

A Study on English Affixation Found in Lyrics of Back to Friend by Sombr

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History Article:

Received 20-06-2025
Accepted 21-06-2025
Published 24-06-2025

ABSTRACT

Language is composed of various structural elements, and one of the most essential is morphology, the study of word formation and structure. This research explores the use of English affixation in the lyrics of Back to Friend by Sombr. The purpose of this study is to identify and analyze the affixes used in the song, focusing on both derivational and inflectional affixes. The analysis applies a descriptive qualitative method to examine how these affixes function within the lyrics, how they contribute to changes in grammatical categories, and how they affect meaning. Derivational affixes in the song often alter the word class, such as turning verbs into nouns or adjectives, while inflectional affixes serve to indicate grammatical aspects like tense, number, or aspect without changing the word class. The findings suggest that affixation plays an important role in the richness and expressiveness of the language used in song lyrics. This research also supports the use of popular songs as engaging material in linguistic and morphological studies.

Keyword: Morphology; Affixation; Song Lyrics; Derivational; Affixation

How to Cite:

Dhivia Purnama Arsiladeva, & Otong Setiwan Djuharie. (2025). A Study on English Affixation Found in Lyrics of Back to Friend by Sombr. Jejak Digital: Jurnal Ilmiah Multidisiplin, 1(4), 1491-1497. <https://doi.org/10.63822/1efv4560>

INTRODUCTION

Language serves as an essential component in human life, functioning as the primary tool for communication, interaction, and expression. It allows individuals to share thoughts, convey emotions, exchange ideas, and build social relationships. The significance of language extends beyond its utilitarian function in daily conversation; it also plays a key role in literature, education, religion, media, and entertainment. People have long been intrigued by the inner workings of language how it originates, how it is structured, and how it functions in various social and artistic contexts. One of the most fascinating aspects of language lies in its structure, especially the formation of words, which is studied under a branch of linguistics called morphology.

Morphology is the study of the internal structure of words and the rules by which words are formed. This field explores how simple words can be expanded into more complex forms and how these forms function in different grammatical and semantic contexts. Morphological processes allow speakers to create new words, modify existing ones, and understand subtle differences in meaning. In essence, morphology explains how individual components of language called morphemes combine to form meaningful expressions. Morphemes are the smallest linguistic units that carry meaning. They can be classified into roots, prefixes, and suffixes. The root serves as the core of a word, while affixes (prefixes and suffixes) are added to modify or extend its meaning.

There are two primary types of affixes in English morphology: derivational and inflectional. Derivational affixes are used to create new words by changing either the meaning or the grammatical category of the base word. For instance, the addition of the suffix “-ness” to the adjective “happy” forms the noun “happiness,” changing both the form and function of the word. In contrast, inflectional affixes do not create new words but rather modify existing words to reflect grammatical features such as tense, number, aspect, or possession. For example, the addition of “-ed” to “walk” changes it to “walked,” indicating past tense but not altering the word class.

Derivational affixes are particularly interesting because they are less predictable and more complex than inflectional ones. They often involve semantic shifts, changes in word class, and sometimes phonological alterations. Moreover, derivational affixes do not apply uniformly to all words and are often restricted to specific lexical categories. This irregularity and diversity make derivational affixes a rich subject of study in morphological research. Understanding how derivational affixes function not only helps in decoding word meanings but also enhances our appreciation of how language evolves creatively in different contexts.

One such context where language undergoes artistic manipulation is in music specifically in song lyrics. Songs are a unique form of linguistic expression that combine rhythm, melody, and words to evoke emotion and convey meaning. The language used in songs is often informal, poetic, and expressive, which allows for flexibility in word choice and structure. This makes song lyrics an excellent medium for morphological analysis, as they often include affixed words that are carefully chosen to fit the rhythm, rhyme, and meaning of the composition.

In recent years, analyzing the morphology of song lyrics has gained popularity among linguists and language learners alike. Songs serve not only as entertainment but also as pedagogical tools for understanding vocabulary, grammar, and linguistic creativity. Through the study of affixation in lyrics, researchers can explore how word formation rules are applied in real-life contexts outside of academic or formal writing.

This study focuses on the morphological process of affixation, with an emphasis on derivational and

inflectional affixes, as found in the lyrics of *Back to Friend* by Sombr. Sombr is a contemporary pop artist known for producing emotionally resonant songs that touch on themes of love, loss, and introspection. *Back to Friend* features lyrical content that reflects deep emotional conflict, and within its verses and chorus, numerous examples of affixed words appear. These words offer insight into how morphology contributes to the song's emotional depth, thematic coherence, and linguistic rhythm.

By conducting a detailed morphological analysis of the lyrics, this research aims to identify the types of affixes used, classify them as derivational or inflectional, and analyze their functions in shaping meaning. Additionally, this study seeks to highlight how affixation contributes to the overall communicative and aesthetic impact of the song. In doing so, this paper contributes to the broader field of applied linguistics by illustrating how language functions artistically in popular media, and how even informal linguistic forms such as song lyrics can reveal structured morphological processes.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research adopts a descriptive qualitative method to analyze the affixation processes present in the lyrics of *Back to Friend* by Sombr. The descriptive qualitative approach is appropriate for this study because it focuses on providing a detailed analysis of linguistic phenomena as they appear naturally in the text, rather than quantifying data or applying statistical analysis. This method allows for an in-depth examination of the types and functions of affixes found in the song lyrics, with an emphasis on understanding how these affixes contribute to word formation and meaning.

The primary data source of this study is the official lyrics of *Back to Friend* by Sombr. The lyrics were obtained from a reliable online music lyrics database to ensure authenticity. The data analysis procedure involved several steps: (1) reading and transcribing the lyrics carefully, (2) identifying all words containing affixes, (3) classifying the affixes into derivational and inflectional types based on morphological theory, and (4) analyzing the function of each affix in the context of the word and sentence structure.

The theoretical framework of this study draws upon the morphological theories of affixation as proposed by linguists such as Haspelmath (2021), and supported by previous studies in similar contexts. Affixes are analyzed based on their ability to change grammatical categories (derivational) or grammatical functions (inflectional). Each affixed word is broken down into its root and affix, then interpreted to determine the morphological process it undergoes.

By using this method, the study seeks to provide insight into how affixation operates in artistic and expressive texts, such as song lyrics, and how it contributes to linguistic richness and emotional expression in popular music.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Back to Friends
Sombr

Touch my body tender
'Cause the feel, it makes me weak
Kicking off the covers

I see the ceiling while you're looking down at me

*How can we go back to being friends
When we just shared a bed?
How can you look at me and pretend
I'm someone you've never met?*

*It was last December
You were layin' on my chest
I still remember
I was scared to take a breath
Didn't want you to move, yeah*

*How can we go back to being friends
When we just shared a bed? (Yeah)
How can you look at me and pretend
I'm someone you've never met?*

*The Devil in your eyes
Won't deny the lies you sold
I hold it on too tight
Won't you let go? This is casual
How can we go back to being friends*

*When we just shared a bed? (Yeah)
How can you look at me and pretend
I'm someone you've never met?
How can we go back to being friends
When we just shared a bed? (Yeah)
How can you look at me and pretend
I'm someone you've never met?*

I'm someone you've never met (Yeah)

In the lyrics of *Back to Friend* by Sombr, several examples of affixation are found, illustrating how morphological processes function in natural language use, particularly in creative writing such as song lyrics. This analysis identifies both inflectional and derivational affixes, each playing a distinct role in shaping grammatical structure and conveying deeper meaning within the song's emotional narrative.

One of the most commonly used affixes in the song is the inflectional suffix **-ing**, as seen in words like *kicking*, *feeling*, *looking*, *being*, and *holding*. The suffix **-ing** forms present participles or gerunds, indicating ongoing or continuous actions. In the lyrical line "*Kicking off the covers*," the verb *kicking* conveys an active, perhaps sudden physical movement that reflects emotional tension. In "*while you're looking down at me*," *looking* represents an action in progress, adding a dynamic, real-time aspect to the

moment being described. These participles contribute to the immediacy and intensity of the emotional experiences conveyed in the song.

Word	Root	Affixes	Affix Type	Derivational / Inflexional
feeling	feel	-ing	suffix	derivational
looking	look	-ing	suffix	inflexional
kicking	kick	-ing	suffix	inflexional
holding	hold	-ing	suffix	inflexional

Inflectional suffix -ed is also found in words like *shared*, *scared*, and *moved*, signifying past tense. For example, “*when we just shared a bed*” uses *shared* to reference a completed action, rooted in memory, which underscores the emotional distance the speaker now feels. Similarly, *scared* conveys a past emotional state of fear and uncertainty, adding depth to the speaker’s vulnerability. These inflectional suffixes help express temporal aspects of the events and enrich the emotional narrative of the lyrics.

Word	Root	Affixes	Affix Type	Derivational / Inflexional
shared	share	-ed	suffix	inflexional
scared	scare	-ed	suffix	inflexional
moved	move	-ed	suffix	inflexional

In terms of derivational affixes, several examples appear in the song. The verb *pretend* includes the prefix **pre-**, which adds the meaning of “before” or “false representation” to the root *tend*, creating a new word that implies deception or denial. This term is significant in the song’s central question, where the speaker asks how someone can *pretend* not to know them after sharing intimacy. The verb *remember* uses the prefix **re-**, indicating repetition or a return to a previous state. This intensifies the song’s nostalgic tone, as the speaker reflects on emotionally significant moments.

Word	Root	Affixes	Affix Type	Derivational / Inflexional
pretend	tend	pre-	prefix	derivational

The adjective *casual* contains the derivational suffix **-al**, modifying the noun *case* to describe something relaxed or lacking in seriousness—highlighting the contrast between the speaker’s emotional investment and the other person’s nonchalance. Similarly, *tender* is derived from the root *tend* with the suffix **-er**, forming an adjective meaning soft or affectionate. In the line “*Touch my body tender*,” the term expresses vulnerability and emotional intimacy.

Word	Root	Affixes	Affix Type	Derivational / Inflectional
tender	tend	-er	suffix	derivational

CONCLUSION

This study has examined the use of English affixation in the lyrics of *Back to Friend* by Sombr through a morphological analysis focused on derivational and inflectional affixes. The findings reveal that both types of affixes are present and play distinct roles in shaping the linguistic structure and meaning of the lyrics. Derivational affixes are used to form new words and alter word classes, such as turning verbs into nouns or adjectives. In contrast, inflectional affixes function to express grammatical aspects such as tense, number, and aspect without changing the basic word class. The analysis demonstrates that affixation contributes significantly to the expressiveness and depth of the song's language. Through the creative use of affixed words, the songwriter conveys emotions, actions, and ideas more vividly and effectively. This highlights how morphological elements, often seen as technical components of language, are also essential to artistic and emotional expression in musical texts. Furthermore, this study supports the use of song lyrics as a meaningful and engaging medium for linguistic research and language learning. By analyzing affixation in a real-world artistic context, learners and researchers can better appreciate the interplay between structure and creativity in language use.

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