

## **An Analysis of Derivational Affixation and Inflectional Affixation Process in Song Lyric “Unstoppable” By Sia**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Language plays an important role in human communication, and understanding word formation helps explain meaning in texts. Affixation, which includes derivational and inflectional processes, is an important part of morphology. However, studies that analyze affixation in song lyrics are still limited, even though songs carry expressive messages and are easily accessed by the public. This study aims to identify and describe the types of derivational and inflectional affixation found in the song lyrics Unstoppable by Sia, and to analyze how these affixes contribute to word formation and meaning. Using a qualitative descriptive method, the researcher analyzes the song lyrics and classifies words that contain derivational and inflectional affixes. The results show that there are 12 words containing affixes, with inflectional affixation being more dominant because it keeps the original word class, while derivational affixation changes the word class and enriches meaning. In conclusion, inflectional affixation appears more frequently, but derivational affixation plays an important role in shaping expressive meaning. These findings show that analyzing affixation in song lyrics provides valuable insights for linguistic studies, language teaching, vocabulary development, and text analysis, and shows the practical use of morphology in real-world texts.*

**Keywords:** *Morphology, Affixation, Derivational, Inflectional, Song Lyric*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Language is a unique and remarkable human ability, as no other species has developed a linguistic system as complex as that of humans (Fromkin et al., 2021). It plays a central role in communication, enabling individuals to express ideas, share emotions, transfer knowledge, and construct meaning in social and cultural contexts. Fundamentally, language consists of two interconnected aspects, form and meaning, which work together to produce clear and purposeful messages. Form includes linguistic elements such as sounds, words, and sentence structures, while meaning refers to the ideas conveyed through these forms.

Building on this understanding of language, one important area that examines how words are formed is morphology. Morphology, a branch of linguistics, focuses on the study of word forms and structures. Yule (2010) explains that morphology examines how words are built and organized and how changes in words affect meaning, covering both grammatical and semantic functions. The smallest unit of meaning in language is the morpheme, which cannot be broken down further. Katamba (1993) states that a morpheme is the smallest part of a word that carries meaning or a grammatical function. Words are generally stored in the mind as complete units, not constructed morpheme by morpheme. Morphemes can be free, standing alone as words, or bound, which must attach to other morphemes. Bound morphemes are also called affixes.

Understanding morphemes leads naturally to the discussion of affixes, which are bound morphemes attached to a base or root. An affix is a morpheme added to a word that changes its meaning. Bauer (as cited in Lieber & Štekauer, 2014) explains that affixes modify words or create new ones. Katamba (1993) states that affixes only exist when attached to a root or base. Prefixes are affixes placed at the beginning of a word and are important for forming new words or changing word categories (Nandito, 2016). Both prefixes and suffixes are considered affixes (Charty, 2002). Prefixes are derivational because they can form new words or alter the meaning of existing words (Laila et al., cited in English). Examples include Anti-, Re-, Un-, In-, Ir-, En-, Em-, Mis-, Pre-, Sub-, Trans-, Over-, Mid-, Dis-, Under-, Super-, Inter-, Fore-, De-, and Semi-.

Suffixes, on the other hand, are affixes added to the end of words and cannot stand alone (Lieber, 2016). Stageberg (1981) describes suffixes as bound morphemes that follow a base, as seen in words such as *shrinkage*, *failure*, and *noisy*. Some suffixes are inflectional, which create different grammatical forms of the same word without changing its word class (Laila et al., cited in English). Common suffixes include -s, -es, -'s, -ed, -est, -ing, -ate, -en, -ify, -ity, -fy, -ize, -ise, -ly, -acy, -ance, -ence, -less, -ment, and -ship. Derivational affixes change the word class or meaning, while inflectional affixes indicate grammatical variations such as tense, number, or comparison (Stageberg, 1981).

The study of morphology, particularly affixation, becomes more meaningful when applied to authentic language use, such as song lyrics. Songs combine language and music to convey messages and emotions. A song is a short poem or series of verses set to music, with lyrics arranged into verses and choruses to express feelings such as happiness or sadness through rhythm and rhyme (Hornby, 1980). Lyrics often employ creative language forms, making them a rich source for linguistic analysis. One example is *Unstoppable* by Sia, a song that delivers a strong message of resilience and encouragement. Although released several years ago, the song remains popular,

especially on platforms such as TikTok, and continues to inspire listeners to face challenges and believe in their abilities.

In morphology, affixation plays a key role in word formation and meaning. Affixes are bound morphemes that attach to roots or bases to modify meaning. Katamba (1993) emphasizes that an affix only exists when attached to a root or base. Bauer (as cited in Lieber & Štekauer, 2014) explains that affixes can alter meaning or create new words. Prefixes are attached to the beginning of words and can form new words or change word categories (Nandito, 2016). Suffixes are added to the end of words and can be derivational or inflectional (Charty, 2002). Derivational affixes change the word class or meaning, whereas inflectional affixes generate a new form of the same word without altering its class (Stageberg, 1981). Understanding these concepts is essential to analyze how words in song lyrics are formed and how they convey meaning.

Several previous studies have examined affixation in English by focusing on different types of texts. Some researchers analyzed affixation in formal written documents such as government articles and news texts, describing how derivational and inflectional processes appear in structured writing (Hutamingrum, 2022; Sari, 2022). Other studies investigated academic contexts, especially students' writing, and revealed various errors and challenges learners face when using inflectional and derivational affixes in their compositions (Guna et al., 2022; Sunandar, 2022). A number of studies also explored literary works, including novels and short stories, showing how affixes function in storytelling and character description, as seen in research on plural noun suffixes in a novel (Laksi & Tustiawati, 2023), inflectional morphemes in a short story (Ifadloh et al., 2023), and both bound inflectional and derivational forms in another short story (Yustika & Efendi, 2025). In addition, some studies focused on more expressive or creative texts, such as analytical exposition writing and song albums, demonstrating how affixes help shape meaning and stylistic features in artistic language use (Simaremare & Silalahi, 2021; Masfufah, 2022). Although these studies offer useful insights, research specifically analyzing affixation in modern song lyrics remains limited, even though songs are widely accessed and rich in emotional expression. This gap shows the need to explore how affixes contribute to meaning in popular music. Therefore, the present study identifies the types of derivational and inflectional affixation found in the lyrics of *Unstoppable* by Sia and explains their role in shaping meaning.

Despite these studies, research that specifically analyzes affixation in modern popular song lyrics remains limited, even though songs are widely consumed and linguistically rich. This gap indicates the need for further investigation into how affixes function in contemporary song lyrics and how they contribute to meaning. Therefore, this study focuses on identifying the types of derivational and inflectional affixation

found in the lyrics of *Unstoppable* by Sia and explaining their roles in shaping meaning. The objectives of this study are to describe the types of affixation present in the song lyrics and to analyze their functions in terms of derivation and inflection. The findings are expected to contribute to morphological studies by demonstrating the application of affixation analysis in authentic texts, as well as supporting language teaching, vocabulary development, and textual analysis in educational contexts.

## METHOD

This research uses a qualitative descriptive approach, which focuses on exploring structures, patterns, and the way phenomena exist (Litosseliti, 2018 as cited in Saefudin et al. 2023), to analyze derivational and inflectional affixation in the song lyrics of *Unstoppable* by Sia. The study was conducted online, using the song lyrics as the primary subject. The main instrument is the researcher, who collects, observes, and interprets the data directly. Data were collected by searching for the lyrics online and identifying words containing affixes. The procedure involved reading the lyrics carefully, selecting relevant words, and classifying the affixes into derivational and inflectional types. Data analysis followed three steps: reducing the data, displaying it in a table, and drawing descriptive conclusions. To ensure validity, the researcher applied data triangulation by cross-checking interpretations with reliable linguistic references.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### Findings

The analysis of Sia's song *Unstoppable* identified both inflectional and derivational affixation. Inflectional affixation involves adding suffixes that do not change the word class, while derivational affixation can involve prefixes or suffixes that change the word class. In total, 12 words with affixation were found in the song, consisting of 8 inflectional affixations and 4 derivational affixations.

**Table 1.** Inflectional Affixation

Word	Analysis		Note
	Prefix	Suffix	
Smiles		{-s}	Smile (verb) to Smiles (verb)
Takes		{-s}	Take (verb) to Takes (verb)
Goes		{-es}	Go (verb) to Goes (verb)
Sunglasses		{-es}	Sunglass (noun) to sunglasses (noun)
Unstoppable	{-un}	{-able}	Stop (verb) to Unstoppable (adjective)

Brakes	{-s}	Brake (verb) to Brakes (verb)
Powerful	{-ful}	Power (noun) to Powerful (adjective)
Batteries	{-es}	Battery (noun) to Batteries (noun)
Hiding	{-ing}	Hide (verb) to Hiding (noun)
Feelings	{-ing} {-s}	Felling (adjective) to Fellings (adjective) Feel (verb) to Feeling (adjective)
Friendship	{-s}	Felling (adjective) to Fellings (adjective) Feel (verb) to Feeling (adjective)

To make the analysis clearer, the affixations are presented separately in the following tables:

**Table 2.** Inflectional Affixation

<b>Finding</b>	<b>Root</b>	<b>Inflectional affixation</b>
Smiles	Smile	Verb- verb
Takes	Take	Verb- verb
Brakes	Brake	Verb- verb
Feelings	Feeling	Noun- noun
Friendships	friendships	Noun- noun
Goes	Go	Verb- verb
sunglasses	Sunglass	Noun- noun
Batteries	Battery	Noun- noun

**Table 3.** Derivational Affixation

<b>Finding</b>	<b>Root</b>	<b>Inflectional affixation</b>
unstoppable	Stop	Verb- adjective
Powerful	Power	Noun- adjective
Hiding	Hide	Verb- noun
Feeling	Feel	Verb- adjective

From the tables, it can be seen that inflectional affixation is more dominant in the song, as it occurs more frequently and does not change the word class. Suffixes such as {-s} and {-es} are commonly used in verbs and nouns. In contrast, derivational affixation

plays a key role in changing word class and meaning, for example, unstoppable changes a verb into an adjective, while powerful changes a noun into an adjective.

Overall, the findings show that while inflectional affixation maintains grammatical structure, derivational affixation enriches the meaning and emotional expression in the song.

## **Discussion**

The findings from the song Unstoppable by Sia show a clear distinction between inflectional and derivational affixation. Inflectional affixation, which occurs more frequently, does not change the word class. Words like smiles, takes, and batteries maintain their original grammatical category. This suggests that the use of inflectional affixation in the song provides grammatical consistency and clarity, making the lyrics easier to follow and understand. Such structure allows the listener to focus on the message without confusion about word forms.

Derivational affixation, although less frequent, plays an important role in changing meaning and word class, thereby adding semantic depth. For example, unstoppable transforms the verb stop into an adjective, expressing a strong sense of resilience and determination. Similarly, powerful changes a noun into an adjective, emphasizing strength, while hiding and feeling turn verbs into nouns or adjectives to convey actions or emotions. These transformations show how derivational affixation enriches the expressive quality of the song, allowing the lyrics to communicate emotional and motivational messages effectively.

Comparing the two types of affixation, it is clear that inflectional affixation dominates in frequency, ensuring grammatical structure, while derivational affixation contributes to meaning and emotional impact. This balance between grammatical form and expressive content helps the song engage listeners both intellectually and emotionally. By using derivational affixation selectively, Sia emphasizes key words that carry strong emotional or motivational weight, which may explain why the song resonates widely, especially in contexts like TikTok, where short, impactful lyrics are more memorable.

Overall, the discussion shows that affixation is not only a linguistic feature but also a stylistic tool in songwriting. Inflectional affixation maintains clarity, while derivational affixation enhances creativity and emotional expression, demonstrating how morphology can shape meaning in a musical context.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study looked at inflectional and derivational affixation in the lyrics of *Unstoppable* by Sia. It found that inflectional affixation is more common. These appear

in words that keep their original word class, such as *smiles*, *takes*, and *batteries*. Derivational affixation is less frequent but important because it changes the word class and adds meaning. Examples include *unstoppable*, *powerful*, *hiding*, and *feeling*. The results show that the song balances correct grammar with expressive meaning, making the lyrics clear and emotionally strong. Affixation is not only a grammatical tool but also helps create style and meaning. This can be useful for linguistics, language learning, and analyzing texts, because it shows how word formation works in real examples. Since this study only looked at one song, the results may not apply to all songs. Future research can examine more songs or genres to see how affixation affects meaning and style in different contexts.

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