Inflectional Process in the Spanish Lyrics of "On My Way": A Morphological Study

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Abstract. The aim of the study was to analyze the inflectional process towards the words in "On My Way" song's lyric by Alan Walker feat. Sabrina Carpenter and Farukko. The study employed the descriptive-qualitative method to understand the inflectional process without numerical data. The data, which sourced from the lyrics of "On My Way" song, were collected through documentation, content-analysis, and interview techniques. Inflectional morphology was used to analyze the data through data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verifying. The result showed that 16 inflected words were found, which the words underwent conjugation were found the most, followed by gender and plurality.

Keywords: Inflectional process; Morphology; On My Way lyric; Spanish language

1. INTRODUCTION

Morphology, a branch of linguistics, studies the relationship between a word's form, meaning, and internal structure (Booij, 2007). According to Lieber (2009) word forms can change depending on their sentence use. Morphology is the study of how words are formed and highly related to the four skills of language (reading, writing, speaking, and listening) as people need to understand how to form words to be able to use it in a sentence (Zuhri et al., 2022). Words are built from morphemes, minimal units carrying lexical or grammatical meaning, which cannot be broken down further (Booij, 2007). Morphemes are classified as free, which can stand alone, or bound, which must attach to a free morpheme (Booij, 2007).

Bound Morpheme is classified into two categories, Inflectional morphemes and derivational morphemes. According to Booij (2007), unlike derivational morphemes which led to the shift of lexical category of word class and meaning, Inflectional morphemes act as markers within a lexeme, resulting in a grammatical word form. Common inflectional morphemes include those indicating plurality, possession (for nouns), comparison (for adjectives), tense (for verbs), and, in some languages, gender.

The phenomenon that became the focus of this study is the use of Spanish inflectional morphological processes found in the lyrics of the song *"On My Way",* a song composed by Allan Walker with collaboration with Sabrina Carpenter and Latin singer, Farukko. Spanish language was chosen as Spanish is known to have a complex inflectional system, including verb conjugation, gender agreement, plurality, and tense (Moreno-Sandoval & Goñi-Menoyo,

2002), which is quite different from what is found in Indonesian, where fewer inflectional forms are used, and affixes such as *ter-an* or *ke-an*, as well as repetition and clitics like *ku-* and *mu-*, are more commonly applied (Denistia & Baayen, 2021; Pastika, 2012).

The song "On My Way" was published on 2019, to celebrate the first anniversary of famous online game, PUBG. The lyric is mostly in English, however one part that was sung by Farukko was in Spanish. Although the Spanish part of the song is limited, it contains various forms of inflectional morphemes, such as verb conjugation, gender agreement, and plurality. These grammatical markers appear naturally in the lyrics and can be analyzed to understand how inflection works in real-life language usage. This phenomenon is interesting because it shows how standard grammatical are applied even in creative media like music, where informal and artistic language is often used.

Several research have been conducted regarding the inflectional process. The study by Meyfiany et al. (2024) explored the inflectional and derivational process in Javanese language and found that only Javanese noun and verbs underwent a derivational process and additional adjective in inflectional process. Ifadloh et al. (2022) conducted study on inflectional process in the short story by Charles Dickin entitled "The Child's Story" and found that the most used inflectional morphemes were plural nouns with 35 morphemes, followed by 32 present participle, 29 past tense verb, 4, 3rd person singular/present tense verb, 3 superlative, 2 comparative, and 1 past participle verb. Another study was conducted by Febriyanti et al. (2021), that analyze the error of inflectional morphemes in the fourth semester of English department of *STKIP PGRI Bandar Lampung* students writing. The result shows that the errors were mostly found in inflectional process in verbs. Although there are already a lot of study from both English and regional language in Indonesia, there is no study which analyze the inflection process in Spanish language particularly in "On My Way" Spanish part. Therefore, this study was conducted to analyze the inflectional process in Spanish part of "On My Way" song.

2. THEORY

Morphology falls under the umbrella of linguistics and is essentially the study of the relationship between a word's form and its meaning, as well as the structure of its constituents (Booij, 2007). Lieber (2009) stated that words are formed and the form could be changed based on how they were used in a sentence. According to Booij (2007), morphology is also used to provide the extension of words in a systematic way and creating new words for people used to

label new objects, events, or properties. Thus, morphology is the study of word's formation and the way the word form shifts, depending on how it was used in a sentence.

Words are constructed from block of words, minimal units in a language which also carried lexical and grammatical meaning called morpheme and cannot be further analyzed or divided into smaller parts (Booij, 2007. Morpheme is classified into two types, which can be either a free morpheme, able to stand alone, or a bound morpheme, requiring a free morpheme to complete its meaning (Booij, 2007; Fitriyeni, 2024). Free morpheme is the one that carried the lexical meaning, while bound morpheme carried the grammatical meaning. For example, the word dislike, the word "like" is the free morpheme, it can stand alone and have meaning, which is to enjoy or approve of something or someone. "Dis-" in other hand, could not stand alone as it need the free morpheme to complete its meaning. It only showed the negation of the verb "like and showed with the hypen that preceed and/or afterward the morpheme.

Bound morphemes are further divided into two main types: inflectional morphemes and derivational morphemes. According to Booij (2007), derivational morphemes are used to create new words by changing the meaning or the lexical category of the base word. For example, adding the suffix *-ness* to the adjective *happy* forms the noun *happiness*, changing both the meaning and the word class. The word chnge from an adjective to noun, as well as the meaning from the feeling that shwoing pleasure to the state of being happy.

In contrast, inflectional morphemes do not create new words, meaning or alter the word class, but instead provide grammatical information within a single lexeme (Booij, 2006; Rushiti, 2022). According to Booij (2006), inflectional morphemes play a role in reflecting aspects of sentence syntactic structure and involve the creation of varied forms of the same word.

(3) *Nouns*: Number (singular, plural, dual, etc.), Case (nominative, genitive, accusative, etc.), Definiteness, Gender;
Verbs: Tense (present, past, future), Aspect (imperfective, perfective, etc.), Mood (indicative, subjunctive, imperative, etc.), Voice (active, passive, etc.), Number (singular, plural, etc.), Person (first, second, third), Gender;
Adjectives: Degree (positive, comparative, superlative), Number, Gender, Case, Definiteness.

source: Booij (2007)

Figure 1. Indicators of Inflectional Morphemes

These morphemes cover indications of plurality, possession (for nouns), comparison (for adjectives), tense (for verbs). For instance, the *-s* in *dogs* shows plurality, while *-ed* in *walked* indicates past tense. In some languages like Spanish, infectional morpheme also include

gender (Booij, 2007). Many languages categorize noun and adjective inflectional processes as declension and verb inflectional processes as conjugation (Booij, 2007).

According to Booij (2007), at the morphological level, words may be made up of more than one part, which are considered the morphological atoms of a word. These atoms are the smallest meaningful units in a word's structure that cannot be divided any further into smaller morphological components. These atoms are root, stem, and base.

- Root is the smallest unit that carried the lexical meaning and could not further analyzed without destroying the meaning (G. E. Booij, 2010; Cao, 2022; Fábregas et al., 2021). A root is typically a free morpheme, though in some cases it can also be bound. It is the core unit of meaning in a word, and it does not have a fixed position, it can appear at the beginning, middle, or end of a word, depending on the language and structure. The root is what remains when all derivational and inflectional affixes are removed.

- Stem is a root plus a morpheme that marks the word class adscription of the root, excluding inflectional affixes for tense, person, or number (G. E. Booij, 2010; Fábregas et al., 2021). In Spanish verb, the morpheme that marked the word class is the thematic vowel. Thematic vowel is the morpheme that indicates the verb's conjugation class (-ar, -er, or -ir), and serves as the base to which inflectional endings are added. The thematic vowel is typically -a-, -e-, or -i-, corresponding to the first, second, and third conjugation classes, respectively. Stems play a role in inflection since they are the target of the inflectional process.

- Base is every root and stem, including their inflectional or derivational affixes (G. E. Booij, 2010; Cao, 2022; Fábregas et al., 2021) .

For example, in Spanish, the verb *hablamos* ("we speak"), the root *habl-* combines with the thematic vowel *-a-* to form the stem *habla-*, to which the inflectional suffix *-mos* is added. Although the thematic vowel often appears in present tense forms, it may disappear or be replaced in certain conjugations, such as the first-person singular present *(hablo, como, vivo)*, where the inflectional ending *-o* directly attaches to the root, suppressing the overt appearance of the thematic vowel. Nonetheless, the thematic vowel remains an important part of the underlying morphological structure of regular Spanish verbs.

3. RESEARCH METHOD

This study was conducted using a descriptive qualitative method, which is commonly used to explore and understand the meaning of a phenomenon through non-numerical data (Cresswell, 2014). As Creswell (2014: 37,152) explained, qualitative studies often involve

personal engagement and interpretation, based on contextual understanding and participant perspectives.

As this study analyzed an already existing text rather than collecting new data, the data source is classified as secondary data, specifically the Spanish part of the song "On My Way" by Alan Walker featuring Sabrina Carpenter and Farukko. The lyric was retrieved on 9 June 2025, in Genius.com (n.d.), at https://genius.com/Alan-walker-sabrina-carpenter-and-farruko-on-my-way-lyrics. Genius is a platform which could be called as a music encyclopedia which provide a song's information including the music itself, the lyric, the stories behind the song, and the meaning of the song. The focus of the study is to analyze the words in the Spanish lyric that underwent an inflectional process.

The data was collected using documentation, content analysis technique, and interview toanalyze the inflectional process. Documentation is the techniques to collect data based on public documents such as newspaper, official reports, or articles, and private documents, such as personal journals and diaries, letters, and e-mail (Cresswell, 2014). In this study, the Spanish lyrics of the song "On My Way" were obtained from the lyric website Genius.com. Since the lyrics were officially published and accessible, no transcription was necessary.

This study also employed content analysis is a scientific way to study messages by looking at their meanings, context, and purpose, done by identifying certain features in the content to make conclusions (Rudy & Adhitya, 2022). The lyrics were studied to identify verbs and other inflected words, which were then analyzed based on their morphological changes related to tense, plurality, gender, etc. An in-depth interview also conducted with Spanish-speaker to validate the comprehension of the inflection process.

After the data were collected, the data then analyzed using the theory of inflectional morphemes proposed by Booij (2007) and Miles et al. (2014) framework, which consist data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verifying. The analysis process was done by taking these steps: 1) condensating the data by identified the words that underwent inflectional process, looking into the word class, such as verbs and nouns; 2) See the stem to find the indicator of the inflection, such as conjugation, plurality, gender, or tenses; 3) Analyze the inflectional process of the words and displaying the data using table and text; 4) Enhanced the analysis process by doing verification in the form of interview with Spanish-speaker.

4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

According to Booij (2007), inflectional morphemes play a role in reflecting aspects of sentence syntactic structure and involve the creation of varied forms of the same word. These

morphemes cover indications of plurality, possession (for nouns), comparison (for adjectives), tense (for verbs), and, in some languages like Spanish, gender (Booij, 2007). Many languages categorize noun and adjective inflectional processes as declension and verb inflectional processes as conjugation (Booij, 2007). In this study, the declension through gender forms, plural forms, and conjugation through verb tense in the Spanish part of the song "On My Way" was found.

Plural

Fábregas et al. (2021) stated that in Spanish, plurals are identified by incorporating morphemes such as '-s,' '-es,' and '-ces'. While in English, nouns ending in a vowel receive the morpheme '-es,' and those ending in a consonant take only '-s,' in Spanish, the pattern is reversed. Specifically, Spanish adds '-s' to nouns ending in a vowel and '-es' to those ending in a consonant (Gudmestad et al., 2020). Additionally, for nouns concluding with 'z,' the ending is replaced by the morpheme '-ces' (Sanchez, 2023). In On My Way lyric, the word that indicating plurality only two words in one phrase were found.

Tabel 1. Plural Process in Spanish Word

Bases	Singular	Plural Process
Mis errores	Mi error	Mi + s Error+es

According to the table above, the phrase *mis errores* ("my mistakes") demonstrates regular inflectional processes in Spanish, specifically in the formation of plural possessive adjectives and plural nouns. When compared to its singular counterpart *mi error* ("my mistake"), the changes observed in both *mi* and *error* follow predictable morphological patterns of adjective-noun agreement.

The word *mi* is a singular possessive adjective that agrees in number with the noun it modifies. To express plurality, the plural marker '-s' is added to the base form, resulting in *mis*. This transformation is regular and applies to adjectives that end in a vowel. Therefore, *mis* is formed through a simple and regular inflectional process: ***mi + -s → mis***.

Similarly, the noun *error*, which ends in a consonant, becomes *errores* in the plural form. In Spanish, nouns ending in a consonant typically take the suffix '-es' to indicate plurality. As a result, *errores* is formed by attaching '-es' to the base noun: **error + -es → errores.** This follows the standard morphological rule for pluralizing consonant-ending nouns.

Gender

In some language that has gender, the impact of gender is solely observed in the direct morphological effects it has on dependent adjectives and determiners (Booij, 2007). Spanish

features gender-specific lexemes, categorized into masculine and feminine genders. Masculine nouns typically conclude with the suffix '-o,' while feminine nouns conclude with the suffix '-a' (Gudmestad et al., 2020). The agreement extends to adjectives and the determiners, which generally follow the gender of the noun they modify (Molnar et al., 2021; Nicolás Saiz, 2025). Consequently, when a noun is masculine, the accompanying adjective and determiner also takes on masculine gender, and vice versa.

In the lyric, four nouns and two determiners are indicating gender were found. Two of them are indicating feminine and the other two are masculine.

Tabel 2. Gender-Masculine Process in Spanish Word

Bases	Gender
Humano	-o ending
Propio camino	-o ending in adjective and noun

- *Humano*

The noun *humano* in Spanish means "human". In the context of a song lyric, the form of the noun reflects the gender of the speaker. If the singer is a woman, the noun must appear as *humana*, while if the singer is a man, the masculine form *humano* is used. This agreement is a regular inflectional process in Spanish noun morphology. The noun *humano* follows the typical pattern of gender inflection where '-o' is used for masculine and '-a' for feminine: *humano → humana* (for feminine singular). In this case, since the singer is male, the form *humano* is grammatically appropriate.

- *Propio Camino*

In the phrase *propio camino*, which means "one's own path", the adjective *propio* also reflects regular agreement rules. *Propio* modifies *camino*, a masculine noun, and therefore retains the masculine form. If the noun were feminine, e.g., *propia vida*, means one's own life, the adjective would change to *propia*. This again demonstrates a standard inflectional pattern in Spanish where adjectives agree in gender and number with the noun they modify.

Tabel 3. Gender-Feminine Process in Spanish Word

Bases	Gender Morphemes
La linea	La (definite article)
La mano	La

Based on the table 3, the words *la línea* ("the line") and *la mano* ("the hand") both use the feminine definite article *la*, but they present interesting morphological observations related to gender marking and noun class.

- *La linea*

The noun *línea* follows the regular pattern of Spanish feminine nouns ending in '-a'. The article *la* marks it as feminine, and the noun itself ends in the typical feminine suffix '-a', which serves as a gender morpheme. In this case, both the base *línea* and the determiner *la* function together to indicate that the noun is feminine.

- *La mano*

The noun *mano* is a well-known exception to the general rule. While it ends in '-o', which is commonly associated with masculine nouns, it takes the feminine article *la*. This irregularity is historical and lexical rather than morphological. Despite its masculine-like ending, *mano* remains grammatically feminine and always pairs with *la*. Thus, the form *la mano* shows a mismatch between form and gender marking, where the gender is not transparent from the noun's suffix.

Conjugation

Conjugation refers to change tenses, mood, and subject pronoun in verbs (Pérez Saldanya, 2012). In Spanish, the identification of verbs is facilitated by their distinct endings. Each verb falls into one of three categories, characterized by special endings: '-er', '-ar', and '-ir'. All three endings convey the notion of "to" in English. Pérez Saldanya (2012) stated that Spanish has 62 simple forms and 188 compound forms for verbs. Same as English, verbs in Spanish also have two forms, regular and irregular, making the inflectional process becoming more complex. In "On My Way" lyrics, both the conjugation of the regular and irregular verbs were found.

a) '-Ar' Ending Regular Verbs

The table 4 below shows that there are three regular verbs with -ar ending found in On My Way song's lyric.

Tabel 4. Conjugation Process in Spanish '-Ar' Regular Verbs

Bases	Stem	Conjugation Process
Cans*é*	Cansar	Cans~~ar~~+ *é*
Acepto	Aceptar	Acept~~ar~~ + o
Amo	Amar	Am~~ar~~+ o

- *Cansé*

The verb *cansé* is the first-person singular form in the past tense or the preterite of the stem cansar ("to tire"). It is formed by taking the verb root *cans-* and adding the ending '-é', which is used for regular -ar past tense verbs. In the lyric of the song, the verb *cansé* was started with the pronoun *me*, the form of object pronoun "me". Literally, the meaning of *me canse* is

got tired myself, but got modified into "I got tired". Thus, *cansé* follows regular inflectional rules.

- *Acepto*

The verb *acepto* means "I accept," and it is the first person singular present tense form of the regular verb *aceptar*. It follows the standard '-ar' conjugation pattern. The form is composed of the root *acept-* and the regular present tense ending '-o'. So, **acepto = acept- + -o**, making it a regular inflectional process.

- *Amo*

The verb *amo* means "I love," in first person singular present tense of the verb *amar*. It is a regular '-ar' verb and follows standard inflection rules. The form is built by taking the root *am-* and adding the present tense ending '-o'. So, **amo = am- + -o**, representing a clear and regular inflectional process.

b) '-Er' Ending Regular Verb

Tabel 5. Conjugation Process in Spanish '-Er' Regular Verb

Base	Stem	Conjugation Process
Ves	Ver	Ver+ es

Based on the table 5 above, only one regular verb with -er ending was found in "On My Way" lyric which is *Ves* . The verb *ves* in Spanish means "you see," and it is the second person singular form of the verb *ver* in the present tense. *Ver* is considered an irregular verb overall due to its unpredictable forms in other tenses, such as *vi (preterite)*, *veía* (imperfect), and *vea* (subjunctive). However, the form *ves* itself follows a regular inflectional pattern. It is formed by combining the root *ve-* with the standard second person singular present tense ending '-s'. Although *ver* is irregular, *ves* is a regular present tense form that fits within the typical morphological structure. Therefore, *ves* can be categorized as a regular form of an irregular verb.

c) '-ie-' Inffix Irregular Verb

Tabel 6. Conjugation Process in Spanish '-ie-' Inffix Irregular Verbs

Base	Stem	Conjugation Process
Siento	Sentir	S(ie)ntir+ o

The verb *siento* in Spanish means "I feel," and it is the first person singular form of the verb *sentir* in the present tense. This verb belongs to the '-ir' verb group, but it is classified as irregular due to stem-changing behavior that deviates from the standard patterns of regular '-ir' conjugation.

The base form sentir comes from the Latin verb *sentīre*, which originally carried the meaning "to feel" or "to perceive." During its evolution into Spanish, *sentir* underwent typical phonological changes, but its present tense conjugation was also affected by a stem vowel alternation, a process known as '**e→ie**' diphthongization. As a result, the root *sent-* changes to *sient-* in stressed syllables, which we see in *siento.*

From a morphological standpoint, *siento* is formed by the altered stem *sient-* and the regular first person singular present tense suffix '-o.' Unlike completely irregular verbs like ir, which involve suppletion, *sentir* follows a predictable irregular pattern that still allows for segmentation into morphemes. The bases change itself is conditioned by phonological rules related to stress and syllable structure, rather than being an unpredictable or fossilized form.

d) Additonal -y ending Irregular Verbs

According to Coffman (2017), several explanations have been proposed for the addition of the 'y' (yod) in verbs *soy* and *voy*. One theory suggests that these verbs changed by analogy with haber, which evolved from *ha* to *hay*, possibly influenced by an old Romance particle 'y' meaning "there," still present in Modern French. Another explanation is that the yod appeared through the fusion of the pronoun *yo* ("I") with the verb. Some linguists argue that the yod was added to distinguish these verbs' stressed '-ó' endings from the similar third-person singular past endings of regular verbs. Additionally, it has been suggested that *soy* developed through analogy with the preterite form *fui*, which also contains a final "i" sound. Finally, contact with neighboring Romance languages such as Leonese or Portuguese, where similar patterns occurred, may have influenced this change.

Tabel 7. Conjugation Process in Spanish Additional -y ending Irregular Verbs

Base	Stem	Conjugation Process
Voy	Ir	Ir (vadere) + o
Soy	Ser	Ser+o

- *Voy*

Voy is the first-person singular form in the present tense that means "I'm going". The stem of the verb is *ir*, which means "to go". According to Penny (2002), the verb *ir* in Spanish is a combination of forms derived from Latin verbs such as *īre* (to go) and *vadere* (to proceed), with some scholars also mentioning minor influences from *ambulare* (to walk). The form *voy* is believed to have been influenced particularly by *vadere*, which contributed the initial 'v-' sound. Over time, voy developed as a result of historical and phonological changes, not through the usual inflectional process where a stem is simply combined with a regular ending. The '-

oy' part is not a typical present tense suffix like '-o', and it cannot be separated into distinct morphemes. Therefore, *voy* is considered a fixed form that must be memorized.

- *Soy*

The word *soy* is the first person singular present tense form of the verb *ser*, which means "to be" in Spanish. Just like *voy, soy* is also irregular and suppletive in nature. The verb *ser* comes from multiple Latin roots, mainly *esse* and *sum*, both of which mean "to be." Over time, the Latin *sum* evolved into older forms like *so* or *soyo* in early Spanish, and eventually became *soy* (Penny, 2002). Although the form ends in *-oy*, this is not a typical inflectional suffix. Unlike regular verbs where the stem is easily identified and combined with a clear grammatical morpheme like '-o', the form *soy* does not follow this transparent pattern. Instead, the '-y' in *soy* is not a separate morpheme but rather part of the evolved word shape. According to Coffman (2017), *soy* is one of the earliest forms in Spanish that adopted this structure.

This shows that the verb *ser*, like *ir,* has a unique development that makes its conjugation forms irregular and unpredictable based on modern grammar rules.

Tabel 8. Conjugation Process in Spanish -g- inffix Irregular Verbs

Bases	Stem	Conjugation Process
Hago	Hacer	~~Hacer~~ + g + o
Tengo	Tener	~~Tener~~+g+o

- *Hago*

The verb *hago* in Spanish means "I do" or "I make". It is the first-person singular form of the verb *hacer* in the present tense. *Hacer* is considered an irregular verb because its first-person form does not follow the standard '-er' verb conjugation pattern. Instead of the expected form *haco*, Spanish uses *hago*, with the insertion of a '-g-' in the stem.

- *Tengo*

In Spanish, the verb *tengo* means the first-person singular form of present tense "I have,". The stem of the verb is *tener*. Unlike regular '-er' verbs, *tener* shows irregular behavior, particularly in the first person singular, where the root changes from *ten-* to *teng-* through the insertion of a '-g-'. The form *tengo* is then created by attaching the regular present tense suffix '-o' to the modified stem *teng-*.

e) *"Di"* Irregular Verb

Tabel 9. Conjugation Process in Spanish *"Di"* Irregular Verb

Bases	Stem	Conjugation Process
Di	Dar	~~Dar~~+i

The verb *di* in Spanish means "I gave," and it is the first-person singular form of the verb *dar* in the past tense. This form is highly irregular, as it does not follow the standard past conjugation pattern for regular '-ar' verbs, nor does it resemble the present tense forms of dar. If it followed the regular '-ar' verbs, it should be *dé*, d~~ar~~ +é and not di.

5. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

This study aimed to analyze the inflectional processes in the Spanish lyrics of the song *"On My Way"* by Alan Walker, featuring Farruko. The study revealed a total of 16 inflected words, with verb conjugation being the most frequently occurring process, followed by gender agreement and plurality. These findings indicate that, despite the creative and informal nature of song lyrics, grammatical structures such as inflection are consistently applied in accordance with the rules of Spanish morphology. This suggests that popular media, such as music, can serve as a valuable and authentic resource for observing real-world language use and grammatical patterns. Moreover, this research contributes to the field of morphology by highlighting inflectional processes in a foreign language context that has been relatively underexplored in Indonesian linguistic studies.

However, the study is limited by the small sample size, as it focuses only on the brief Spanish section of the song. Future research is encouraged to examine a broader range of Spanish-language texts, such as song lyrics, dialogues, or literary works, in order to develop a more comprehensive understanding of Spanish inflectional morphology.

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