine whether there were any overgeneralisations among those wrong words. Of the 30 students, 19 overgeneralised the prefix *un-*, which is the prefix that forms the negative derivative. It should be observed that the word **untrust* has 6 occurrences which is the highest number, followed by the word **unpolite* with four occurrences.

Of the 30 students, 7 overgeneralised the prefix *in-*, with the word **impossible* having the highest number (4) of occurrences. The table also shows that out of 30 students, 6 overgeneralised the prefix *dis-* with the word **disresponsible* having the highest occurrences. The prefixes *in-* and *dis-* form negative derivatives. In this exercise, therefore, there were 32 instances of overgeneralisation, with the prefix *un-* having the highest number (19) of occurrences. The next table shows the findings of exercise 2 which was attempted by the grade 9 students.

Table 3: Findings of exercise 2 (grade 9) students.

| Suffix -ness | Freq. | Suffix -ful | Freq. | Suffix -ment | Freq. |
|--------------|-------|--------------|-------|--------------|-------|
| *educateness | 1 | *educateful | 1 | *angerment | 1 |
| *sincereness | 3 | *poorfulness | 1 | | |
| *angerness | 4 | | | | |
| *cookness | 1 | | | | |
| *beautiness | 3 | | | | |
| TOTAL | 12 | | 2 | | 1 |

Table 3 above shows the three suffixes: *-ness*, *-ful* and *-ment* which were overgeneralised by the students. The prefix *-ness* has been overgeneralised by 12 students with the word **angerness* having 4 occurrences, followed by **sincereness* and **beautiness*. The suffix *-ful* has 2 occurrences while the suffix *-ment* has been overgeneralised once. In this exercise there were 15 instances of overgeneralisation. The two suffixes *-ness* and *-ment* are noun forming suffixes while the suffix *-ful* forms adjective derivatives. The following table presents the findings of exercise 1 attempted by form E students.

Table 4: Findings of exercise 1 (form C) students.

| -ify | Freq. | -ness | Freq. | -ation | Freq. | -able | Freq. |
|------------|-------|---------------|-------|--------------|-------|--------------|-------|
| *shorttify | 1 | *powerness | 1 | *preferation | 1 | *concludable | 1 |
| *sweetify | 1 | *discoverness | 2 | | | *sweetable | 1 |
| *warmfy | 1 | *strongness | 1 | | | *warmable | 1 |
| | | *reactness | 1 | | | | |
| TOTAL | 3 | | 5 | | 1 | | 3 |

The table above displays the findings of exercise 1 that was answered by 30 students. In this exercise, there were four derivational morphemes that were overgeneralised by students. The

suffix *-ness* has the highest number (5) of occurrences followed by the suffixes *-ify* and *-able*. The suffix *-ation* has only 1 occurrence. The suffixes *-ness* and *-ation* are noun forming suffixes. The suffix *-ify* forms verbs while the suffix *-able* forms adjectives. In this exercise there were 12 instances of overgeneralised derivational morphemes. The following table presents the findings of exercise 2 by form C students.

Table 5: Findings of exercise 2 (form C) students.

| -ify | Freq. | -ful | Frq. | -ness | Freq. | -ise | Freq. |
|--------------|----------|-------------|----------|-------------|----------|------------|----------|
| *creativify | 2 | *attractful | 1 | *furiness | 4 | *dangerise | 3 |
| | | | | *careness | 2 | | |
| | | | | *beautiness | 1 | | |
| | | | | *createness | 1 | | |
| TOTAL | 2 | | 1 | | 8 | | 3 |

Table 5 above shows the findings of the last exercise that was given to form C students. In this exercise, four derivational morphemes were overgeneralised. The suffix *-ness* was overgeneralised by 8 learners with the word **furiousness* having the highest number (4) of occurrences. The other 3 suffixes; *-ify* occurs 2 times, *-ful* occurs once (1) and *-ise* occurs 3 times. The suffixes *-ify* and *-ise* are verb forming morphemes. The total number of overgeneralised derivational morphemes in this exercise was 11. The next table presents the findings of the data collected by interviews from teachers.

4.2.2 Online Teacher Interviews (Questionnaires)

Table 6: Findings of question 1 from the questionnaire.

| Wrongly formed words | No. of respondents out of 9 | Percentage % |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------|
| *beautiness | 7 | 77% |
| *attractful | 5 | 55% |
| *incomplete | 5 | 55% |
| *ineffective | 7 | 77% |
| *inpossible | 6 | 67% |
| *cooker (someone who cooks) | 5 | 55% |
| *dispel | 5 | 55% |
| *honestion | 4 | 44% |

The table above shows words which the respondents (teachers) frequently come across in students' written work. Of the 9 teachers, 7 teachers indicated that they usually come across the words **beautiness* and **unefective*. 6 teachers out of 9 usually notice the word **inpossible*. Furthermore, 5 teachers out of 9 indicated that they frequently come across the words **attractful*, **imcomplete*, *cooker* (for someone who cooks) and **disspel*. The next table presents questions 2-9 of which were of the same pattern, while question 1 was different hence presented separately.

Table 7: An overview of the questionnaire responses by teachers (question2-9).

| Statement / question | Agree | % | disagree | % |
|--|-------|-------|----------|-------|
| 2.Word formation is the most important aspect to vocabulary building in L2 learning. | 9 | 100% | | |
| 3.Can reading improve the learners' skill of forming words appropriately? | 5 | 55.5% | 4 | 44.4% |
| 4.The teaching of word formation is important in helping students do well in English language. | 9 | 100% | | |
| 5.The knowledge of word formation rules is very important to both the English language teacher and the student. | 9 | 100% | | |
| 6.As an English language teacher, are you aware of the rules of word formation through suffixes and prefixes? | 3 | 33.3% | 6 | 66.6% |
| 7.Are you aware of restrictions in word formation rules, for example, the suffix -able attaches to transitive verbs only to form adjectives and not to intransitive verbs? | 3 | 33.3% | 6 | 66.6% |
| 8.Students overgeneralise some suffixes and prefixes due to lack of knowledge of word formation rules. | 9 | 100% | | |
| 9.These overgeneralised suffixes and prefixes which result to errors affect the students' language proficiency negatively. | 9 | 100% | | |

As Table 7 shows, all the teachers are of the belief that word formation is key to vocabulary building and that the knowledge and teaching of word formation are very important to both the English language teacher and the student. Furthermore, the table illustrates that all the 9 teachers are of the view that students lack knowledge of the rules of word formation and that hinders their language proficiency. This information is shown in statements: 2, 4, 5, 8 and 9.

Question 3, however, shows that 5 teachers out of 9 strongly agree that reading can improve the learners' skill of word formation. We also see a different pattern in question 6 where only 3 teachers out of 9 agree that they are aware of the rules that govern word formation. The same tendency can also be seen about question 7, which shows that 3 teachers out of 9 have the knowledge of word formation restrictions while 6 do not have such knowledge. The next presentation is on the findings of the compositions which were analysed as documents.

4.2.3 Documents (Compositions)

This subsection presents findings of the corpus as it appears in the students' compositions on the topic: A football match you witnessed. Four (4) compositions out of 40 were selected as the sample as they seemed to have the information that the researcher needed. Below is the presentation of the findings of the data collected from the students' compositions.

Table 8: Findings on documents (form E students' compositions).

| Sentence as it appears in the composition | Wrong derivative |
|--|------------------|
| 1. When the game went on, there were boys dressed in black and wearing all-star shoes, these boys were <i>stealers</i> , they stole money from people's pockets. | stealers |
| 2. The boys from our school won because of their <i>strengthness</i> and skills. | strengthness |
| 3. The referee judged <i>incorrectly</i> and that made the fans to be very angry and unruly. | incorrectly |
| 4. We went into the buses very happy because we won. When we arrived in the bus, some boys from back city started drinking beer because of <i>exiteness</i> . | exiteness |

The above table shows 4 sentences which were part of the body of the compositions written by form E students. The words in italics in each sentence are words which seem to have been wrongly formed as they do not exist in the authorised dictionaries. All in all, there were only 4 words (*stealers*, *strengthness*, *incorrectly*, *exiteness*) that were found to be wrongly formed

in the students' compositions. The next section presents the discussion based on the themes that emerged as the data was presented.

4.3 Discussion

The analysis of the data and discussion of the findings is thematically done premised on the research questions that were posed earlier in Chapter 1. The discussion is also based on Error Analysis procedure and the principles of Aronoff (1976) as stipulated in the theoretical framework. The discussion will first be conducted based on research tools followed by the analysis of the research questions.

4.3.1 Online Focus Groups

The prefixes are discussed first, followed by the suffixes.

4.3.1.1 Prefixes

One of the main functions of derivational morphology is to create new words from old ones. Prefixes are attached to the front of the base or stem to alter the meaning but do not always change the function of the word to which they are prefixed. Suffixes are attached to the end of the base and they commonly change the class of the word to which they are attached.

As it is presented in Table 2, Section 4.3.1, it became clear that the affixes that were overgeneralised in the first exercise were prefixes which are the first category. The prefix *un-* has been overgeneralised by 19 students with the words:

Table 9: The prefix un- overgeneralised.

| Overgeneralised form | Correct form |
|----------------------|----------------------|
| ● *untrust | ● mistrust, distrust |
| ● *unregular | ● irregular |
| ● *unresponsible | ● irresponsible |
| ● *unpolite | ● impolite |
| ● *unpossible | ● impossible |
| ● *unlegal | ● illegal |
| ● *uncontinue | ● discontinue |
| ● *unhonest | ● dishonest |

According to Plag (2002:124), the prefix *un-* can attach to verbs and sometimes nouns to yield a reversative or privative (remove X) meaning: *unwind, unwrap, unsaddle, uncork*. The prefix is also used to negate simple and derived adjectives: *uncomplicated, unhappy, unsuccessful*. Nouns are also attested with *un-*, usually expressing ‘absence of X’: *unease, unbelief*. In the above list, the prefix *un-* has been overgeneralised in the attempt to form the negative derivatives. It is evident that this prefix is the most common one to the respondents, that is, whenever they do not know the appropriate prefix they tend to use the prefix *un-*.

The prefix *in-* has also been overgeneralised by 7 respondents in the words:

*inpolite (1) *instead of* impolite

*inpossible (4) *instead of* impossible

*inresponsible (1) *instead of* irresponsible

*inattractive (1) *instead of* unattractive

According to Plag (2002:126), the negative prefix *in-* is exclusively found with Latinate² adjectives and has the general negative meaning ‘not’: *incomprehensible, inactive*. This

² Latinate: of, relating to or derived from Latin (Hornby 2010).

prefix like its relative prefix *un-* does not change the word class but it yields a lexical item of the same category as the original base.

The last prefix that is also illustrated in Table 2 as overgeneralised by 6 respondents is *dis-* in the following words:

*disresponsible (4) *instead of* irresponsible

*disunderstand (1) *instead of* misunderstand

*dispolite (1) *instead of* impolite

Aronoff (1976) demonstrates that this prefix forms reversative verbs from foreign verbal bases: *disassemble*, *discharge*, *disconnect*. Apart from deriving reversative verbs, this suffix is also used to negate the verb base the same way as the clausal negation does: *disagree* ‘not agree’, *dislike* ‘not like’. Plag (2002: 125) asserts that the prefix *dis-* is also found inside nouns and nominalisations although it is often unclear whether *dis-* is prefixed to the nominalisation [*dis-[organisation]*] or to the verb before the nominalising suffix was attached [*disorganis]-ation*]. Plag (ibid) further states that *dis-* also occurs in lexicalised adjectives with the meaning ‘not X’: *dishonest*, *dispassionate*, *disproportional*.

These findings of the above discussed prefixes conform closely to those identified in a study that was conducted by Akande (2003) which investigated morphological errors in the English usage of some Nigerian learners, causes and remedies. The study showed that prefix related errors constituted 11% of the morphological errors. The study discovered that ESL secondary learners make use of prefixes incorrectly and some of the errors that were found in the English usage of the subjects were:

i) You are *inhonest. (dishonest)

ii) It is *unsignificant. (insignificant)

iii) The girl do not agreed because she is *inmatured. (immature)

Although such errors constituted 11% of the overall morphological errors, it is evident that this phenomenon of overgeneralising particularly these two prefixes (*in-*, *un-*) is common among secondary students.

One of the studies that was reviewed in the present study which came up with similar findings was conducted by Usha and Kader (2016). Their study investigated syntactic and

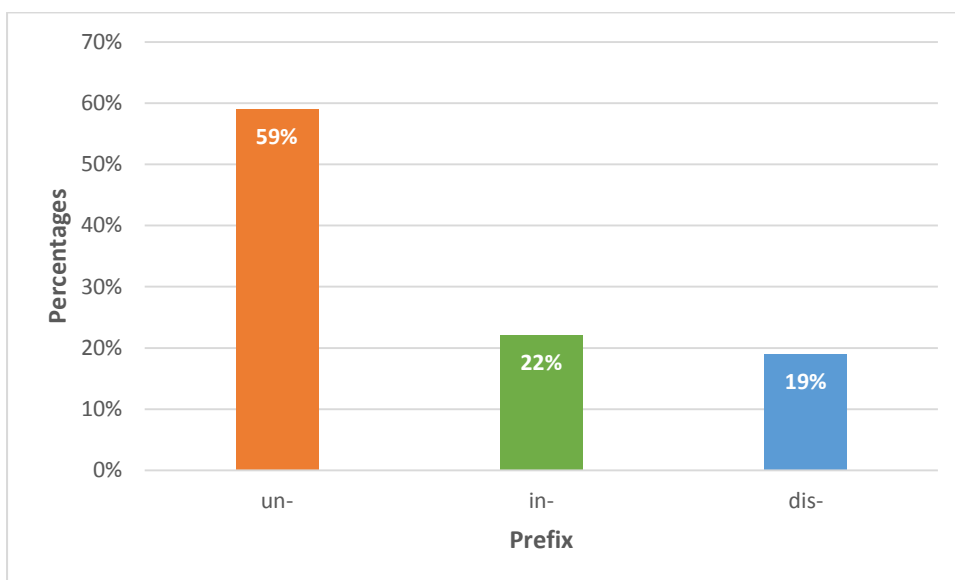
morphological error analysis in English language among secondary students of Kerala. The study indicated that some of the errors that were made by the students were:

- i) You are *diskind. (unkind)
- ii) She is *unhonest. (dishonest)

Similarly, the error committed in (i) above is also a clear indication that the misuse of the prefix dis- is common among secondary learners.

Although there are many other prefixes that exist in English, the current study has established through its findings that the three prefixes: un-, in and dis- are commonly overgeneralised by secondary students of 'Mabathoana high school. Below is a visual presentation of the occurrences of the overgeneralised prefixes:

Figure 3: The summary of the overgeneralised prefixes.



4.3.1.2 Suffixes

As seen in tables 3, 4 and 5, the learner corpus shows the second category of overgeneralisation of the following suffixes: *-ness*, *-ment*, *-tion* *-ful*, *-able*, *-ify* and *-ise*. In this sub-section, the discussion is done in the order in which the suffixes have been listed above. It should be noted that the tables 3, 4 and 5 represent three (3) different exercises on word formation which were gathered through online WhatsApp groups.

The suffix **-ness** according to Plag (2002:123) is a quality noun forming suffix which is perhaps the most productive suffix of English. With regard to base words, *-ness* is much less restrictive than its close semantic relative *-ity* as it can attach to practically any adjective. However, the study has discovered that students attach the suffix to verbs and not to adjectives and produce unacceptable forms like:

*createness

*educateness

*discoverness

*reactness

Furthermore, the above words do not conform to the **output** principle of derivational rules which indicates that the output of a derivational rule must be a member of one of the lexical categories: *adverb*, *noun*, *adjective* and *verb*. The above words are not recognised as English words; therefore, they cannot be classified under any lexical category. Despite its productivity, there are some adjectives it does not attach to. Aronoff (1976) asserts that *-ness* does not attach to adjectives of the end form +ate, +ant +ent as in words *decent* (*decency* and not **decentness*). However, there are exceptions like *accurateness* which can be confusing to students. Below is a frequency table which presents the number of times the suffix has been overgeneralised by the students in all the three tables as follows:

Table 11: Occurrences of the suffix -ness in all tables 3, 4 and 5.

| Table | Frequency |
|--------------|-----------|
| 3 | 12 |
| 4 | 5 |
| 5 | 8 |
| TOTAL | 25 |

Table 11 above indicates that in Table 3 (presented earlier), the suffix *-ness* occurred 12 times, while in Table 4 it occurred 5 times, and finally in Table 5 it occurred 8 times. This brings the

total number of occurrences to 25. Most of the words that the respondents have formed were derived from nouns.

The suffixes **-ment** and **-tion** have been overgeneralised once each suffix in tables 3 (**angerment*) and 4(**preferation*) respectively. The two suffixes are noun forming suffixes. Aronoff (1976) denotes that the suffix *-ment* derives action nouns denoting processes or results from mainly verbs with a strong preference for monosyllables³ or disyllabic⁴ base words with stress on the last syllable such as: *assessment, involvement, treatment*. The word **angerment* as derived by one of the subjects draws us back to the phenomenon of **blocking** which was extended to morphology by Aronoff (1976). According to the restrictions of the attachment of the suffix *-ment*, the base *anger* conforms to the rule as it is both a verb and a disyllabic word, but it is unacceptable according to the rules. It is evident that the word *anger* does not obey this rule. The most related noun is the unaffixed noun, *anger*. Aronoff (1976) proposed that this special form **blocks** the productive process of default affixation.

The suffix **-ful** has been overgeneralised in two tables, 3 and 5. According to Plag (2002:124), the adjectival *-ful* has the general meaning ‘having X, being characterised by X’ and is typically attached to abstract nouns as in *beautiful*. Plag (ibid) further indicates that it can also be attached to verbal bases as in *forgetful*. Below is the frequency table which presents the suffix *-ful*:

Table 12: The frequency of the suffix *-ful*.

| Table | Frequency |
|-------|-----------|
| 3 | 2 |
| 5 | 1 |
| TOTAL | 3 |

In the above table, the suffix *-ful* has been overgeneralised 3 times by the respondents in their attempt to derive adjectives:

**educateful instead of educative/educational*

³ Monosyllable is a word with one syllable (Hornby 2010).

⁴ Disyllabic- of a word pertaining to two syllables (Hornby 2010).

*poorfulness *instead of* poor

*attractful *instead of* attractive

It must be noted that there were other irregularities (such as *poorfulness*) that were found in the data which the researcher was not interested in as they were not part of the scope. A combination of the suffixes *-ful* and *-ness* in the word *poor* shows a serious confusion that the student was in. It is also a clear indication that the subject is unsure as to which suffixes are adjective forming suffixes.

The suffix **-able** has been overgeneralised 3 times in Table 4. Plag (2002:119) points out that the suffix *-able* chiefly combines with transitive and intransitive verbal bases as in *deterrable* and *perishable*, respectively, as well as with nouns, as in *serviceable*, *fashionable*. These are the words that the respondents came up with:

*concludable

*sweetable

*warmable

The productions, *sweetable* and *warmable* seem to have been formed from adjective bases and not verbal bases. The process itself does not conform to the rule of the suffix *-able* as they have derived adjectives from adjective bases: *sweet* and *warm*. According to Aronoff (1976), the suffix *-able* is Latinate and it is unique in that it attaches to both Germanic and Latinate bases productively.

The suffix **-ify** is one of the suffixes which appears to have been overgeneralised in the findings. This suffix according to Aronoff (1976) attaches to base words that are either monosyllabic, stressed on the final syllable or end in unstressed /ɪ/. The suffix attaches to nouns and adjective bases. The following table presents the occurrences of the suffix *-ify*.

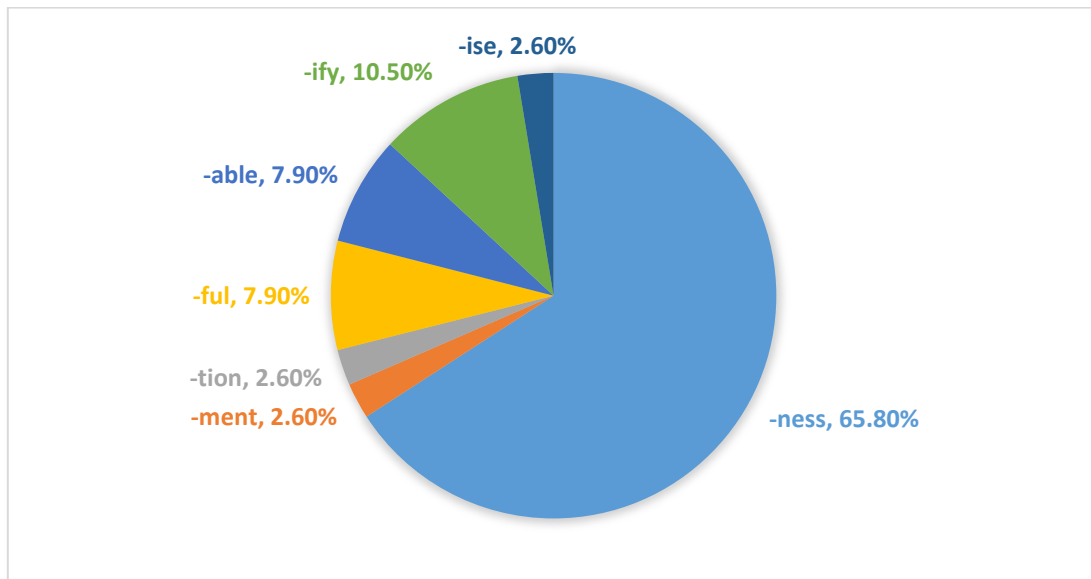
Table 13: The frequency of the suffix -ify.

| Table | Frequency |
|-------|-----------|
| 4 | 3 |
| 5 | 1 |
| TOTAL | 4 |

The words that were overgeneralised in Table 4 are **shortify*, **sweetify* and **warmfy* instead of *shorten*, *sweeten* and *warm* respectively, while **createify* has been recorded in Table 5. Even though the words (**shortify*, **sweetify*, **warmify*) have been derived from adjectives, they are not monosyllabic therefore their attachment does not conform to the rule. Regarding the production **createify*, the base that it derives from is a verb and according to the rules a verb forming suffix cannot attach to a verbal base. The existence of *create* blocks the derivation of another verb according to Aronoff's (1976) concept of blocking.

The suffix **-ise** is the last one to be discussed and it has been overgeneralised only once as indicated in Table 5. It is a verb forming suffix and according to Plag (2002), it is polysemous to the suffix -ify as it can express a whole range of related concepts. It also attaches to nouns and adjectives to form verbs. The corpus finding reveals the word **dangerise* as the verb derivative which does not conform to the suffix -ise rule. The correct form is *endanger* derived by the prefix *en-* as in words like *enlarge*, *enrich*. The figure below displays all the suffixes that were overgeneralised in the learner corpus gathered by the online focus groups. The figure below presents the visual presentation of the summary of the overgeneralised suffixes.

Figure 4: The summary of overgeneralised suffixes.



4.3.2 Online Teacher Interviews

The *first question* that the teachers were asked was to tick words that mostly occurred in the students' writing. As seen in Table 6, seven (7) teachers out of 9 chose the suffix *-ness*. Similarly, 7 teachers selected the prefix *un-*. The prefix *in-* followed the two affixes as it was selected by six (6) teachers out of nine (9) teachers. From the findings, it is evident that the affixes that are mostly overgeneralised by the students according to the teachers' perceptions are *un-*, *-ness* and *in-*.

Question/Statement 2

Word formation is the most important aspect to vocabulary building in second language learning. 9/9 (100%)

As presented in the findings, all the teachers (100%) indicated that word formation is the most important aspect to vocabulary building when learning second language. In other words, all the nine (9) English teachers at the concerned school agree that word formation is key to vocabulary building.

Question/Statement 3

Can reading improve the learners' skill of forming words appropriately? 5/9 (55.5%)

The findings reveal that five (5) teachers indicated that reading could help students to develop their skill of forming words. However, four (4) teachers out of nine (9) are of the view that reading cannot improve the children's skill of word formation. Although the number of teachers who agree surpasses of those who do not agree by 1, more teachers agree that reading can contribute significantly to the improvement of word formation skills as it constitutes 55.5%.

Question/Statement 4

The teaching of word formation is important in helping students do well in English language.
9/9 (100%)

In the above statement, the data findings indicate that all the nine teachers felt that the teaching of word formation is of uttermost importance as it helps students to perform well in the subject of English language.

Question/Statement 5

The knowledge of word formation rules is very important to both the English language teacher and the student. 9/9 (100%)

Similarly, the responses of those who agree in the above statement constitute 100% as all the respondents are of the opinion that both the English language teacher and the student must possess the knowledge of word formation rules which specify the attachment of affixes.

Question/Statement 6

As an English language teacher, are you aware of the rules of word formation through suffixes and prefixes? 3/9 (33.3%)

In this question, only three (3) teachers indicated that they are aware of word formation rules through suffixation while six (6) teachers honestly pointed out that although they are English teachers, they are uncertain about the rules of word formation affixation. The number of the teachers who are not knowledgeable about the word formation rules is far greater than the number of teachers who are aware of such rules as it constitutes 66.6%.

Question/Statement 7

Are you aware of the restrictions in word formation rules, for example, the suffix -able attaches to transitive verbs only to form adjectives and not to intransitive verbs? 3/9 (33.3%)

The same trend can be seen with regard to this question. In this question, three (3) respondents agree that they know the restrictions of word formation while six (6) respondents indicated that they do not know such restrictions. It must be noted that these restrictions are quite vital in the creation of words as they restrict the production of unacceptable words. Most of the teachers indicated that despite the fact that they are English teachers, they do not know why certain affixes cannot attach to certain bases. The number of those who do not know the restrictions constitutes 66.6% while the number of those who do not know constitutes 33.3%, the former is clearly greater than the latter.

Question/Statement 8

Students overgeneralise some suffixes and prefixes due to lack of knowledge of word formation rules and restrictions. 9/9 (100%)

In the above statement, the teachers all agree that students overgeneralise some suffixes and prefixes on account of lack of knowledge of word formation rules. They also agree that not knowing the restrictions of affix attachment is another cause of overgeneralisation.

Question/Statement 9

These overgeneralised suffixes and prefixes which result to errors affect the students' language proficiency negatively. 9/9 (100%)

With regard to the above statement, it is evident that all the teachers, through their experience have discovered that overgeneralisations caused by wrongly attached affixes lead to errors. Such errors, therefore, affect the students' language proficiency detrimentally. These words which are wrongly affixed are not recognised as English words and their usage, therefore, impacts negatively on the students' language proficiency.

4.3.3 Documents

The discussion of the data gathered by this tool is based on EA procedure as seen in the data analysis in Chapter 3, section 3.5. In order to identify the derivational overgeneralisations, the researcher first had to examine all the errors in the students' compositions. The discussion of error causes is premised on Richards' (1977) classification of interlingual and intralingual causes. According to James (1998), error analysis is the process of determining the incidence, nature, causes, and consequences of unsuccessful language.

As stated in the theoretical framework by Richards (1974), two linguistic factors which are considered the major sources of errors are interlingual and intralingual interference. This subsection focuses mainly on intralingual errors as they encompass these aspects:

- a) Overgeneralisation
- b) Ignorance of rule restrictions
- c) Incomplete application of rules
- d) False concept of hypothesis of some grammatical rules

After the students' compositions were analysed, the errors that occurred were then analysed in terms of interlingual and intralingual errors. Interestingly, morphological selection also occurred as a result of overgeneralisation. As presented in Table 8, Section 4.3.3, the following were discovered from the learners' compositions:

Sentence 1

*When the game went on, there were boys dressed in black and wearing all star shoes, these boys were *stealers, they stole money from people's pockets.*

In the above sentence, the focus is on the word **stealers* which seems to be a nominal derivative though it has the inflectional plural marker at the end. It has been derived from the base *steal* by the derivational suffix *-er*. The form *stealer* is not recognised as an appropriate nominal derivative since it is blocked by the existence of the word *thief* according to Aronoff's (1976) theory.

Blocking prevents the formation of words with existing synonyms, particularly if the blocked form is morphologically complex and the existing synonym is morphologically simple such as **stealer* which is blocked by the existing simple form *thief*⁵. The word **stealer* is therefore morphologically complex as it consists of the base and an affix (*steal - er*). In this case, therefore, the form **stealers* is blocked by the word *thieves*.

Sentence 2

*The boys from our school won because of their *strengthness and skills.*

⁵ Plag, I. (1999). Morphological productivity: *Structural constraints in English derivation*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

In the above sentence, the form **strengthness* has been overgeneralised, double marking the nominal *strength* as the preferred form. The suffix *-ness* occurs again in the students' compositions as it occurred in the online focus group exercises. This finding conforms to the finding presented in Faisyal (2015) reviewed in the current study where students overgeneralised the same suffix in the word **lieness* double marking the nominal *lie*.

Sentence 3

*The referee judged ***incorrectly** and that made the fans to be very angry and unruly.*

Similarly, in the sentence above, the word **incorrectly* has been overgeneralised in an attempt to negate the word *correct*. Again, the prefix *un-* appears again after being overgeneralised in the word formation exercises. The appropriate form in the above case is *incorrectly* as **incorrectly* does not conform to the rules of derivation.

Sentence 4

*We went into the buses very happy because we won. When we arrived in the bus, some boys from back seat started drinking beer because of ***exiteness**.*

The overgeneralisation of the suffix *-ness* occurs again in another learner's composition. In an attempt to derive the noun *excitement*, the learner attached the suffix *-ness* to *excite*. Such a process does not conform to the rules of derivation and the form cannot therefore be recognised as a nominal derivation.

From the learners' sample above, it is observed that there were three affixes overgeneralised which are *-ness*, *un-* and *-er*. The suffix *-ness* occurred two (2) times while *un-* and *er-* occurred once each. The table below presents the frequency of the affixes which were overgeneralised in the analysis documents:

Table 15: The frequency of the overgeneralised affixes from the documents.

| Affix | Frequency |
|--------------|-----------|
| -ness | 2 |
| -er | 1 |
| un- | 1 |
| TOTAL | 4 |

4.3.4 Summary of Analysis per Research Question and Hypothesis

The research questions that were posed in Section 1.9 are discussed below based on the findings of this study.

Research Question 1

- Which derivational rules are commonly overgeneralised by English L2 secondary school learners?

Hypothesis 1

- The derivational rules which are mostly overgeneralised by secondary students are noun and adjective forming affixes.

The findings brought forward more overgeneralised affixes than the researcher had hypothesised. It must be clear that it was difficult to specify which noun and adjective forming affixes were mostly overgeneralised by the learners unless the study was conducted. In the category of prefixes, the most overgeneralised rule was the prefix *un-* rule which attaches to verbs, nouns and adjectives. It was followed by the prefix *in-* rule which attaches to adjectives. The last prefix that was overgeneralised is the prefix *dis-* rule which like the prefix *un-* also attaches to nouns, verbs and adjectives.

With regard to the suffixes, the noun forming suffixes: *-ness*, *-tion* and *-ment* rules were mostly overgeneralised. They were followed by the adjective forming suffixes: *-ful* and *-able* rules. The last suffix rules that were overgeneralised are the verb forming suffixes: *-ify* and *-ise* rules. The hypothesis was partly proved as the findings reveal that noun and adjective forming suffixes were mostly overgeneralised by students. However, it was not hypothesised

that the three prefixes (*un-*, *in-*, *dis-*) and verb forming suffixes were also overgeneralised as has been discovered by the current study.

Research Question 2

- What are the causes of these overgeneralisations?

Hypothesis 2

- These overgeneralisations are caused by lack of both morphological knowledge and the constraints on derivational rules.

The study has discovered that the cause of these overgeneralisations is due to the fact that students attach or extend rules they have memorised to cases where they do not apply. The findings indicate that students and teachers as well are not familiar with restrictions on derivational rules. This implies that when students attach affixes on wrong bases, their teachers are unable to explain to the students why a certain affix cannot attach to a certain base. This finding was predicted, therefore the hypothesis has been proved. The study also established that lack of reading culture among the students is also the cause of overgeneralisation. This point was not anticipated, and this suggests that there may be other causes that were not discovered by this study.

Research Question 3

- How do these overgeneralisations affect students' language proficiency?

Hypothesis 3

- These overgeneralisations have a detrimental effect on the students' language proficiency.

The findings showed that these overgeneralisations are detrimental to the students' language proficiency as they form part of errors which are regarded as very serious. The hypothesis formulated has been confirmed as the findings clearly indicated that all the respondents agreed that these words which have been wrongly formed affect the students' language proficiency negatively.

4.4 Conclusion

This chapter has provided the data analysis by firstly presenting the data analysis procedure followed by the presentation of the findings of qualitative data obtained from the online focus groups, documents and teacher online interviews that were conducted by an online questionnaire. The presentation was then followed by the discussion which was based on the theoretical framework. Lastly, the analysis of research questions and hypotheses was presented. The next chapter presents general conclusions, implications, limitations of the study, and suggestions for further studies.

CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusions

5.0 Introduction

The following chapter presents the conclusions of this study based on the findings presented in the previous chapter. It begins with the summary of the findings, followed by the implications of the findings for the EFL teachers at secondary schools. Furthermore, the limitations of the study and lastly, some suggestions for further research are also outlined.

5.1 Summary

The present study investigated overgeneralisation of derivational rules done by secondary students at a high school in Maseru, Lesotho. Thus, the research was carried out in a form of a case study. The study addressed three research questions regarding overgeneralisation of derivational rules in the school: which derivational rules are commonly overgeneralised, what are causes of these overgeneralisations and how do these overgeneralisations affect students' language proficiency. The participants of the study were: thirty (30) grade 9 students, thirty (30) form C students, forty (40) form E students and nine (9) English language teachers. The study employed the qualitative design and obtained data through three (3) data collection tools being: online focus groups, online interviews and documents.

The results revealed that students mostly overgeneralised the prefixes *un*, *in-* and *dis-*. These affix rules do not change the word class of the base but merely negate and reverse it. Some of the overgeneralised words were **unresponsible*, **illegal*, **inpolite*, **inresponsible*, **disunderstand*, **dispolite*. The suffixes that were overgeneralised were: *-ness*, *-tion*, *-ment*, *-ful*, *-able*, *-ify* and *-ise*. The first three suffixes (*-ness*, *-tion*, *-ment*) were noun forming affix rules, the two suffixes (*-ment* and *-ful*) were adjective forming affix rules while (*-ify* and *-ise*) were verb forming affix rules. Some of the overgeneralised words were: **educateness*, **preferation*, **angerment*, **attractful*, **sweetable*, **shortify*, **dangerise*. In other words, only the adverb forming affix was not overgeneralised in the findings of the current study.

Other crucial findings also indicated that most EFL teachers and students do not know derivational rules and restrictions of these rules. Majority of teachers (7 out of 9) agreed in the interviews that they do not know the restrictions of derivational rules which clearly makes it difficult for them to teach students efficiently, thus resulting to students overgeneralising these rules in their written work. While still on the causes, another finding was that students lack a reading culture and therefore are not familiar with the English vocabulary, hence they overgeneralise.

The last finding was that these overgeneralisations have a detrimental effect on the students' language proficiency as the produced words are not recognised as English words. The findings of this study were discussed based on the principles of the Aronoff (1976) as outlined in the theoretical framework in Chapter two. The next section presents the implications of the study based on the findings.

5.2 Implications

The findings of this study have implications for both EFL teachers and curriculum designers for the secondary students.

5.2.1 Implications for EFL Teachers

This study contributes to the English language teaching field as one of its findings is that English teachers at the secondary school in question are incompetent in teaching English derivations. The possible implications that this study has for EFL teachers are as follows:

- a) More training sessions are required to train EFL teachers to better teach derivational morphology in secondary schools.
- b) Teachers must teach derivational morphology explicitly to assist their learners avoid overgeneralising the derivational rules.
- c) Learners must be taught to understand the use of prefixes, suffixes and bases, and how words are transformed.
- d) In their training at tertiary level, EFL teachers must take morphology course as one of the core courses and not optionally.

e) Teachers should encourage students to read as much as possible in English in order to improve their vocabulary capacity.

Students who understand how words are formed by combining suffixes, prefixes and roots or bases may have larger lexicon and better reading comprehension skills than those without such knowledge and skills. Therefore, if the above implications are taken into consideration, they may help learners to form words appropriately and avoid overgeneralising. The next sub-section presents implications for the curriculum planners.

5.2.2 Implications for the EFL Curriculum Designers

The importance of how a word is formed in English is still underestimated by curriculum designers. Grammatical syllabuses or English textbooks do not give attention or emphasis to word formation while it plays an integral part to the students' language proficiency. In order to understand word formation processes, students are left to their abilities to use dictionaries and guessing skills which sometimes lead to overgeneralisation of rules.

The implication of the findings of this study for curriculum planners is that they incorporate a part in secondary school textbooks which addresses morphology, particularly derivation in order to promote morphological awareness. To put it in a different way, teaching English morphology should be an integral part of EFL secondary school curriculum. If this be considered, students will be motivated to improve their derivation approach to enrich their vocabulary knowledge and thus will improve the way they express themselves in English.

In this sense, the researcher wants to complete this section by quoting the task or goal of morphology according to Aronoff (1976:17):

‘the simplest task of a morphology, the least we demand of it, is the enumeration of the class of possible words of a language’.

The above quotation implies that morphology is key for every language as it enumerates words for such a language. It is evident, therefore, that explicit morphological instruction is necessary. The next section presents the limitations of the study.

5.3 Limitations

This study, like any other research, encountered some difficulties and setbacks. The most important limitation lies in the fact that this study was conducted during the pandemic of Corona virus (Covid-19), when secondary school students were forced to stay at home in Lesotho. As a result of the pandemic, students and teachers were dispersed to their different homes making it difficult for the researcher to reach them as the participants the study.

One of the initial data collection methods was observations which had to be replaced with online focus groups since they seemed to be suitable for the pandemic situation. These online focus groups had to be conducted by WhatsApp and it became difficult for some students to participate in the groups, due to lack of data bundles that would allow them to access the messages in the WhatsApp groups. Therefore, some of the students did not attempt some questions that were distributed through the WhatsApp groups.

As the interviews were also carried out by online questionnaires, some teachers struggled to login into the link and therefore delayed to complete the questionnaires. The issue of time also became a challenging factor as it took the researcher time to access the data from the students and the teachers as well. Due to the fact that some students did not have smart mobile phones, they could not participate in the study, thus, the sample size became relatively small.

Given the small sample size, the findings of the current study might not be transferable to other secondary schools. Despite these limitations, the findings of the present study may build a solid foundation for more profound and refined future research. The next section presents suggestions for further research.

5.4 Suggestions for Future Research

The following are suggestions for future research pursuing a similar topic:

- a) This study can be replicated in another secondary school or schools to find out whether the same findings can be obtained.
- b) More research should also be carried out to investigate overgeneralisation of derivational rules on other EFL levels like grade 8 and form D in Lesotho secondary schools.

c) It would also be interesting to find out which pupils overgeneralise derivational rules more between students who attended private and public primary schools.

d) Further work can also be done to establish whether these overgeneralisations are mostly done by boys or girls.

e) Future research can also focus on why there were a few overgeneralised derivational affixes in the students' narrative continuous writing (compositions).

In a nutshell, the researcher believes that this research will serve as a base for future studies on English derivational morphology and hopes the results obtained from the present study would be useful for EFL and morphology researchers.

5.5 Conclusion

This chapter has provided an overview of the summary of the findings, the implications of the findings for the EFL teachers and curriculum designers. The chapter further outlined some limitations of the study and suggestions for future research.

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Appendix One

Questions that were given to the students.

Exercise one-Word Formation

Use appropriate prefixes to form negative meaning with the following words:

- a) Correct-
- b) Honest-
- c) Understand-
- d) Limited-
- e) Certain-
- f) Obedient-
- g) Fair-
- h) Possible-
- i) Responsible-
- j) Regular-
- k) Legal-
- l) Continue-
- m) Attractive-
- n) Trust-
- o) Polite-

Appendix Two

Exercise two-Word Formation

Form nouns using appropriate suffixes with the following words:

- a) Sincere-
- b) Poor-
- c) Kind-
- d) Angry-
- e) Cruel-
- f) Cook-
- g) Beautiful-
- h) Education-

Appendix Three

Exercise three- Word Formation

Fill in the blanks appropriately.

| Adjective | Noun | Verb | Adverb |
|-----------|------------|---------|-------------|
| | | | |
| | | Anger | |
| Beautiful | | | |
| | | | Creatively |
| | | Attract | |
| | | | Dangerously |
| Quick | | | |
| | | | Furiously |
| | Education | | |
| Careful | | | |
| | Completion | | |

Appendix Four

Exercise four- Word Formation

Fill in the blanks appropriately.

| Noun | Verb | Adjective |
|--------------|------------|------------|
| | | |
| | Describe | |
| | | Persuasive |
| Appreciation | | |
| Marriage | | |
| | Strengthen | |
| | | Warm |
| Sweetness | | |
| | Prefer | |
| | | Short |
| Reliability | | |
| | Attend | |
| | | Special |

Appendix Five

Composition question given to form Es for monthly test.

Write a story on the following topic:

A football match you witnessed.

You are advised to write in 300-500 words or 2-2 1/2 pages. Total marks:30.