

IRREGULAR INFLECTIONAL MORPHEMES IN ENGLISH CONTRASTIVE WITH ALBANIAN



Morphology

Keywords: grammar, language, morphology, morphemes, inflectional morphemes, comparative study.

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Abstract

This study compares inflectional morphemes in English and Albanian with one another. Given that these two languages are members of the Indo-European language family, we attempted to compare and contrast by placing morphemes side by side with examples in both languages as well as their morphological foundations, rules, and exceptions. Other morphemes besides inflectional were also mentioned in order for the readers learn more about their function and differences between both languages.

I. INTRODUCTION

English is a fairly sophisticated language. English has been adopted for use by dozens of cultures. English also doesn't mind borrowing words from other languages, unlike many others that are concerned with maintaining some semblance of purity: we have thousands of French, Latin, and Spanish phrases in addition to dozens of Yiddish words and numerous words from various African and Native American languages. As an alternative, there is Albanian. Even though Albanian is an Indo-European language, it is distinctive, has more complex grammar, as well as the most bizarre spelling system in the world, a rich sound system, abundant synonyms, the use of stress, etc. This makes it difficult to master.

II. METHODOLOGY

Because it deals with the basis, the very foundation of language, grammar, in this case the formation of words and prefixes and suffixes (morphemes) with the aid of which new words in English are formed. Separating the various morpheme kinds and comparing the morphemes in Albanian and English to show similarities and differences are our further goals.

2.1 Research Questions

Starting with the topic, this paper's focus is on morphemes. During preparation, the following questions about the paper's focus were asked and needed answers:

What are morphemes?

How are they divided?

Where are they placed?

What morphemes in Albanian share similarities with those in English?

What are the morpheme distinctions in the Albanian language?

2.2 The Study

The study will cover the theoretical aspects of English and Albanian grammar and includes tables and examples of word creation and morphemes in both languages.

2.3 The Study Instrument

Grammar books in two languages (English and Albanian), numerous websites, studying students' workbooks and note books in both languages, comparison charts, and tables with examples make up the study materials.

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 Morphology and Morpheme – Book definitions (*English Language*)

According to Beard, R (1995: 1), he states that, “Morphology is superficially the sum of all the phonological means for expressing the relations of the constituents of words, of words in phrases, and of the phrasal constituents of sentences. The key element of morphology is the WORD, a symbol comprising mutually implied sound and meaning. The central purpose of morphology, therefore, is to map sound to meaning within the word and between words. The issues of morphology are what constitutes linguistic sound, what determines linguistic meaning, and how the two are related.”¹

“A morpheme can be defined as a minimal unit having more or less constant” meaning and more or less constant form.²

“Morphemes can vary in size: neither the number of syllables nor the length of a word can indicate what a morpheme is and what isn't. For example, *Albatross* is a long word but a single morpheme, -y (as in dreamy) is also a single morpheme.”³

“In English grammar and morphology, a morpheme is a meaningful linguistic unit consisting of a word (such as dog) or a word element (such as the -s at the end of dogs) that can't be divided into smaller meaningful parts.”⁴

¹ Beard, Robert, *Lexeme-morpheme Base Morphology : A General Theory of Inflection and Word Formation SUNY Series in Linguistics*, State University of New York Press, 1995, pg.1

² <http://www.mathcs.duq.edu/~packer/Courses/Psy598/Ling-Morphology.pdf>

³ Ibid.

⁴ <http://grammar.about.com/od/mo/g/morphemeterm.htm>

3.2 Morfologjia – Morfemat (Albanian)

“Morfologjia merret me klasifikimin e fjalëve në kategori leksiko – gramatikore që quhen pjesë të ligjëratës dhe së dyti me tipat kryesorë të fjalëformimit, në radhë të parë me tipin morfologjik dhe me tipin morfologjik - sintaksor. Morfologjia nuk merret me studimin e fjalëve të veçanta. Ajo studion veçoritë e përbashkëta të fjalëve të së njëjtës klasë duke nxjerrë kështu rregulla me karakter të përgjithshëm, që kanë vlerë për mbarë klasën e dhënë dhe si rrjedhim edhe për secilën fjalë të kësaj klase.”⁵ Morfema është njësia me kuptim gjuhësor e përbërë nga një fjalë ose një element fjalësh, që nuk mund të ndahet në pjesë kuptimplota më të vogla.

IV. CLASSIFICATION OF ENGLISH MORPHEMES

The smallest linguistic unit with a meaning or grammatical purpose is called a morpheme. Although many people consider words to be the fundamentally meaningful components of a language, many words can really be divided into even more compact pieces known as morphemes. Some morphemes lack a continuous or definite shape, while others lack semantics in the traditional sense.

4.1 Free and Bound Morphemes

- If a morpheme may be read as a word on its own, it is free. The term ‘*root*’ also applies to free morphemes.

- If a morpheme can only occur as a component of a longer, multi-morphemic term, it is said to be bound.

- Each morpheme is either unbound or free.

Bound morphemes are also referred to as affixes, among which there are prefixes, infixes, and suffixes.

- prefixes: *un*-happy, *re*-write, *pre*-view

- suffixes: writ-*ing*, quick-*ly*, neighbor-*hood*

- English has no true **infixes**, but the plural suffix **-s** behaves like an infix in unusual plurals, for example: *mothers-in-law*.

Bound morphemes may be **derivational** or **inflectional**.

4.2 Classification of Albanian Morphemes

The two types of morphemes in Albanian are root and affixational morphemes. The word's root or root morpheme serves as its lexical core. It is the root word and the transmitter of lexical meaning.

⁵ <http://www.shembulli.com/gjshqipe/2542-morfologjia-objekti-lidhja-me-disiplinat-e-tjera>

- Root morpheme is equal to the root of the front theme i.e. the part of the word that remains after all affixational morphemes are removed.

In the sense that it can join the root in the formation of a word, root morphemes are freestanding and distinct from affixational morphemes. Most of the time, the root meaning is obvious and simple to understand, as in the situations of *largo-j*, *larg-im*, *larg-es*, and *larg-si*.

Both English and Albanian have free and bound roots. Free roots may be employed in word creation when no affix is present, i.e., they may match any word's theme. Bound roots: They are unable to function as the word's central idea, i.e., they cannot be utilized alone in word creation.

V. BOUND MORPHEMES IN ENGLISH

A morpheme (or word constituent) that is bound cannot function as a word on its own. Bound morphemes, as opposed to free morphemes, are also known as affixes. Bound morphemes in English also contain prefixes and suffixes. They are unable to stand alone, to use a phrase. *Pre-*, *un-*, *-ness*, and *-y* are examples of bound morphemes that require a free morpheme to lean on. Along with the phrase *Despite its geeky delight, the preamble did not faze me*; each of those bound morphemes (in bold) found a free morpheme to connect up with.⁶

When a bound morpheme is joined to a free morpheme, such as when the prefix *re-* is added to the verb *start*, a new word or at least a new form of an existing word is produced (in this example, *restart*). Word fragments known as morphs serve as the auditory and written representations of morphemes. Derivational morphemes and inflectional morphemes are the two primary categories of bound morphemes.

5.1 Derivational Morphemes

Definition

Derivation in morphology is the process of changing an existing word into a new one, frequently by adding a prefix or suffix. Derivational is an adjective. Geert Booij, a linguist, points out that one standard for determining derivation and inflection "is that derivation may feed inflection, but not vice versa. Derivation applies to the stem-forms of words, without their inflectional endings, and creates new, more complex stems to which inflectional rules can be applied" (The Grammar of Words, 2005)."⁷

Zero derivation or conversion refers to a morphological change that occurs without the addition of a bound morpheme, such as when the noun *impact* is used as a verb.

⁶ <http://grammar.about.com/od/ab/g/boundmorphterm.htm>

⁷ Ibid.

They typically:

- Modify a word's essential meaning or its part of speech. The suffix "-ment" turns a verb into a noun (achieve-ment);

- are not necessary for the word's syntactic relations. *Un-kind* is created by combining the prefixes *un* and *kind*, although it has no additional syntactic relationships.

- are frequently ineffective since derivational morphemes have a choice in what they combine with. As a result, only a small number of nouns—including *brother*, *neighbor*, and *knight*—have the ending *-hood*; most others—such as *friendhood*, *candlehood*, etc.—do not.

They often come after the stem but before the inflectional affixes. In the word *government*, the inflectional suffix *-s* follows the derivational suffix *-ment*. They can be prefixes or suffixes in the English language, such as *re-group* *angel-ic*.

Examples of Derivational Affixes

Prefix	Grammatical category of base	Grammatical category of output	Example	Suffix	Grammatical category of base	Grammatical category of output	Example
in-	Adj	Adj	inaccurate	-hood	N	N	child-hood
un-	Adj	Adj	unkind	-ship	N	N	leader-ship
un-	V	V	untie	-fy	N	V	beauti-fy
dis-	V	V	dis-like	-ic	N	Adj	poet-ic
dis-	Adj	Adj	dishonest	-less	N	Adj	power-less
re-	V	V	rewrite	-ful	N	Adj	care-ful
ex-	N	N	ex-wife	-al	V	N	refus-al
en-	N	V	encourage	-er	V	N	read-er

Picture 1: Derivational Morphemes⁸

5.2 Inflectional Morphemes

“Inflectional morphemes: vary (or “inflect”) the form of words in order to express grammatical features, such as singular/plural or past/present tense. Thus *Boy* and *boys*, for example, are two different forms of the “same” word; the choice between them, singular vs. plural, is a matter of grammar and thus the business of inflectional morphology. (Crystal, p. 90.)”⁹

⁸ <https://www.google.com/?ion=1&espv=2#q=derivational%20morphemes%20pictures>

⁹ http://www.ling.upenn.edu/courses/Fall_1998/ling001/morphology2.html

Inflectional Morphemes generally:

- Keep the core meaning and the part of speech the same; for example, "small," "smaller," and "smallest" are all adjectives.

- Express grammatical requirements or denote relationships among the sentence's words. John likes Kimberly because: The suffix "-s" designates the verb's third person singular present tense and links it to the third person singular subject John.

- Are successful. With predictable implications on usage and meaning, inflectional morphemes often combine easily with all other members of a large class of morphemes. Almost any noun can be paired with the plural morpheme, usually in the same form and with the same meaning-changing effect.

- Take place without any derivational morphemes. As a result, the final -s in un-employ-ee-s is inflectional and comes right at the end of the word, outside of the derivational un-employ-ee.

- Inflectional morphemes only appear as suffixes in English.

Inflectional Affixes		
• There are precisely eight inflectional affixes in English:		
1. -s	3rd person	wait --> waits
2. -ing	progressive	wait --> waiting
3. -ed	past tense	wait --> waited
4. -en	past participle	eat --> eaten
5. -s	plural	card --> cards
6. -'s	possessive	dad --> dad's
7. -er	comparative	tall --> taller
8. -est	superlative	weak --> weakest
• All of these are <u>suffixes</u> .		

Picture 2: List of Inflectional Morphemes¹⁰

5.3 The Major Differences between Derivational and Inflectional Morphology

Table 1: Differences between derivational and inflectional morphology

	Derivational	Inflectional
position	closer to stem	further from stem
addable on to?	yes	not in English
changes stem?	yes	no
productive?	(often) no	(usually) yes
meaning?	(often) unpredictable	predictable

¹⁰ <https://www.google.com/?ion=1&espv=2#q=inflectional%20morphemes%20picture>

5.4 *Equivalents in Albanian Language*

Based on the principle of separation of morphemes in English, we will make such a division, highlighting the encountered differences with prefixes and suffixes, trying to find out how the affixes act in Albanian grammar, do they change the category of words or not and where are they placed inside the word.

Table 2: Inflectional and derivational morphemes in English and Albanian

English		Albanian	
Inflectional	Derivational	Inflectional	Derivational
Agim - Agim's	Rich – En-rich (N to V)	Agim - Agim-it	Kap – i-pa-kap-shem (V to Adj)
Card - Cards	Poet – Poet-ic (N to Adj.)	Bilet - Bilet-at	Akt – Akt – iv (N to Adj)
Wait - Waits	Happy – Happy –ness (Adj. to N)	Pusho - Pusho-n	Art – Art-i-stik (N to Adj)
Run - Running	Lock – Un-lock-able (N to Adj)	Vrapo -Vrapon-te	Buzë – Për - buz (N to V)

At first glance, it appears that Albanian inflection and derivation work the same way as they do in English, or that there are many areas of similarity between the two languages. We'll see irregular inflection in both languages on the pages that follow, as well as what happens in this area of grammar and any differences that emerge when we compare the two languages side by side.

VI. IRREGULAR INFLECTION

“When a given word class is subject to inflection in a particular language, there are generally one or more standard patterns of inflection. Words which follow such a standard pattern are said to be **regular**; those that inflect differently are called **irregular**.”¹¹

For instance, there are both regular and irregular verbs in many languages that use verb inflection. Regular verbs in English use the ending *-(e)d* to generate its past tense and past participle; consequently, words like *work*, *walk*, and *help* are regular verbs. Some other verbs, such as *drink drank drunk* and *fly flew flown*, however, follow various patterns and are referred to as irregular. Other irregular inflected form categories include irregular plurals, like the English *mice*, *children*, and *women*, and irregular comparative and superlative forms of adjectives or adverbs, like the English *better* and *best*, which are equivalent to the positive form of *well*.

¹¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Inflection#Regular_and_irregular_inflection

6.1 Irregular plurals in English

Table 3: Nouns ending in *-o* pluralized by adding *-es*

Most nouns ending in *-o* are pluralized by adding an *-s*, but some take *-es* instead—for example:

<i>singular</i>	<i>plural</i>
echo	echoes
embargo	embargoes
hero	heroes
potato	potatoes
tomato	tomatoes
torpedo	torpedoes
veto	veto

Table 4: Nouns which change their central vowel sounds when pluralized

Some nouns change their central vowel sounds when pluralized—for example:

<i>singular</i>	<i>plural</i>
foot	feet
goose	geese
louse	lice
man	men
mouse	mice
tooth	teeth
woman	women

Table 5: Nouns ending in *-f* pluralized by dropping the *-f* and adding *-ves*

Some nouns ending in *-f* are pluralized by dropping the *-f* and adding *-ves*:

<i>singular</i>	<i>plural</i>
calf	calves
elf	elves
half	halves
hoof	hooves
knife	knives
leaf	leaves
life	lives
loaf	loaves
self	selves
shelf	shelves
thief	thieves
wife	wives
wolf	wolves

Table 6: Nouns ending in *-is* pluralized by dropping the *-is* and adding *-es*
Some nouns ending in *-is* are pluralized by dropping the *-is* and adding *-es*:

<i>singular</i>	<i>plural</i>
axis	axes
analysis	analyses
basis	bases
crisis	crises
diagnosis	diagnoses
ellipsis	ellipses
emphasis	emphases
hypothesis	hypotheses
neurosis	neuroses
oasis	oases
paralysis	paralyses
parenthesis	parentheses
thesis	theses

Table 7: Nouns ending in *-ix* pluralized by dropping the *-ix* and adding *-ices*
Some nouns ending in *-ix* are pluralized by dropping the *-ix* and adding *-ices*:

<i>singular</i>	<i>plural</i>
appendix	appendices
index	indices
matrix	matrices

Table 8: Nouns that remain unchanged in their plural forms¹²

A few nouns are unchanged in their plural forms:

<i>singular</i>	<i>plural</i>
barracks	barracks
deer	deer
fish	<u>fish</u>
gallows	gallows
means	means
offspring	offspring
series	<u>series</u>
sheep	sheep
species	<u>species</u>

6.2 Irregular Plural in Albanian

The absence of English's grammatical categories affects the grammar of the Albanian language in terms of irregularities that arise at the morphological level and the pluralization of nouns.

¹² Source: English grammar

These categories are the category of cases, fixed suffixes that are closely related to the gender of nouns (I, u, and a), and category named *Lakimi i Emrave* (shqar-pashqar), to which the definite and indefinite articles are the closest equivalents. However, as a point of comparison, we will only mention a few irregular plurals that have English equivalents, namely, morphological changes that occur similarly to how they do in English. Examples:

- (një) ujk –(ca) ujq (the letter –k transformed in –q)
 (një) zog –(ca) zogj (the letter –g transformed in –gj)
 (një) dash –(ca) desh (the letter –a transformed in –e)

Some nouns form the plural by changing letters and at the same time, by taking endings:

- (një) varg – (ca) vargje (the letter –g transformed in –gj, and added endings –e)
 (një) hark – (ca) harqe (the letter –k transformed në –q, and added endings –e) etc.

And nouns that are unchanged in their plural forms:

- (një) nxënës – (ca) nxënës; (një) mësues – (ca) mësues; (një) vendas –(ca) vendas,
 (një) rrugë – (ca) rrugë, (një) fole – (ca) fole etc.

Table 9: Irregular Plurals in Albanian¹³

<i>Singular</i>	<i>Plural</i>
Djali	Djemtë
Kali	Kuajtë
Ashti	Eshtrat
Mashkulli	Meshkujt
Dashi	Deshët
Shtegu	Shtigjet
Grua	Gra - Gratë
Thua	Thonjtë ... etc

VII. IRREGULAR ADJECTIVES

English language also has the irregular adjectives - comparative and superlative - which will be presented in the following table.

Table 10: Adjectives with irregular comparative and superlative forms.¹⁴

adjective	comparative	superlative		example sentence
<i>good</i>	<i>better</i>	<i>the best</i>	irregular	Tara is the best athlete in the school.
<i>well (healthy)</i>	<i>better</i>	<i>the best</i>		He is still in hospital, but he is better than he was last week.
<i>bad</i>	<i>worse</i>	<i>the worst</i>	irregular	You are the worst driver I have ever known.
<i>far</i>	<i>further</i>	<i>the furthest</i>	irregular	My house is the furthest one.
<i>old (people in a family)</i>	<i>elder</i>	<i>the eldest</i>	irregular	Ram is my elder brother.

¹³ Gramatika e gjuhës Shqipe

¹⁴ <http://www.ef.com/english-resources/english-grammar/comparative-and-superlative/>

There are no irregular forms of comparatives and superlatives in Albania Language. All adjectives are following the pattern below:

Pohore: Ky është nxënës i mirë (m) - nxënëse e mirë (f)

Krahasore: Ky është nxënës më i mirë (m) - nxënëse më e mirë (f)

Sipërore: Ky është nxënës shumë më i mire (m) - nxënëse shumë më e mire (f)

VIII. IRREGULAR VERBS IN ENGLISH

The difference between a regular and an irregular verb is the formation of the simple past and past participle. The simple past and past participle of irregular verbs can end in a variety of ways, with absolutely no consistent pattern. Here are some examples:

Table 11: Irregular verbs in English¹⁵

Base Form	Past Third Person	Past Participle
arise	arose	arisen
be	was/were	been
do	did	done
drive	drove	driven
eat	ate	eaten
fly	flew	flown
go	went	gone
know	knew	known
ring	rang	rung
rise	rose	risen
see	saw	seen
sing	sang	sung
speak	spoke	spoken
spring	sprang	sprung
swim	swam	swum
tear	tore	torn
write	wrote	written...etc

IX. IRREGULAR VERBS IN ALBANIAN

They are called irregular because the theme of simple and past participle are quite different from the theme of the present, while others undergo special phonetic changes and cannot join any of the conjugation of verb conjugations of Albanian verbs. And they are also closely related with the mood of the verb conjugation.

Irregular verbs are divided into two main groups: supletive and non-supletive.

¹⁵ <http://www.chompchomp.com/rules/irregularrules01.htm>

9.1. Suppletive Irregulars (të kushtëzuara):

Table 12: Suppletive irregulars in Albanian

Present	Simple past	Past participle
jam	qeshë	qe
bie	prura	prure
bie	rashë	rë-në
ha	hëngra	ngrënë
shoh	pashë	parë
vi	erdha	ardhur

9.2. Non-suppletive irregulars (të kushtëzuara):Table 13: Non-suppletive irregulars in Albanian¹⁶

Present	Simple past	Past participle
them	thashë	thënë
dua	desha	dashur
lë	lashë	lënë
vdes	vdiqa	vdekur

X. SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES

“In English grammar and morphology, a morpheme is a meaningful linguistic unit consisting of a word (such as dog) or a word element (such as the –s at the end of dogs) that can’t be divided into smaller meaningful parts.”

The first similarity between the two languages that we encounter is in the definition of morphemes, but this was expected. The morpheme is considered the lowest linguistic unit in most languages around the world. As we go on, we come to the classification of morphemes, which is the same for both languages, meaning that both languages contain free morphemes and bound morphemes. Affixes, also known as prefixes and suffixes, are another name for free morphemes.

Other morpheme divisions in word formation (in English) include derivational (which is not very productive and can be used as prefixes or suffixes during word formation), and inflectional (productive and in the word forming process may occur only as suffixes). Despite the fact that the division of morphemes in Albanian is labeled differently from English, we found the identical examples in Albanian, and this led us to the conclusion that the word creation in the two languages is extremely similar.

¹⁶ <http://www.nasergashi.com/t4455-klasifikimi-i-foljeve-ne-zgjedhime>

When we had to work with irregular plurals, we came to the same conclusion. Both languages have irregular plurals that change letters and add endings, both languages have nouns that remain the same in their plural forms, and both languages have irregular verbs that are formed in past participle and simple past (in English, third person, in Albanian first, second, and third person), as well as past participles. The only significant difference we could find was that Albanian does not include irregular comparative and superlative adjectives, although both of these adjective types are present in English.

XI. CONCLUSION

Despite all the contrasts we anticipated between the English language and the Albanian language, which are two entirely distinct languages from different language families, we discovered more similarities than differences in the way the two languages produce words.

Before we began this study, we worried that we wouldn't be able to find the right materials, that we wouldn't have a hard time navigating the two seemingly incompatible language differences, that we wouldn't be able to go deep enough to understand the fundamentals of word formation in both languages, that we wouldn't be able to compare the two languages properly, and many other concerns. Slowly and carefully, we found the answers to all of these concerns.

In spite of my previous belief that the Albanian language, with its case system, different affixes (prefixes and suffixes), complicated grammar, and distinctive spelling system, looking from this angle, after we finished this study, we would say that, Albanian and English, morphemically, following the rule, are similar to one another. This may be because we had to work with the smallest units of language, or because we were focused more on finding similarities rather than differences.

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