

# Derivational and Inflectional Morphological Processes in the Song Lyrics of Niki's Buzz Album

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## Abstract

*This study explores the morphological processes found in the song lyrics of NIKI's Buzz album. The research focuses on two primary aspects of morphology, including derivation and inflection. As the problem statement, this study aims to examine how these processes are applied in the song lyrics and what functions they serve in shaping meaning and expression. The study is grounded in the theoretical framework proposed by Aronoff and Fudeman, particularly their classification of derivational and inflectional morphology. The researcher used qualitative method to examine the problem. The findings reveal that the album features a variety of morphological processes. Derivational processes identified include affixation, compounding, zero-derivation, blending, and clipping. No data involving acronyms or back-formation were found. For inflectional processes, the lyrics contain affixation, suppletion, and apophony. No instances of reduplication were found in the data. Derivation morphology in the lyrics serves to change lexical categories, alter meanings, and form words with clearer semantic value. Meanwhile, inflectional morphology is used to indicate number, person, case, tense, and aspect, all without altering the base word's class or core meaning.*

**Keywords:** *morphological processes, derivation, inflection, Buzz album, NIKI*

## Introduction

Language is a crucial medium for human communication that facilitates individuals to convey messages, thoughts, and emotions to others. However, people usually focus on using words for communication without understanding the structure and formation of words. The study of word formation is important because it provides insights into how meaning is created and how words change.

One linguistic field that has a significant influence on word formation is morphology. Morphology, as defined by Lieber (2016: 2), is a study of the way new words are formed in languages and the way word forms are changed to match the usage of sentences. Studying morphology is essential to understanding how words change and function in a language. One effective approach for studying

morphology is through literary works, such as song lyrics. NIKI's album song lyrics are an example of how musical storytelling can be analyzed by morphology.

The *Buzz* album by NIKI explores themes of love, loss, and personal growth. This album is worth analyzing because its lyrics are written in a storytelling style that are not only engaging but also rich in linguistic features. This study is analyzed by using Aronoff & Fudeman's concepts of derivational and inflectional morphological processes. The study aims to understand the application of linguistic analysis to contemporary music and to highlight the importance of morphology in everyday language use.

## **Literary Review**

### **Morphology**

One of the key areas of linguistics is morphology, which specifically deals with the structure and formation of words. Aronoff & Fudeman (2011: 2) define morphology as the branch of linguistics that studies the structure, mental processing, and function of words in language. The process of forming or modifying words is referred to as word formation. However, as observed by Aronoff & Fudeman (2011: 48) in their work, *What is Morphology?*, the term 'word formation' is not always used consistently throughout linguistic study. To avoid such ambiguity, Aronoff & Fudeman distinguish two major types of morphological processes: derivational and inflectional processes.

### **Derivational Process**

Derivation is a morphological process that involves a new lexeme being formed from an existing one, resulting in a change in lexical meaning or lexical category of the original word (Aronoff & Fudeman, 2011: 47). Similarly, according to Katamba (1993: 47), derivation plays a crucial role in word formation by either changing the base word's meaning or changing its word class. In conclusion, as a morphological process, derivation serves a lexical function, often leading to a change in word class and a modification of meaning.

According to the Aronoff & Fudeman concept, there are various types of derivational processes, including:

#### **1) Derivational Affixation**

According to Aronoff & Fudeman (2011: 3), affixation is the morphological process of attaching affixes to a base word to create a new word. As explained by Katamba (1993: 48), derivational affixes are used to create new words by either changing only meaning, changing both meaning and class, or changing the type of meaning within the same class. Affixation in English involves only prefixes and suffixes. Prefixes are attached to the beginning of a word (like *re-* in *redo*, *rewrite*, *rethink*), while suffixes are added to the end (like *-ize* in *modernize*, *equalize*, *centralize*) (Akmajian et al., 2010: 20).

## **2) Compounding**

As stated by Aronoff & Fudeman (2011: 47), compounding is a type of derivational process that creates a new lexeme (word) by combining two or more other lexemes (words). As mentioned by Yule (2022: 64), this morphological process results in various types of compounds, including compound nouns (example: *textbook*, *wallpaper*, *bookcase*), compound adjectives (example: *good-looking*, *low-paid*), and combinations of adjectives and nouns (example: *fast-food*, *full-time*).

## **3) Zero-derivation**

Zero-derivation, also referred to as conversion, is a productive derivational process in which a word changes its lexical category without any modifications to its phonological form or the addition of an affix (Aronoff & Fudeman, 2011: 115).

#### 4) **Blending**

Blending, as defined by Aronoff & Fudeman (2011: 119), is a derivational process that creates new words by combining parts of two or more existing words. Some common examples of blending as mentioned by Yule (2022: 64) are *smog* (from *smoke* and *fog*), *brunch* (from *breakfast* and *lunch*), *motel* (from *motor* and *hotel*), and *bit* (*binary* and *digit*).

#### 5) **Acronyms**

Acronyms are a type of derivational process in which new words are formed by taking the beginning letters of a sequence of words (Aronoff & Fudeman, 2011: 120). For example, *CD* (Compact Disk).

#### 6) **Clipping**

Aronoff & Fudeman (2011: 122) define clipping as the process of creating a new word by truncating an existing word. For example, Yule (2022: 65) lists the following words: *ad* (advertisement), *fan* (fanatic), *flu* (influenza), *typo* (typographical error), *pub* (public house), and *exam* (examination).

#### 7) **Backformation**

Backformation is a morphological process in which an affix from an existing word is removed to create a new one (Aronoff & Fudeman, 2011: 122). Common examples of words created by this process, as provided by Yule (2022: 65), are *edit* (from *editor*), *emote* (from *emotion*), and *mix* (from *mixture*).

### **Inflectional Process**

Aronoff & Fudeman (2011: 47) define inflection as the morphological process that creates various grammatical forms of a single word to adjust it to the grammatical structure of a sentence. Unlike the derivational process, which creates new words, inflection serves as a grammatical function (Yule, 2022: 82). Inflection serves to represent grammatical properties such as degree, tense, possession, or number.

Aronoff & Fudeman proposed various types of inflectional processes, including:

#### 1) **Inflectional Affixation**

Unlike derivational affixes, inflectional affixes serve a purely grammatical purpose and do not change the word class (Fromkin et al., 2011: 50). In English, inflectional affixes are only suffixes. According to Fromkin et al. (2011: 51), inflectional suffixes follow specific patterns in English, including third-person singular present (-s), plural (-s), superlative (-est), comparative (-er), progressive (-ing), past tense (-ed), possessive (-'s), and past participle (-en).

## 2) Suppletion

According to Aronoff & Fudeman (2011: 176), suppletion is a type of inflectional process in which a word's form changes in a way that is not morphologically predictable. A common example of suppletion in English as mentioned by Aronoff & Fudeman (2011: 176) is the verb "be" (*am, is, are, was, were, be*) and personal pronouns.

## 3) Apophony

Apophony, also known as internal change, is a morphological process involving a vowel change inside a root or base word (Aronoff & Fudeman, 2011: 173-174). The two forms of apophony are ablaut and umlaut. Katamba (1993: 101) defines ablaut as the vowel change in the root of a word that indicates a grammatical shift, for instance, in *drive* becoming *drove*. In contrast, umlaut, as defined by Aronoff & Fudeman (2011: 174), refers to the type of vowel change that is found in pairings of singular-plural nouns, such as *foot* into *feet*.

## 4) Reduplication

Aronoff & Fudeman (2011: 81) define reduplication as the process of creating a new grammatical or semantic form by repeating a part of a word, either from the beginning or the end of a word.

## Functions of Derivation and Inflection

In language structure, derivation and inflection are two major categories of morphological processes. According to Katamba (1993: 47), derivation plays a crucial role in word formation by either changing the base word's meaning or changing its grammatical class. The key function of the derivational process includes:

### **1) Changing the lexical category of words**

Derivational morphology can change the lexical category of a word by adding prefixes or suffixes. According to Halawa (2021), based on their function in forming new words, derivational suffixes are divided into noun forming, adjective forming, verb forming, and adverb forming.

### **2) Changing the meaning of words**

According to Katamba (1993: 47), derivational morphology changes the meaning of the root word to which they are attached to create new words. Katamba (1993: 47) presents an example: *obey* vs *dis-* + *obey* (both are verbs but with opposite meanings).

### **3) Forming words with clear semantic meaning**

Fromkin et al. (2011: 48) derivational morphology contributes to lexical meaning in a way that content words do, which convey essential meaning in a sentence. For instance, as provided by Fromkin et al. (2011: 48), the adjective *pure* can be affixed with *-ify* and *-cation*, resulting in *purify*, which means ‘to make pure’ and *purification*, which means ‘the process of making pure’.

Meanwhile, as stated by Lieber (2016: 102), inflection refers to the morphological process that forms a word to fit various grammatical contexts without changing the word’s lexical category. The key function of inflectional morphology to Lieber (2016), includes indicating number, indicating person, indicating case, indicating tense, and indicating aspect.

## Research Method

The researcher employed qualitative research in this study. Creswell & Creswell (2018) define qualitative research as an approach to collecting and analyzing descriptive data inductively in order to interpret and understand the deeper meanings expressed through language.

The object of the research is *Buzz*, a studio album by NIKI that was officially released under the 88rising Music label. The researcher accessed the songs from Spotify. The lyrics analyzed in this study were taken from Genius Lyrics. The main source of data is song lyrics from NIKI's album *Buzz* (2024). The secondary data used in this research is gathered from publications in journals, books, and other related literature.

The method of collecting data in this research is by doing observation. The procedures are listening to the *Buzz* album, reading the song lyrics, identifying song lyrics that contain derivational and inflectional processes, classifying the data based on the data found in the lyrics, and selecting the most relevant data for deep analysis.

After the data have been classified the researcher used four steps for analyzing data, as outlined by Creswell & Creswell (2018), such as: displaying the chosen data, numbering the data, explaining, and interpreting the chosen data.

## Finding and Discussion

In this chapter, the researcher presents a deep analysis of the types of morphological processes and their functions found in the thirteen song lyrics from NIKI's *Buzz* album.

### 1) Types of Morphological Processes

After analyzing the morphological processes in the lyrics, the researcher concluded that both types of morphological processes are commonly used in the lyrics, with inflectional processes appearing more frequently.

#### a) Derivational Process

The researcher identified several derivational morphological processes which lead to the change of word class or a modification of meaning. Among the derivational processes examined, acronyms and backformation

were not presented in the data. The most frequently occurring process was affixation followed by compounding. Zero-derivation and clipping appeared with the same frequency, while blending was the least occurring process.

### (1) Derivational Affixation

Derivational affixation that were identified in the lyrics of NIKI's *Buzz* album include various derivational suffixes such as *-ing*, *-ed*, *-ly*, *-ion*, *-er*, *-y*, *-ness*, *-ous*, *-en*, *-al*, *-sy*, *-ty*, *-ine*, *-some*, *-ify*, *-less*, *-ship*, *-ie*, and *-dom*, as well as derivational prefixes such as *un-*, *under-*, and *a-*. The distribution of these affixes is shown in the following data.

#### Data 36

*“No, guys, I swear he’s not emotionally unavailable”*

*(Focus, NIKI, 2024: line 6)*

The word *emotionally* is formed by adding the suffix *-ly* to the adjective *emotional*, resulting in an adverb. The adjective *emotional* itself is derived from the base noun *emotion* through the addition of the suffix *-al*. This data illustrates a multi-step of derivational process involving the combination of suffixes: *emotion* (noun) → *emotional* (adjective) → *emotionally* (adverb).

### (2) Compounding

The most common types of compound words found in the album include compound nouns and compound adjectives. The data below provides instances of compound words.

#### Data 112

*“Or a half-baked thought”*

*(Paths, NIKI, 2024: line 15)*

The term *half-baked* is an example of compound adjective, which is created by combining two free morphemes: *half* and *baked* with hyphen (-). *Half* refers to one of two equal parts of something, while *baked* means cooked using dry heat. These words combined to form the compound word *half-baked*, which means ‘incomplete’.

### (3) Zero-derivation

The instances of zero-derivation found in the lyrics involve verbs converted into nouns, while one instance involves noun to verb. The following data shows the example of zero-derivation found in the *Buzz* album lyrics.

#### Data 125

*“And I’ll take the dog on a drive somewhere”*

*(Take Care, NIKI, 2024: line 8)*

The word *drive* stands as a noun which derived from the verb *drive* through zero-derivation with no affix added.

### (4) Clipping

In the lyrics of NIKI’s *Buzz* album, clipping appeared the same frequency as zero-derivation. In most cases observed in the data, the clipped word appear with an apostrophe which indicates the omission of one or more letters. The following data presented the instance of clipping.

#### Data 140

*“’Bout getting my hands dirty”*

*(Blue Moon, NIKI, 2024: line 34)*

The word *'bout* is the example of clipping process. It is formed by removing the initial syllable in the word *about*. The syllable *a* is omitted and replaced with an apostrophe to indicate the omission of one letter.

### (5) Blending

Among the derivational process identified, blending is the least frequently appearing. The following data illustrates this morphological process.

#### Data 134

*“To wanna get brunch? No thanks”*

*(Colossal Loss, NIKI, 2024: line 22)*

The word *brunch* is the example of blending process. It is formed by combining the beginning of *breakfast* and the end of *lunch*, resulting in a new word that functions as a noun. *Brunch* refers to a meal that serves as both *breakfast* and *lunch*, typically eaten in the late morning or early afternoon.

## b) Inflectional Process

The researcher found that inflectional morphological process is most frequently appeared in the *Buzz* album. Among inflectional processes observed, affixation was the most frequently used. In addition to affixation, there were suppletion and apophony. Notably, there were no instances of reduplication in the data. The detailed distribution of each inflectional processes is presented below.

### (1) Inflectional Affixation

The data showed that the plural marker (-s) and the progressive marker (-ing) were the most often used inflectional suffixes. Other affixes discovered include the third-person singular person (-s), past tense (-ed), past participle forms, superlative, comparative, and possessive markers.

#### Data 49 and 50

*“The songs, the scars, the life”*

*(Paths, NIKI, 2024: line 30)*

In the lyric above, the words *songs* and *scars* are examples of plural nouns. The base words, *song* and *scar*, affixed with the plural suffix -s to indicate that these words refer to more than one item.

### (2) Suppletion

The data found the suppletive forms of pronouns, irregular verb *to be* (*was*, *were*, *been*), irregular verbs, comparative and superlative adjective. The following data presents examples of suppletion identified in the lyrics.

#### Data 133

*“There was sky, and where there wasn't”*

*(Strong Girl, NIKI, 2024: line 3)*

The term *was* is the classic example of suppletion. *Was* serves as the past tense of *is*. The change from *is* to *was* is not morphologically predictable.

#### Data 136 and 137

*“It's like you've known me through all my past lives”*

*(Tsunami, NIKI, 2024: line 4)*

The pronouns *me* and *my* represents suppletive forms of the base pronouns of the first-person singular *I*. These forms changes unpredictability from the base word *I*, resulting in *me* as the object form and *my* as the possessive form of *I*.

### (3) Apophony

Apophony is the least common inflectional process in the data. Apophony is categorized into two types: ablaut (grammatical shift) and umlaut (singular-plural nouns). The most common occurring apophony is ablaut. The instances of apophony found in the lyrics are given below.

#### **Data 149**

*“It’s just he hasn’t met the girl that’ll fix his life”*

*(Focus, NIKI, 2024: line 9)*

The word *met* is the example of ablaut created from the base verb *meet*. It involves a vowel change from /i:/ in *meet* to /e/ in *met*.

## 2) Functions of Derivation and Inflection

After examining the types of morphological processes found in the lyrics of NIKI’s *Buzz* album, this section discusses the specific functions of those processes.

## a) Derivation

Derivation primarily serves a lexical function, which involves either changing the lexical meaning or lexical category of a word. Each of these processes contributes to the creation of new words or meanings in different ways. The following discussion provided the key functions of derivation as observed in the data.

### (1) Changing the lexical category of words

#### Data 55

*“To my sadness and your sadder colossal loss”*

(*Colossal Loss*, NIKI, 2024: line 30)

The word *sadness* is the example of noun-forming as seen in the lyrics. It is derived from the adjective *sad* by attaching the derivational suffix *-ness*. In this case, the change from adjective to noun illustrates the derivation functions in changing lexical category of the word.

### (2) Changing the meaning of words

#### Data 71

*“Or an unexpected mention”*

(*Buzz*, NIKI, 2024: line 21)

The word *unexpected* is an adjective formed through both suffixation and prefixation. The base form of *unexpected* is *expected* which is derived from the verb *expect* by adding the suffix *-ed*. Subsequently, the prefix *un-* is added to indicate negation, resulting in the adjective *unexpected*, which means ‘not expected’.

### (3) Forming words with clear semantic meaning

#### Data 70

*“Thought my freedom endangered”*

(*Paths*, NIKI, 2024: line 19)

The word *freedom* is derived from the adjective *free* through the addition of derivational suffix *-dom*. The suffix *-dom* typically indicates a state or condition. In this case, it transforms *free* into *freedom* which means ‘the state of being free’.

## b) Inflection

Inflection is a morphological process that modifies a word to indicate grammatical features such as number, person, case, tense, and aspect. The following section discusses the key grammatical functions of inflection.

### (1) Indicating number

#### Data 18

*“Walls up to the skies, many men have marched around”*  
(*Heirloom Pain*, NIKI, 2024: line 16)

As shown in the lyric above, the word *skies* is the plural form of sky. It is formed by adding the suffix *-es*. This is a regular example of pluralization, indicating inflectional function of marking number.

### (2) Indicating person

#### Data 61 and 62

*“Never there when it counts and puts you right in therapy”*  
(*Heirloom Pain*, NIKI, 2024: line 3)

The verbs *counts* and *puts* are the example of inflectional process of third-person singular present tense. This is identified by their agreement with the third-person singular subject, in this case, *it*. This inflectional process serves grammatical function to indicate person, particularly third-person.

### (3) Indicating case

#### Data 138

*“I hope our paths cross again”*  
(*Paths*, NIKI, 2024: line 24)

The other possessive form found in the lyric is the word *our*. This form was different from the regular form of possessive *-‘s*. This word is a suppletive form of the pronoun *we*. This instance shows that case marking can also occur through suppletion, not just through the regular possessive *-‘s* suffix.

### (4) Indicating tense

#### Data 84 and 144

*“Maryland passed, so did I”*  
(*Strong Girl*, NIKI, 2024: line 5)

The word *passed* represented the past tense form of the verb *pass*. It formed by adding the regular inflectional suffix *-ed*, which indicates

the past action. This is a standard example of tense marking through inflection.

#### (5) Indicating aspect

##### Data 102

“You’re pulling me in”

(*Magnets*, NIKI, 2024: line 13)

The word *pulling* is inflected by adding the suffix *-ing* to the base verb *pull*. This process indicates a progressive aspect. The auxiliary *are* as in *you’re* together with *pulling* form the present continuous tense. This reflects how progressive aspect is marked through inflection.

## Conclusion

After analyzing the data in the previous chapter, the researcher concludes that the song lyrics in NIKI’s *Buzz* album contain both derivational and inflectional morphological processes. In term of derivational morphology, the processes identified in the lyrics include affixation, compounding, zero-derivation, blending, and clipping. Among these, affixation appears most frequently, while blending occurs least often. However, no data involving acronyms and backformation were found in the identified lyrics. Regarding inflectional morphology, the processes occurred in the album include affixation, suppletion, and apophony, with affixation also being the most commonly appearing. However, no data of reduplication was found in the data.

Each morphological process serves specific functions. In derivational process, the main functions are changing the lexical category of a word, changing the meaning of a word, and forming word with clear semantic meaning. In inflectional morphology, the primary functions are indicating number, indicating person, indicating case, indicating tense, and indicating aspect of a word without changing its meaning or word class.

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