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Inflectional affixes in j.k. Rowling's novel Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the use of inflectional affixes in J.K. Rowling's novel *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* from a morphological perspective. The research aims to identify the types of inflectional affixes and explain their grammatical functions in the narrative context. A descriptive qualitative method was employed, with data collected from selected words and sentences in the novel. The analysis is based on Yule's (2010) theory, which classifies English inflection into eight categories: plural, possessive, third person singular present, past tense, past participle, progressive, comparative, and superlative. The findings reveal a total of 34 inflectional forms, consisting of five plural forms, five possessives, three third person singular forms, ten past tense forms, three past participles, five progressive forms, two comparative forms, and two superlative forms. These results demonstrate that inflectional affixes play an essential role in conveying grammatical meaning without altering word class or core meaning. This study contributes to morphological analysis by illustrating the practical use of English inflectional affixes in literary texts and may serve as a reference for students and researchers in linguistics and English language studies.

Keyword: inflectional affixes; morphology; English grammar; literary text; Harry Potter

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1. INTRODUCTION

Morphology, as a branch of linguistics, focuses on the internal structure of words and the processes by which words are formed. One important area within morphology is the study of inflectional affixes, which are grammatical markers added to words to express grammatical information such as tense, number, aspect, comparison, and possession without changing the word's core meaning or lexical category. Understanding inflectional morphology is therefore essential for analyzing how languages encode grammatical relationships within texts.

English inflectional morphology constitutes a closed and limited system of grammatical markers that modify words to express grammatical relationships while preserving their lexical category (Aronoff & Fudeman, 2011; Katamba, 1993). An analysis of *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* demonstrates that the novel consistently employs core English inflectional affixes to construct meaning, maintain syntactic agreement, and convey temporal and relational information. These findings are consistent with established linguistic theories that describe English inflection as a finite system primarily concerned with number, tense, aspect, comparison, person, and possession (Fromkin et al., 2018; Yule, 2020).

This article aims to examine the use of inflectional affixes found in the novel *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*. The discussion highlights how inflectional affixes function to mark grammatical variation in word forms without altering their basic meaning or word class. By analyzing selected examples from the novel, this study seeks to provide readers with a clearer understanding of the role of inflectional affixes in context and to illustrate their practical application in English through a well-known literary work.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a descriptive qualitative research method. A descriptive qualitative approach is appropriate because the research focuses on describing and interpreting linguistic phenomena rather than measuring them statistically. Accordingly, the data are analyzed in the form of words and sentences rather than numerical values.

Sugiyono (2012) states that descriptive qualitative research is a method used to examine an object or phenomenon with the aim of providing a systematic, factual, and accurate description of the facts and characteristics of the phenomenon under study, without seeking to explain causal relationships or test hypotheses.

The data used in this study are taken from the novel *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* by J. K. Rowling. The primary data source is the electronic version (e-book) of the novel, which was accessed from the following website: https://www.hasanboy.uz/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Harry-Potter-and-the-Chamber-of-Secrets.pdf

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The author found eight types of inflectional affixes in the novel *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* by J. K. Rowling. According to Yule (2010) in *The Study of Language*, English has eight inflectional affixes, namely plural, possessive, third person singular present, past tense, past participle, present participle, comparative, and superlative.

A. Plural

In *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*, the author found five data that contain plural inflectional affixes.

Data 1: He missed the castle, with its secret passageways and ghosts."

The words *passageways* and *ghosts* are plural forms created by adding the inflectional suffix -s to their singular forms *passageway* and *ghost*. This suffix is classified as an inflectional affix because it indicates number (plurality) without changing the lexical meaning or grammatical category of the nouns.

Data 2: "May I take your coats, Mr and Mrs Mason?"

The word *coats* is derived from the base word *coat* by adding the suffix -s, which marks plural number. This inflection does not change the word class or the core meaning of the noun.

The plural inflectional forms found in the data are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Plural Inflectional Affixes

No	Base Word	Inflectional Suffix	Inflected Word
1	Passageway	-s	Passageways
2	Ghost	-s	Ghosts
3	Coat	-s	Coats
4	Friend	-s	Friends
5	Student	-s	Students

B. Possessive

There are five data that show the use of possessive inflectional affixes in *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*.

Data 3: "Mrs Weasley conjured up a sumptuous dinner which included all of Harry's favourite things."

The word *Harry's* contains the possessive inflectional suffix 's, which indicates ownership or association. This suffix does not change the grammatical category of the word; *Harry* remains a noun (proper noun), and no new lexical item is formed.

Data 4: "Funny you should mention Draco's father."

The word *Draco's* also uses the possessive inflection 's to indicate a relationship of ownership, meaning *the father of Draco*. This inflection does not alter the word class or lexical meaning of the base word.

The possessive forms identified in the novel are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Possessive Inflectional Affixes

No	Base Word	Inflectional Suffix	Inflected Word
1	Draco	's	Draco's
2	Harry	's	Harry's
3	Slytherin	's	Slytherin's
4	Hagrid	's	Hagrid's
5	Malfoy	's	Malfoy's

C. Third Person Singular Present

There are three data showing the use of third person singular present inflectional affixes found in *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*, as follows:

Data 5: "Harry Potter asks if he can help Dobby."

The verb *asks* is a third person singular present tense form because the subject *Harry Potter* refers to a single person (third person singular). In English present tense, verbs typically add the inflectional suffix -s or -es when the subject is *he, she, it,* or a singular noun. The change from *ask* to *asks* represents an inflectional process because it only marks grammatical agreement and does not change the verb's meaning or word class.

Data 6: "Harry Potter speaks not of his triumph over He Who Must Not Be Named."

The word *speaks* functions as a third person singular present verb. The suffix -s is added to the base form *speak* to agree with the singular subject *Harry Potter*. This inflection marks grammatical agreement while preserving the verb's lexical meaning and category.

The third person singular present forms identified in the data are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Third Person Singular Present Inflectional Affixes

No	Base Word	Inflectional Suffix	Inflected Word
1	Ask	-s	Asks
2	Speak	-s	Speaks
3	Work	-s	Works

D. Past Tense

In *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*, the author found ten data that use past tense inflectional affixes, as follows:

Data 8: "But Dobby's eyes were wide and he seemed to be trying to give Harry a hint."

The word *seemed* is a regular past tense verb formed by adding the inflectional suffix -ed to the base verb *seem*. This suffix indicates that the action occurred in the past. The verb remains a verb and retains its basic meaning, so the suffix -ed functions as an inflectional marker of tense.

Data 9: "Dobby's voice dropped to an urgent whisper."

The word *dropped* is also a regular past tense form created by adding -ed to the base verb *drop*. The suffix marks past time and does not change the grammatical category or core meaning of the verb.

Data 10: "'Ron!' breathed Harry."

The word *breathed* is the past tense form of the regular verb *breathe*, formed by adding -ed. This inflection signals that the action took place in the past and is commonly used in narrative texts.

The past tense inflectional forms found in the novel are summarized in Table 4.

Table 4. Past Tense Inflectional Affixes

No	Base Word	Inflectional Suffix	Inflected Word
1	Seem	-ed	Seemed
2	Drop	-ed	Dropped
3	Breathe	-ed	Breathed
4	Look	-ed	Looked
5	Stop	-ed	Stopped
6	Listen	-ed	Listened
7	Clap	-ed	Clapped
8	Whisper	-ed	Whispered
9	Moan	-ed	Moaned
10	Squeak	-ed	Squeaked

E. Past Participle

There are two data that show the use of past participle inflectional forms in *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*.

Data 11: "'What terrible things?' said Harry at once."

The word *said* is the past tense and past participle form of the irregular verb *say*. In this context, *said* functions as a past tense verb in narrative reporting. Although its form is irregular, it remains an inflectional form because it expresses grammatical tense without changing the word class or core meaning of the verb.

Data 12: "Without the special features which Mr Weasley had added."

The word *added* is a past participle of the regular verb *add*. It is formed by adding the suffix -ed to the base word *add* and is used with the auxiliary verb *had* to form the past perfect tense. The suffix -ed here marks a grammatical function and does not create a new word or change the lexical category of the verb.

The past participle forms identified are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Past Participle Inflectional Affixes

No	Base Word	Inflectional Form	Inflected Word
1	Say	Irregular	Said
2	Add	-ed	Added

F. Progressive (Present Participle)

The author found five data using the progressive (present participle) form in *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*, as follows:

Data 13: "He lay on his bed watching the sun sinking behind the bars on the window and wondered miserably what was going to happen to him."

The word *sinking* is a progressive (present participle) form of the verb *sink*. It is formed by adding the inflectional suffix -ing to the base verb *sink*. This suffix indicates an ongoing action and does not change the grammatical category or core meaning of the verb.

Data 14: "'Why haven't you been answering my letters?'"

The word *answering* is a present participle form derived from the base verb *answer* by adding the suffix -ing. In this context, it is used with the auxiliary verb *been* to form the present perfect progressive tense. The suffix -ing functions as an inflectional marker and does not alter the lexical meaning or word class.

The progressive forms identified in the data are summarized in Table 6.

Table 6. Progressive (Present Participle) Inflectional Affixes

No	Base Word	Inflectional Suffix	Inflected Word
1	Sink	-ing	Sinking
2	Borrow	-ing	Borrowing
3	Shine	-ing	Shining
4	Answer	-ing	Answering
5	Wait	-ing	Waiting

G. Comparative

There are two data showing the use of comparative inflectional forms in *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*, as follows:

Data 15: "It's a bit smaller…"

The word *smaller* is a comparative adjective formed by adding the inflectional suffix -er to the base adjective *small*. This suffix is used to compare two entities and does not change the word class or the basic meaning of the adjective.

Data 16: "Mrs Weasley's sons were taller than she was."

The word *taller* is also a comparative adjective derived from the base adjective *tall* by adding the suffix -er. This inflection indicates a higher degree of comparison while maintaining the adjective's grammatical category.

The comparative forms are presented in Table 7.

Table 7. Comparative Inflectional Affixes

No	Base Word	Inflectional Suffix	Inflected Word
1	Small	-er	Smaller
2	Tall	-er	Taller

H. Superlative

There are two data showing the use of superlative inflectional forms in *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*, as follows:

Data 17: "The Burrow had been the happiest of his life."

The word *happiest* is a superlative adjective formed from the base adjective *happy* by adding the inflectional suffix -est. This suffix indicates the highest degree of comparison and does not alter the word class or lexical meaning of the adjective.

Data 18: "Looked like the largest."

The word *largest* is a superlative form derived from the base adjective *large* by adding the suffix -est. This inflection marks the maximum degree of comparison while maintaining the adjective category.

The superlative forms are summarized in Table 8.

Table 8. Superlative Inflectional Affixes

No	Base Word	Inflectional Suffix	Inflected Word
1	Happy	-est	Happiest
2	Large	-est	Largest

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis conducted in this study, the author identified a total of 34 inflectional words in *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*. These data consist of 5 plural forms, 5 possessive forms, 3 third person singular present forms, 10 past tense forms, 3 past participle forms, 5 progressive (present participle) forms, 2 comparative forms, and 2 superlative forms. These findings confirm the presence of the eight English inflectional categories as proposed by Yule (2010).

The inflectional affixes identified in this research include the suffixes -s, -ed, -d, -ing, -er, and -est, which function to express grammatical meanings such as number, possession, tense, aspect, comparison, and agreement without changing the lexical category or core meaning of the base words. This demonstrates that English inflectional morphology operates as a closed and systematic grammatical system.

This study shows that inflectional affixes play a crucial role in conveying grammatical relationships in English narrative texts. Through the analysis of authentic examples from a literary work, the research illustrates how these affixes are naturally and consistently applied by the author to construct meaning, maintain grammatical accuracy, and support narrative coherence. By observing the use of inflectional forms in context, readers can gain a clearer understanding of how morphology functions in real language use.

Finally, the author hopes that this research will contribute to the study of morphology, particularly in understanding inflectional affixes in English. It is expected that this study can serve as a useful reference for students, researchers, and readers who are interested in English grammar, linguistic analysis, and the structural features of literary texts. Moreover, this research highlights the importance of recognizing how minor changes in word forms, such as the addition of inflectional suffixes, can significantly affect meaning and clarity in written communication.

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