



## Analysis of Inflectional Morpheme in a McMahon's Speech "Our Department's Final Mission"

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**Abstract.** *Inflectional morphemes are of great importance in linguistic analysis, especially when applied to speech delivered in various contexts. We explore the complexity of inflectional morphemes through an analysis of Linda McMahon's Speech script titled "Our Department's Final Mission." Inflectional morphemes are also known as grammatical morphemes, as their primary function is to provide grammatical information about a word without altering its core meaning or lexical category. These inflectional morphemes include possessive morphemes (-'s/s'), plural morphemes (-s/es), third-person singular present morphemes (-s), past morphemes(-d/ed), present/progressive particles (-ing), past participle (-en), comparative particles (-er), and superlative particles (-est). Therefore, this study focuses on understanding the types of inflectional morphemes used in Linda McMahon's speech script. The main theory of inflectional morphemes is based on an understanding of grammatical function, affixation processes, and categories in the language system. The researcher identified 7 categories of inflectional morphemes. The result showed that 99 inflectional morphemes were found in Linda McMahon's speech script. There were 46 plural morphemes (-s), 26 present/progressive particle morphemes (-ing), 19 past tense morphemes (-ed), 4 possessive morphemes (-'s/s'), 2 third-person singular present morphemes (-s), 1 comparative morpheme (-er), and 1 superlative morpheme (-est). It can be conclude that the most dominant category in the analysis is the plural morpheme (-s) and the least dominant is the comparative (-er) and superlative (-est) morpheme. Its is hoped that this study can provide solutions in determining the types of inflectional morphemes in a speech script.*

**Keywords:** *Analysis; Inflectional Morpheme; Morphology; Speech; Word Formation.*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Language can be defined as a structured system of communication that utilizes symbols – both spoken and written – to convey meaning. According to (Wardhaugh, 2006), language is what the members of a particular society speak. Language is a communal possession, although admittedly an abstract one. The primary functions of language include communication, social interaction, and the expression of identity. As highlighted by (Coulmas, 2014), language is integral to the formation and maintenance of social relationships, allowing individuals to share ideas and collaborate with their communities.

According to (Saussure, 1959), linguistic as the science that studies the system of signs or language. Linguistic provide as a foundation for understanding the structure and function of language. Linguistics can be broadly categorized into several branches, including phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics. The study of linguistics also involves examining language change overtime and the social factors that influence language use.

Morphology is defined as the study of the internal structure of words and the relationships between morphemes. According to (Hamawand, 2011), morpheme is the minimal meaningful unit in a language. According to (Aronoff & Fudeman, 2011), morphology refers to the mental

system involved in word formation or to the branch of linguistics that deals with words, their internal structure, and how they are formed. Meanwhile (McCarthy, 2002), defines morphology as area of grammar concerned with the structure of words and with relationships between words involve the morphemes that compose them.

Inflectional morphemes define as a units added to the base form of a word to indicate grammatical relationships such as tense, number, possession, and comparison. According to (Hamawand, 2011), unlike derivational morphemes, which can change the grammatical category of a word (e.g., from noun to verb), the inflectional morphemes do not create a new word, but just modify existing ones to fit grammatical contexts. For example, adding the suffix "s" to the word "cat" and become "cats", just indicating plurality of word, without changing the category as a noun.

According to (Bauer, 2003), inflectional morphemes provide essential grammatical information that helps in understanding the syntactic structure of sentences. They are typically suffixes attached to nouns, verbs, adjectives, or adverbs. This characteristic is crucial for maintaining clarity in communication while adhering to grammatical rules.

Inflectional morphemes can be categorized based on their grammatical function, there are eight main types of inflectional morphemes in English, Possessive, Plural, Third Person Singular Present, Past Tense, Past Participle, Present Participle, Comparative, and Superlative. The possessive (-'s/s') indicates ownership as seen in "*the boy's book*," while the plural (-s/es) indicates more than one object such as "*the cats*." For verbs, the third person singular present (-s) is used for specific subjects like in "*he runs*," the past tense (-d/ed) shows a completed action like "*he walked*," and the past participle (-en) indicates an action started in the past with a connection to the present such as "*she has taken the guitar*." Furthermore, the present participle (-ing) marks an action in progress like "*he is running*," while adjectives use the comparative (-er) to compare two entities like "*she is taller than him*" and the superlative (-est) to highlight the highest level among three or more entities.

These categories highlight how inflectional morphemes function in different grammatical contexts and contribute to sentence structure. Inflectional forms, there are four forms attached to verbs. These forms are "s" for the third person singular present tense, "d/ed" for the past tense, "ing" for the present participle, and "en" for the past participle. Meanwhile, nouns and adjectives each have two forms: "s" for the plural form and "s'/'s" for the possessive form of nouns, "er" for the comparative form, and "est" for the superlative form of adjectives.

It should be noted that there are several ways to determine the plural form in inflectional morphemes, which are regular plural forms and irregular plural forms. The regular pattern is

the most commonly used as almost all nouns in English add the suffix “-s” or “-es” to the word. This pattern is called the regular plural because it follows the same pattern. The most common examples are “cat” becoming “cats”, “book” becoming “books”, and “chair” becoming “chairs”. Nouns ending in sibilant sound such as **-s, -ss, -sh, -ch, -x, or -z** form their plural forms by adding the suffix “-es” to the end of the word. Example include “bus” becoming “buses”, “class” becoming “classes”, “dish” becoming “dishes”, “church” becoming “churches”, and “quiz” becoming “quizzes” – In this case, words ending in a short vowel and a consonant must double the consonant before adding the suffix “-es” to preserve the short “i” vowel sound in the plural form. For nouns ending in the consonant **-y**, the form becomes “-ies”, for example “baby” becoming “babies”, “city” becoming “cities”, and “story” becoming “stories”. However, if they **-y** is preceded by a vowel, simply add “-s” at the end of the word, for example “day” becoming “days”, and “play” becoming “plays”. Meanwhile, for noun with ending **-f** or **-fe**, it can be switch into “ves” in the end of the word, for example “leaf” becoming “leaves”, “knife” becoming “knives”, and “wife” becoming “wives”. There are some exceptions to this rule, such as “roof” becoming “roofs” and “chief” becoming “chiefs”. And for nouns ending in **-o** either **-s** or **-es** can be added, for example “potato” becoming “potatoes”, “hero” becoming “heroes”, “photo” becoming “photos”, and “piano” becoming “pianos”.

Irregular patterns refer to patterns in which the plural form does not follow the rules of adding **-s** or **-es**. In this pattern, the word are generally remnants of Old English or borrowings from other languages that retain their original plural form or remain the same. For this pattern, intensive practice is needed in order to remember the words. There are number of sub-patterns in this category, vowel changes are the first. Vowel changes refer to plural nouns that undergo changes by altering the vowels within the word and do not follow the general pattern of adding **-s** or **-es** at the end of the word. For example is “man” becoming “men”, and “foot” becoming “feet”. The second is the suppletive plural form. This form is similar to vowel change, where the plural form of the noun doesn’t follow the general pattern of adding **-s** or **-es** at the end of the word, for example is “child” becoming “children”, “person” becoming “people”, and “mouse” becoming “mice”. The third is the zero plural, where the plural form of a noun remains the same as its singular form, for example is “sheep” remaining as a “sheep”, “fish” remaining as a “fish”, and “deer” remaining as a “deer”. And the last is a form of terms borrowed from other languages, generally terms taken from Latin or Greek that still retain their original plural form, for example is “datum” becoming “data”, criterion” becoming “criteria” and “fungus” becoming “fungi”.

In addition to the two patterns described above, there is also a way of pronouncing regular plurals known as allomorphs where, although only -s or -es is added in writing, there are three forms of pronunciation determined by the last sound of the base word (Fromkin et al., 2018; Yule, 2020). The first form is /ɪz/ or /əz/, which is found in words ending with sibilant sounds such as -s, -z, -sh, -zh, -ch, and -j/ge /dʒ/, with examples including Buses /bʌsɪz/, Fuzzes /fʌzɪz/, Dishes /dɪʃɪz/, Garages /gə'reɪzɪz/, Churches /tʃɜ:rtʃɪz/, and Judges /dʒʌdʒɪz/. The second form is the /s/ sound, pronounced after voiceless consonants such as -t, -k, -p, and -f, as seen in Cats /kæts/, Books /bʊks/, Maps /mæps/, and Laughs /læfs/. Finally, the third form is the /z/ sound, which is pronounced after voiced consonants such as -g, -r, -l, -i:, and -i, including examples like Dogs /dɒgz/, Bags /bægz/, Cars /kɑ:rz/, Tables /teɪblz/, Boys /bɔɪz/, and Trees /tri:z/ (Roach, 2009).

Similar to the plural form, there are several patterns to understand in the past tense. Just like the plural form, the past tense also has regular and irregular patterns. Regular patterns follow a consistent pattern by adding the suffix -ed or -d to the base form of verb, for example "walk" becoming "walked", "play" becoming "played", and "clean" becoming "cleaned" (Yule, 2020). For verbs ending with -e, simply just adding the suffix -d at the end of the word, for example "love" becoming "loved" and "bake" becoming "baked". Next, if a verb is followed by a vowel and ends with a consonant, then the final consonant must be doubled before adding suffix -ed at the end of the word, for example "stop" becoming "stopped", "plan" becoming "planned", and "prefer" becoming "preferred" (Fromkin et al., 2018). The last is, if the verb ends with the letter -y, then the -y change into -i and adding the suffix -ed at the end of the word, for example "study" becoming "studied" and "try" becoming "tried".

Furthermore, there are irregular patterns that do not follow the rules for adding the suffixes -ed or -d. These are similar to regular plural patterns and have similar sub-patterns. These patterns require a lot of practice to remember the words. Examples of vowel changes in past tense are "sing" becoming "sang", "swim" becoming "swam", and "drive" becoming "drove" (Crystal, 2003). Examples of consonant changes in verbs are "buy" becoming "bought", "catch" becoming "caught", and "teach" becoming "taught". And for example of zero-changing verbs are those that do not undergo any changes at all, for example "cut" remain as a "cut", "put" remain as a "put", and "read" remain as a "read". In this case, the pronunciation differs, such as "read" /ri:d/ and "read" /red/ (Roach, 2009). Finally, there are suppletive forms that do not follow the rules of adding the suffixes -d or -ed and undergo a complete change in their form (not their grammatical). For example, "go" change to "went", "take" change to "took", and "hold" change to "held" (Lieber, 2016).

Past tense forms also have three pronunciations determined by the final sound of a base verb, similar to plural forms. The first form is /ɪd/ or /əd/, which is pronounced after an alveolar stop (which is a sound that produced by touching the back of the upper front teeth with the tongue). This occurs when the base verb end with -t and -d, for example -t in a verb of “wanted” /wɒntɪd/, and -d in a verb of “needed” /niːdɪd/. The second form is /t/, that pronounced after voiceless consonants such as -k, -f, -s, and -ch, for example is “walked” /wɔːkt/, “laughed” /læft/, “kissed” /kɪst/, and “watched” /wɒtʃt/. The last form is /d/, which is pronounced after voiced consonants such as -v, -y, -b, and -n, for example “loved” /lʌvd/, “played” /pleɪd/, “robbed” /rɒbd/, and “cleaned” /kliːnd/.

In this study, the researcher examined the speech script of Linda McMahon, named “Our Department’s Final Mission”, comprising 585 words. This address was given by Linda McMahon on Monday, March 3, 2025, right after her designation as US Secretary of Education to fulfill President Trump’s directive to reform the Department of Education, with goals of minimizing bureaucracy, devolving educational power to states, and enabling parents in making decisions about their children’s schooling.

This research examines inflectional morphemes, which are bound morpheme that significantly contribute to grammatical structure. These morpheme help express grammatical connections without altering the fundamental meaning of the word. They serve to signify elements like singularity or plurality, past tense, comparison, and ownership. This research seeks to determine the most dominant and non-dominant types of inflectional morphemes in Linda McMahon’s speech script.

The chosen subject of analysis, Linda McMahon, is an interesting case study because it contains various word forms and diverse sentences structures. The decisions to choose Linda McMahon’s script speech as the main object of analysis, it because contains highly relevant contemporary issues, such as critical race theory, DEI (Diversity, Equity, Inclusion) programs, and gender ideology. This provides rich context for analyzing how inflectional morphemes are used in this speech. The analysis of the inflectional morphemes in this speech can reveal how McMahon uses word variations to describe her vision and mission in the reforming the education system in the US, such as the use of plurals, and tenses.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This study builds on previous research on bound morphemes extending the analysis to more specific speech contexts. By concentrating our investigation on Linda McMahon’s speech script, the researcher aim to contribute a nuanced perspective to the exiting knowledge on

inflectional morphemes, and the study of inflectional morpheme in this speech can also provide insight into how language is used in public speech contexts.

Moreover, there are three previous researcher related to the topic that the researcher has been learned. The first is a research journal with the title "An Analysis of Inflectional Morphemes in a Short Story 'The Child's Story' by Charles Dickens"(Ifadloh et al., 2022). The problem focus of this research is to identify and analyze the inflectional morphemes contained in the short story. This research found a total of 108 inflectional morphemes.

The second is a research journal with the title "Identify the Use of Inflectional Morpheme in Alice's Adventures in Wonderland by Lewis Carrol"(Indriani, 2021). The problem focus of this research is to identify the use of inflectional morphemes in the novel "Alice's Adventures in Wonderland". This research uses a descriptive qualitative method to analyze the inflectional morphemes contained in the text, with the aim of understanding how they contribute to word formation and meaning in a narrative context.

The third is a research journal with the title "A Morphological Analysis of Inflectional Morphemes in Elon Musk Speech" (Ismail et al., 2023). The problem focus of this research is to identify the types of inflectional morphemes used in Elon Musk's speech and determine which inflectional morpheme are the most dominant in the speech. This research uses qualitative method with data analysis based on Miles & Huberman's approach, which includes data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The result show that there are a total of 85 identified inflectional suffixes, without any prefixes.

There are several differences between this research and previous studies. As can be seen, two of the three previous topics have differences, which is in the previous topic discussing or analyzing inflectional morpheme in a narrative text, while this study identifies the use of inflectional morphemes and identifies the most dominant and non-dominant type of inflectional morphemes in Linda McMahon's speech script.

### **3. RESEARCH METHOD**

This research uses qualitative methods. According to (Aspers & Corte, 2019), qualitative methods are non-numerical methods that are usually used to describe and analyze events that occur in society, namely social phenomena. Qualitative research aims to provide an accurate description of the phenomenon under study through written or oral data.

After finding the problems that exist in the predetermined topic and identifying the object, namely Linda McMahon's speech, several transcript steps will be taken to identify the use of inflectional morphemes. Every word that belongs to the categories of plural, possessive,

comparative, superlative, past tense, progressive, past participle, and third person singular will be analyzed. Lastly, a conclusion of the research results will be made at the end.

#### 4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Inflectional morphemes are a set of morphemes that function to provide additional grammatical information to a word without changing the lexical meaning or class of the base word to which it is attached. These morphemes play a role in modifying word forms to fit the syntactic system of a language. The focus of this research is on inflectional morphemes. So, for the analysis of these inflectional morphemes, it will analyze the category of inflectional morphemes consisting of possessive ('-s/-s'), plural (-s/-es), third person singular present (-s), past tense (-d/-ed), present participle/progressive (-ing), verb past participle (-en), comparative (-er), and superlative (-est).

To find out more in detail, here is an analysis of “-s/-es” plural, “-s/-s” possessive, “-er” comparative, “-est” superlative, “-d/-ed” past tense, “-s” third person singular, and “-ing” progressive in the speech “Our Department’s Final Mission” by Linda McMahon.

**Table 1.** Inflectional Morpheme in Linda McMahon’s Speech.

Suffix	Mean	Word	Times
-s/-es	Noun plural	Students	6
		Promises	2
		Families	1
		States	2
		Parents	4
		Decisions	1
		Professions	1
		Workers	1
		Outcomes	1
		Millions	1
		Americans	1
		Careers	2
		Ideologies	1
		Interests	1
		Teachers	4
		Orders	1
		Admissions	1
		Programs	3
		Droves	1
		Years	1
Reasons	1		
Budgets	1		
Operations	1		
Months	2		
Agencies	1		

		Expectations	1
		Colleges	1
		Schools	2
		Taxpayers	1
		Changes	1
		Times	1
		Results	1
		Directives	1
		Convictions	2
		Makers	1
		Needs	1
		Barriers	1
		Choices	1
		Communities	1
		Basics	1
		Goals	1
		Employees	1
		Servants	1
		Generations	1
		Children	1
		Civics	1
-ing	Present Participle/ Progressive	Overseeing	1
		Supporting	1
		Counting	1
		Rewarding	1
		Studying	1
		Teaching	1
		Combatting	1
		Promoting	1
		Restoring	1
		Eliminating	1
		Coming	2
		Working	1
		Failing	1
		Leaving	1
		Citing	1
		Accomplishing	1
		Thinking	1
		Changing	1
		Daunting	1
		Learning	1
		Reading	1
		Removing	1
		Enabling	1
		Going	1
		Ensuring	1
		Fulfilling	1
-d/-ed	Past Tense/ Past Participle	Accepted	1
		Nominated	1
		Aligned	2

		Started	1
		Corrupted	1
		Signed	1
		Focused	1
		Intended	1
		Entrusted	1
		Languished	1
		Trapped	1
		Subjected	1
		Saddled	1
		Provided	1
		Elected	2
		Tasked	1
		Learned	1
		Took	2
		Held	1
-‘s/s’	Possessive	President Trump’s inauguration	1
		President’s directive	1
		Children’s education	1
		The Department of Education’s role	1
-s	Third Person Singular Present	Gets	1
		Leads	1
-est	Superlative	Greatest	1
-er	Comparative	Stronger	1

Based on the table above, it can be seen that inflectional suffixes include 7 suffixes, namely “-s/-es, -ing, -d/-ed, -s’/-’s, -s, -er, and -est”.

Adding the suffix “-s” or “-es” to a noun will make the word plural. For example, in the term “ Students, Promises, Families, States, Parents, Decisions, Professions, Workers, Outcomes, Millions, American, Careers, Ideologies, Interests, Teachers, Orders, Admissions, Programs, Doves, Years, Reasons, Budgets, Operations, Months, Agencies, Expectations, Collages, Schools, Taxpayers, Changes, Times, Results, Directives, Convictions, Makers, Needs, Barriers, Choices, Communities, Basics, Goals, Employees, Servants, Generations, Children, Civics”

Adding the suffix “-ing” to verb will make the word have a participle or progressive form. For example, in the term “Overseeing, Supporting, Counting, Rewarding, Studying, Teaching, Combatting, Promoting, Restoring, Eliminating, Coming, Working, Failing, Leaving, Citing, Accomplishing, Thinking, Changing, Daunting, Learning, Reading, Removing, Enabling, Going, Ensuring, Fulfilling”

Adding the suffix “-d” or “-ed” to the base regular verb, the word will turn into simple past tense or past participle. For example, in the term “Accepted, Nominated, Aligned, Started,

Corrupted, Signed, Focused, Intended, Entrusted, Languished, Trapped, Subjected, Saddled, Provided, Elected, Tasked, Learned, Took, Held”

Another addition is adding the suffix “-‘s” or “-s””. This suffix is to indicate ownership. For example, in the term “President’s and Children’s”. Moreover, adding the suffix "-s" to the verb will show that the subject is third person singular. For example, in the term “Gets and Leads ”. Meanwhile, adding the suffix “-est” and “-er” to an adjective or an adverb will change the form to superlative and comparative. For example, in the term “Greatest and Stronger”.

After analyzing the data, the researcher found 7 categories of inflectional morphemes. From those 7 categories, the researcher find 99 of inflectional morpheme in Linda McMahon's speech. There are 46 plural (-s/-es), 26 present participle/progressive (-ing), 19 past tense (-d/-ed), 4 possessive (-‘s/s’), 2 third person singular present (-s), 1 comparative (-er), 1 superlative (-est). The most dominant type of inflectional morpheme in this speech is the plural “-s” suffix, while the least is the comparative “-er” suffix and the superlative “-est”. The following are the details of the discussion:

**Table 2.** Inflectional Morpheme in Linda McMahon’s Specch.

No	Suffix	Total Number of Words	Percentage
1	Noun Plural “-s/-es”	46	50,5%
2	Present Particple “-ing”	26	25,5%
3	Past Tense “-d/-ed”	19	18,6%
4	Noun Possessive “-s’/-‘s”	4	1,8%
5	Third Person Singular “-s”	2	1,8%
6	Adjective Superlative “-est”	1	0,9%
7	Adjective Comparative “-er”	1	0,9%
		99	100%

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings and analysis above, inflectional morphemes are widely used in the speech delivered by Linda McMahon titled “The Final Mission of Our Department”. It is known that there are 99 words that contain inflectional morphemes. Plural nouns ending in “-s” or “-es” are the most common, with 50.5% percentage. The present participle “-ing” and the past tense of the verb “-ed/d” also appear significantly in this speech, with percentages of 25.5% and 18.6%. Meanwhile, the possessive morphemes “-‘s”, “-s””, and the third person singular “-s” appear twice or with a proportion of 1.8%. The least common are the superlative adjective “est” and the comparative adjective “-er” which only appear once with a percentage of 0.9%.

The identified inflectional morphemes, such as the plural, past tense, and progressive/present participle, not only serve to provide grammatical information, but also help build a clearer and more structured narrative. The analysis also highlights that the inflectional morphemes contribute to the emotional and rhetorical nuances of the speech, thus strengthening the argument presented by McMahon.

Overall, this study confirms that inflectional morphemes are a key element in the development of effective and communicative language structures. Further research can be conducted to explore how the use of inflectional morphemes varies among other public speakers and their impact on audience reception.

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