

The Analysis of Inflectional Morpheme in English Song Lyric in the Chainsmokers's "So Far So Good" Album

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Abstract

Morphology is a branch of linguistics that examines the internal structure of words, including inflectional morphemes that function to express grammatical meaning in language use. This study aims to identify the types of inflectional morphemes found in English song lyrics and to analyze their frequency of occurrence. A descriptive qualitative method was employed, using the song lyrics from The Chainsmokers' So Far So Good album as the data source. The data were collected through careful listening and reading of the lyrics, followed by identification, classification, and descriptive analysis of inflectional morphemes based on English morphological theory. The findings show that a total of 215 inflectional morphemes were identified, with verb inflections appearing most frequently, particularly progressive and past tense forms, followed by plural noun inflections, while adjective inflections occurred in relatively limited numbers. In conclusion, inflectional morphemes in the album are primarily used to express actions, time, and emotional experiences rather than formal grammatical relations. These results imply that English song lyrics can serve as effective and engaging materials for learning inflectional morphemes, as they present grammatical forms in authentic and meaningful language contexts.

Keywords: *Inflectional Morphemes, Song Lyrics, Morphology*

INTRODUCTION

Morphology is one of the core branches of linguistics that focuses on the internal structure of words and the processes involved in word formation (Booij, 2005; Fromkin et al., 2021). In English morphology, words can be formed through several processes such as compounding, blending, derivation, and inflection, each of which plays a different role in shaping meaning and grammatical function (Lieber, 2016). Among these processes, inflection is particularly important because it operates within the grammatical system of a language and is realized directly in everyday language use, including spoken and written texts.

Inflection differs from other word formation processes because it does not create new words or change word classes. Instead, inflection modifies the form of existing

words so that they can fit into specific grammatical contexts (Plag, 2003). Inflectional morphemes are used to express grammatical information such as number, tense, possession, and degree of comparison. Thus, inflection functions as a key grammatical mechanism that allows meaning to be expressed accurately in real communicative contexts (Lieber, 2016).

In English, the system of inflection is relatively limited compared to other languages. English has only eight inflectional morphemes, and all of them are realized as suffixes (Fromkin et al., 2021). Even though the number is small, these morphemes occur very frequently in language use. They appear in nouns, verbs, and adjectives, both in formal and informal contexts, making English inflection particularly suitable for analysis in authentic texts such as song lyrics (Plag, 2003).

One form of authentic language use that clearly reflects grammatical patterns is song lyrics. Song lyrics often employ natural, expressive, and emotionally driven language, making them a valuable source for linguistic analysis (Braber et al., 2015). Because song lyrics are closely related to everyday language use, they provide a relevant context for observing how inflectional morphemes function in contemporary English. Therefore, analyzing inflectional morphemes in English song lyrics can offer insight into how grammatical meaning is realized in popular music.

This study is based on the concepts of morphology and morpheme. A morpheme is defined as the smallest unit of meaning or grammatical function in a language (Yule, 2010). Morphemes are classified into free morphemes and bound morphemes, with inflectional morphemes belonging to the category of bound morphemes. Inflectional morphemes do not change the word class or the core meaning of a word, but function to indicate grammatical categories such as plural, possessive, tense, participle forms, and degrees of comparison (Booij, 2005). Accordingly, the main variables of this study are the types of inflectional morphemes and their frequency of occurrence in song lyrics.

In addition, inflectional morphemes can be grouped based on the word classes they attach to, namely nouns, verbs, and adjectives. In nouns, inflectional morphemes mark plural and possessive forms. In verbs, they indicate tense, aspect, and subject agreement, such as past tense, present participle, and third person singular forms. In adjectives, inflectional morphemes are used to express comparative and superlative degrees (Plag, 2003). This classification serves as the analytical framework for examining inflectional morphemes in the selected song lyrics.

Previous studies in morphology have largely focused on theoretical explanations of inflectional and derivational morphemes or on learners' understanding of these forms in narrative and spoken texts (Jimmi & Sulaeman, 2022; Woretma et al., 2024).

Other studies have applied morphological analysis to written texts and song lyrics, often examining derivational and inflectional morphemes together (Aprianti & Parmawati, 2020; Fitria, 2020). However, these studies tend to combine different morphological processes or focus on multiple data sources, which makes the specific role of inflectional morphemes less explicit. Studies that specifically examine the types and frequency of inflectional morphemes in contemporary English pop song lyrics within a single album remain limited. This gap indicates the need for focused research on inflectional morphemes as a distinct grammatical phenomenon in modern popular music.

Therefore, this study focuses on inflectional morphemes in the song lyrics of The Chainsmokers' *So Far So Good* album. It aims to identify the types of inflectional morphemes used in the lyrics and to examine how frequently they occur. The analysis is limited to inflectional morphemes, excluding derivational morphemes and other word-formation processes. By focusing on inflectional morphology in contemporary pop songs, this study is expected to contribute to morphological research by illustrating how grammatical meaning is expressed in authentic language use. In addition, the findings may help students and English learners better understand English grammatical forms through song lyrics, which are familiar, engaging, and meaningful learning materials.

METHOD

This research used a descriptive qualitative design to explore the use of inflectional morphemes in English song lyrics. The data were obtained from the lyrics of songs in The Chainsmokers' *So Far So Good* album, which became the main source of analysis during the research process. The lyrics were treated as the subject of the study, while inflectional morphemes were the main focus of the analysis. In this study, the researcher functioned as the primary instrument and worked directly with the lyrics as documented data. Data collection was carried out by listening to the songs and carefully reading the lyrics to identify inflectional morphemes. Each morpheme found was noted and then grouped according to its grammatical category. After the data were collected, they were analyzed descriptively by classifying the inflectional morphemes and interpreting their use based on English morphological concepts.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This study focuses on identifying and describing the use of inflectional morphemes in the song lyrics of The Chainsmokers' *So Far So Good* album. The data were taken from fifteen songs in the album and analyzed using a descriptive qualitative approach. The analysis process involved identifying inflectional morphemes in the

lyrics, categorizing them based on their grammatical functions, and calculating their frequency to observe overall patterns. Through this process, the study reveals how inflectional morphemes are distributed across nouns, verbs, and adjectives in the album.

Based on the analysis, the inflectional morphemes found in the album can be grouped into three main categories: inflectional morphemes of nouns, verbs, and adjectives. From a total of 215 inflectional morphemes, verb inflections appear most frequently, followed by noun inflections, while adjective inflections occur in much smaller numbers. This indicates that verb forms play a dominant role in shaping grammatical meaning within the song lyrics.

Table 1. Summary of Inflectional Morphemes

Inflectional Category	Subcategory	Frequency
Noun	Plural	59
Noun	Possessive	0
Verb	3rd person singular	29
Verb	Past tense	54
Verb	Progressive	59
Verb	Past participle	4
Adjective	Comparative	5
Adjective	Superlative	5
Total		215

The first major theme is verb inflection, which accounts for the highest frequency in the data. Progressive forms (-ing) and past tense forms (-ed or irregular past forms) appear most frequently across the songs. This suggests that the lyrics often describe ongoing actions, emotional states, and past experiences, which are common themes in popular music. Third person singular forms also appear regularly, indicating narrative statements about actions or situations involving third-person subjects.

The second theme is noun inflection, which is dominated by plural forms (-s). Plural nouns are commonly used to refer to people, emotions, objects, and abstract concepts such as *friends*, *things*, *nights*, and *feelings*. Possessive forms, however, were not found in the album, indicating that ownership or possession is rarely expressed morphologically in the lyrics.

The third theme is adjective inflection, which appears least frequently. Comparative and superlative forms such as *better*, *best*, and *closer* are used sparingly to

express degrees of emotion or comparison. Although limited in number, these forms contribute to emphasizing intensity and emotional contrast within the lyrics.

Overall, the findings show that inflectional morphemes in the album are used primarily to express actions, experiences, and emotional states rather than structural or formal grammatical relations. These patterns provide a basis for further interpretation and discussion in relation to morphological theory and previous studies.

The results of this study directly answer the research questions by showing the types of inflectional morphemes found in the album and identifying their frequency of occurrence. The dominance of verb inflections, particularly progressive and past tense forms, highlights how grammatical choices in song lyrics support storytelling and emotional expression.

The high frequency of verb inflectional morphemes reflects the narrative nature of song lyrics. Progressive forms are often used to describe ongoing emotions or actions, creating a sense of immediacy and continuity. Past tense forms, both regular and irregular, suggest reflection on past experiences, which aligns with the themes of memory, regret, and personal relationships commonly found in pop music. This usage supports Lieber's view that inflection adapts words to grammatical contexts without changing their lexical meaning.

The frequent use of plural noun inflections indicates that the lyrics tend to generalize experiences rather than focus on single, specific entities. Words like *friends*, *things*, and *nights* suggest shared or repeated experiences, making the lyrics more relatable to listeners. The absence of possessive inflection supports the idea that the songs prioritize emotional states and actions over explicit ownership or possession.

Although adjective inflections appear less frequently, their presence is still meaningful. Comparative and superlative forms are used to intensify emotions or describe contrasts, such as feeling *better* or being the *best*. This supports the claim that adjective inflections, while limited, play a stylistic role in emphasizing emotional depth rather than grammatical necessity.

The findings of this study are consistent with previous morphological research showing that inflectional morphemes, particularly verb inflections, frequently occur in English texts and spoken data (Jimmi & Sulaeman, 2022). Similar dominance of inflectional morphemes is also found in narrative and lyric-based analyses, where progressive and past tense forms appear as central grammatical features (Woretma et al., 2024; Kusumawardhani & Sihombing, 2024). Studies on song lyrics further confirm that English songs naturally contain various inflectional categories such as plural, progressive, past tense, and comparative forms, reflecting real grammatical usage rather than constructed language patterns (Afri & Maulina, 2021). However, unlike earlier lyric-based studies that primarily focus on identifying affix types or supporting

vocabulary learning, the present study highlights a stronger preference for progressive verb forms as a stylistic choice to express ongoing emotions and immediacy in contemporary pop music. This tendency differs from findings in other music genres where derivational affixes may be more dominant (Aprianti & Parmawati, 2020), suggesting that genre, thematic focus, and communicative purpose significantly influence the distribution of inflectional morphemes in song lyrics.

Taken together, the findings indicate that inflectional morphemes in the album function primarily as tools for expressing time, action, and emotional intensity rather than formal grammatical relations. Theoretically, this supports the view that inflection operates as a grammatical adjustment mechanism within real language use. Practically, the results suggest that song lyrics can be effective learning materials for teaching inflectional morphemes, as they provide natural and engaging examples of grammatical forms in context.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that inflectional morphemes are frequently used in the song lyrics of The Chainsmokers' *So Far So Good* album, with verb inflections appearing as the most dominant category, particularly progressive and past tense forms, followed by plural noun inflections, while adjective inflections occur in relatively limited numbers. These findings indicate that inflectional morphemes in the album primarily function to express actions, time, and emotional experiences rather than formal grammatical relations such as possession. Theoretically, this supports morphological views that regard inflection as a grammatical adjustment mechanism that allows words to fit different contexts without changing their core meaning, while practically, the results suggest that song lyrics can serve as effective and engaging materials for teaching English inflectional morphemes, especially in understanding tense, plurality, and comparison. However, since this study is limited to a single album and focuses only on inflectional morphemes, the findings may not fully represent broader language use, and future research is therefore encouraged to examine a wider range of music genres, compare inflectional and derivational morphemes, or explore inflectional patterns in other forms of authentic language data.

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