

An Analysis Compound Words In Taylor Swift's Song Lyrics

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Abstract

The research aims to discover the types, word formations, and meanings of compound words which existed in song lyrics by Taylor Swift in 2014. The writers used descriptive qualitative method based on the McCharty theory, in which the writers applied it to determine the number of compound words are found in Taylor Swift's song lyrics. The method described the findings of the research by describing it systematically with qualitative data analysis. In collecting the data, the writers did some steps: listening to the song lyrics of Taylor Swift, collecting the data of compound words, classifying the compound words into the types and formations, and getting the meanings of the compound words. From the data analysis, there were 17 compound words of 5 song lyrics. From the 17 compound words were classified into 11 compound noun (64,70%), 3 compound adjective (17,64%), and 9 compound verb (17,64%). The result indicated that compound word derived from compound noun was the highest.

Keywords: *Compound Word, Taylor Swift, Word Formation*

Introduction

Many new words, phrases, or terminology have been a part of language. As a means of communication, language enables individuals not only to interact, express ideas but also emotions. It is thriving every day. Ceylan (2017) states that language is a system of arbitrary vocal symbols by means of which a social group cooperates. It means by using language, people can develop their knowledge and know something that can be applied in their community. Furthermore, people also use language to write, speak, and analyze. One example of how language plays a significant role in artistic expression is through song lyrics. In music, the words or phrases can convey specific or broad meanings for communication. In language study, one of the sciences that contains the use of language is linguistics. Linguistics is a field of science which observes language as a scientific means of communication between people. There are several branches in linguistics, such as phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics. A discipline that identifies the smallest components in the production of words is morphology. Morphology is concerned with the structure, form and process included in word formation within a language. Bybee (2019) stated morphological patterns arise from analogy rather than from fixed rules. On the other hand, (Booij, 2010) emphasized the idea that words are built through constructions or structures pattern, rather than simply through the addition of morphemes. An important aspect of morphology is the study of compound word. It is formed by combining two or more words to produce a new lexical unit with a specific meaning.

This study focused on compound words. According to McCharty (2018), there are three types of compound words, they are compound noun, compound adjective, and compound verb. The three types can be open or spaced compound word, hyphenated compound word, and closed or solid compound word. There are compound words that

do not connect or separate in any way. These are known as open compound word. These are the examples: trash can and peanut butter. Otherwise, closed compound word needs two words that are simply put together, with no space. The examples including: playground, keyboard, and windshield. The last is hyphenated compound word which is neatly tied together with a hyphen. These are the examples: mother - in - law, x - ray, and son - in - law. Those examples come from different forms, types, and meanings.

Nowadays, we can find compound words or any kind of parts of speech in song lyrics. There are several singers or songwriters who create songs using their ideas with compound word. It can enrich our knowledge in using English compounding. Some learners or teenagers like listening to English songs. Their feelings and imaginations run fast when they are listening to songs. They enjoy it, but they do not recognize the existence of compound words in the song lyrics. Bauer (2017) emphasized that compounding is one of the most productive word formation process in English, highlighting its significance in both formal and informal communication. Moreover, Palg (2018) said that compound words vary in structure and meaning, which aligned with McCarty's (2018). These insights stressed the importance of analyzing song lyrics as a source of linguistic knowledge.

One of the famous singers, Taylor Swift, was born on December 13th, 1989, in United State of America (USA). Along her career, she has released many albums and singles, in which contain compound words in her song lyrics. Santika P & Syafryadin, S. (2023) conducted that a descriptive qualitative analysis of all 13 songs in the album to identify and interpret various forms of figurative language. That study was published in the Journal of Applied Linguistics and Literacy in 2023. In addition, Nurwulan, G.R., & Heriyono, H. (2025) examined the lyrics to identify the types, functions, and meanings of compound words in Taylor Swift's songs. They found six categories of compound words, including adverbial, verbal, and nominal compounds. Taylor Swift's song lyrics provide valuable resources for studying compound words and their applications in modern English. Moreover, her existence can inspire many learners or people to enrich their vocabularies through songs. By listening to her songs, we are able to know the types, forms, and meanings of some compound words. The writers focused on five songs from her 2014 album: Blank Space, You are in Love, Wildest Dreams, I Know Places, and New Romantics.

Based on the explanation above, the writers analyzed the types, forms, and meanings of compound words in the song lyrics. This is one of part of English course, too. Moreover, compound words can add our vocabularies in having communication. By doing this research, the writers hope that it will be useful and give information for increasing knowledge in understanding compound words in song lyrics.

Method

The writers used qualitative descriptive method. It involved collecting and analyzing non-numerical data, like from video or audio to understand the concepts, opinions, or experiences. The writers analyzed five song lyrics of Taylor Swift: Blank space, You are in Love, Wildest Dreams, I Know Places, and New Romantics which were realised in 2014. Theory of McCharty (2018) was used to analyse those song lyrics. He said that there are three types of compound words. They are compound noun, compound adjective, and compound verb. Here, the writers classified the song lyrics' data in classification of the types, the forms, and the meanings of compound words.

In collecting the data, the writer did some steps. Firstly, listening to the song lyrics of Taylor Swift. Secondly, collecting the data of compound words from the song lyrics. Thirdly, classifying the compound words into the types and formations. Fourthly, getting the meanings of the compound words by looking up the dictionary. Meanwhile, in doing analysis of data, there are some steps to do in this research. Data analysis is a process in seeking and arranging the data systematically that is gotten in the result of interview, field notes, documentations by organizing the data, describing in units, doing a synthesis, arranging in a pattern, choosing the important thing that will be learned and making a conclusion so it can be easy to understand by themselves and others (Sugiyono, 2008). The steps are: (1) analyzing the song lyrics; (2) identifying the compound words in the song lyrics; (3) classifying the data based on the types of compound words; (4) classifying the data based on the formations of compound word; (5) finding the meaning of the compound word; (6) counting the data; and the last (7) drawing a conclusion.

Results

In the song lyrics of Taylor Swift, there were found compound words which have types, formations, and meanings. Each type of compound word was formed by lexical categories. There are three problems in this study. First, the types of compound word. Second, the formations of compound word. Last, the meanings of the compound word. The result was presented in the table below:

Table 1. The Compound Words Found in Taylor Swift's Song Lyrics

Song Title	Compound Words		
	Compound Noun	Compound Adjective	Compound Verb
Blank Space	3	-	1
You Are in Love	3	1	2
Wildest Dream	2	1	-
I Know Places	1	1	-
New Romantics	2	-	-
Total Percentage	11 (64,70%)	3 (17,64%)	3 (17,64%)

Based on the table above, there were 17 compound words found from 5 songs lyrics of Taylor Swift. From the 17 compound words were classified into compound noun was 11 (64,70%), compound adjective was 3 (17,64%), and compound verb was 3 (17,64%). The result showed compound word derived from compound noun was the highest.

Discussion

The classification of the types of compound words are important to know the detail of types word formations and meanings. The writers described the data through the tables. There were 17 compound words found in this research. The detail is shown below:

Table 2. Compound Noun Found in Taylor Swift's Song Lyrics

Song Title	Compound Noun	Word Formation	Meaning
Blank Space	passport	noun + noun	A license issued

			by a country permitting a foreign citizen to pass
	nightmare	adjective + noun	A frightening dream that usually awakens the sleeper
	weekend	noun + noun	The end of the week
You are in love	Truelove	adjective + noun	One truly beloved or loving
	midnight	adjective + noun	Deep or extended darkness
	darkroom	adjective + noun	A room with no light for developing light- sensitive photographic materials
Wildest Dreams	hindsight	noun + noun	Perception of the nature of an event after it has happened
	All night	adjective + noun	Lasting throughout the night
I Know Places	waistline	noun + noun	Body circumference at the waist
New Romantics	bathroom	verb + noun	A room containing a bathtub or shower
	classroom	noun + noun	A place where classes meet

Descriptive analysis of Data of Table 2.

Passport

The word passport is formed by combining two nouns; pass and port. It refers to an official document issued by government that allows a person to travel internationally. In the song, this word could be interpreted as a freedom.

Nightmare

This word consists of night (adjective) and mare (noun). It refers to an unpleasant dream that causes distress. Related to the song, it represents a toxic relationship.

Weekend

Formed by combination of two words; week (noun) and end (noun). The word shows the end of a week. In the song, it shows a moment of freedom or change.

Truelove

It derived from adjective (true) and noun (love). The word means deep or genuine romantic relationship. It can be concluded that the singer really wanted love in her songs.

Midnight

It consists of mid (adjective) and night (noun). The word refers to the darkness of the night. In the song, it may refer to emotional turning points or magical moments.

Darkroom

Darkroom comes from dark (adjective) and room (noun). It is used especially for photographic materials. From the song, Swifts might use this word to show hidden emotions or mystery.

Hindsight

This compound word combined from hind (noun) and sight (noun), meaning understanding something of the nature of an event after it has happened. It describes the theme of looking back on a past romance.

All night

The word of all night refers to something lasting throughout the night. It implies endurance or intensity with strong emotions or significant events.

Waistline

It combined from waist (noun) and line (noun), describing to body circumference at the waist. This word might be showed in the song to convey physical appearance or closeness in romantic.

Bathroom

The word bathroom formed by a verb (bath) and a noun (room). It means a room containing a bathtub or shower to bathe. From the song, it might be a common and private space.

Class room

It comes from class and room. It is a group of students learning together in a class. The singer might use it to show memory or experience of youth.

Table 3. Compound Adjective Found in Taylor Swift's Song Lyrics

Song Title	Compound Adjective	Word Formation	Meaning
Blank Space	-	-	-
You Are in Love	light-hearted	noun + Adjective	Free from care, anxiety, or

Wildest Dreams	handsome	noun + adjective	seriousness Having a pleasing and usually impressive or dignified appearance
I Know Places	bulletproof	noun + adjective	Impenetrable to bullet
New Romantics	-	-	-

Descriptive analysis of Data of Table 3.

Light-Hearted

The word above is formed by combining noun and adjective; light and hearted. It refers to a feeling that free from anxiety or worry. In the song, it is happy and dreamy love.

Handsome

The word formation is noun and adjective. Hand (noun) and some (adjective) means attractive and impressive appearance. In the song, it refers to the passionate and dreamy imaginary.

Bulletproof

It comes from bullet (noun) and proof (adjective), meaning resistant to bullets. The song describes the idea of staying safe in a secret place.

Table 4. Compound Verb Found in Taylor Swift's Song Lyrics

Song Title	Compound Verb	Word Formation	Meaning
Blank Space	daydream	noun + verb	A pleasant visionary usually wishful creation of the imagination
You Are in Love	sunset	noun + verb	To lapse or come to an end
	understand	preposition verb	+ To grasp the meaning of
Wildest Dreams	-	-	-
I Know Places	-	-	-
New Romantics	-	-	-

Descriptive analysis of Data of Table 4.

Daydream

The word of daydream comes from day and dream; noun and verb. The meaning is pleasant or imaginative thoughts. The song represents a whirlwind romance that starts as a dream but soon becomes destructive.

Sunset

The word formation of sunset describes noun and verb combination. Sun and set

symbolize the ending of natural or moment. The singer reflects about love as a passion and also quiet; meaningful moments.

Understand

It formed by preposition and verb; under and stand. In the song, understand shows deep emotional in a relationship; understand each other without needing words.

Conclusion

From the results and analysis above, the analysis of compound words in Taylor Swift's song lyrics convey how compound words raise that compound nouns are the most used. It suggests that Taylor Swift basically uses compound nouns to evoke strong imagery and demonstrate concrete concepts, while compound adjectives and verbs add emotional intensity and dynamic movements of her songs. Next, for the further researchers can do research by analyzing the complete types and word formations on compound adjective and compound verb in various albums by Taylor Swift.

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