

An Analysis of Compound Words Found in the Encanto Movie Soundtrack

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| Received: 09/06/2025 | Revised: 25/06/2025 | Accepted: 29/06/2025 |

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Abstract

This research aims to identify the types of compound words and examine how their meanings are formed in the lyrics of the *Encanto* movie soundtrack. The analysis is based on Lieber's (2009) theory for morphological classification, which divides compounds into endocentric and exocentric types, and Saeed's (2016) theory for semantic classification, which distinguishes between transparent and opaque meanings. This study uses a descriptive qualitative method with documentation as the data collection technique. The steps include listening to the songs, checking the lyrics, identifying compound words, and classifying them based on their structure and meaning. The results show a total of 30 compound words: 24 (80%) are endocentric and 6 (20%) are exocentric; 23 (77%) have transparent meanings, while 7 (23%) are opaque. This study highlights the structural and semantic features of compound words found in song lyrics and shows how linguistic elements can enrich musical expression.

Keywords: compound word, morphology, semantics, song lyrics, Encanto soundtrack

1. Introduction

In modern media, especially music and film, language is used creatively to tell stories and connect emotionally with audiences. Songwriting norms often encourage linguistic innovation, positioning song lyrics as a key medium through which language change and adaptation can be observed (Panduwati & Hilman, 2025). Linguistics, as the study of language, consists of several branches that can be applied to analyze language use in different contexts, including creative media. One of the most relevant branches for analyzing word formation in song lyrics is morphology, which focuses on the structure and formation of words.

Morphology is a branch of linguistics that focuses on how words are formed and how morphemes are structured in a language (Kalsum et al., 2021). Among the many processes in morphology, one of the most important is compounding, which involves joining two or more words to form a new word. This newly formed word often carries a meaning that is different from its individual parts. The process typically draws from open-class words such as nouns, verbs, or adjectives. By combining these words, a language can create new terms that help people communicate more effectively in daily life or describe new ideas (Rabiah, 2018). As language

continues to grow and change with society, compounding becomes one way it keeps up. According to Ava (2022), compounding is the process of putting together at least two open-class morphemes to form more complex words, showing how language changes to meet communication needs.

In the study of morphology, compound words are seen as an interesting and important feature. A compound is a fixed combination of words that acts as one single word, with a meaning that comes from the combination as a whole not just from each part (Sapayeva, 2023). Compound words are often made by putting together English adjectives and nouns into forms that have more than one base word. Even so, they still work as one grammatical and meaningful (Hikmaharyanti, 2020). This makes compound words a good topic for further study, especially in creative works like song lyrics. Moreover Libben (2020) emphasize that the most easily processed compound word tend to follow a productive pattern, have a simple morphological structure without additional linking elements, and retain a transparent meaning.

Although compound words have been widely studied in formal and academic texts, their use in song lyrics particularly in animated musical films remains relatively underexplored. Song lyrics are a crucial part of storytelling in music, and they often utilize compound words not only to enhance poetic effect but also to reinforce meaning, match the rhythm, and support the emotional tone of the song. As Jahida et al (2025) state, songs often carry messages and intended meanings from the songwriter to the listener, making them an effective tool for communication. This illustrates how songs function not only as artistic expression but also as a medium of meaningful communication. In this context, compound words help deliver the song's message, express characters' identities, and reflect the cultural and emotional aspects of the story.

In morphological studies Lieber (2009, p.48) classifies compound words based on structure into two major types: endocentric and exocentric compounds. In endocentric compounds, the head word determines the grammatical category and overall meaning. For example, in *Snowflake*, "flake" is the head, making it a noun, while "snow" functions as a modifier. In contrast, exocentric compounds have meanings that are not directly derived from any of their components. For instance, *runaway* does not simply mean "to run away" but refers to a person who escapes or something out of control. From a semantic perspective, Saeed (2016) divides compound words into two types: transparent and opaque. Transparent compounds have meanings that can be inferred from their parts, such as *toothbrush* (a brush for teeth). Opaque compounds, however, have meanings that cannot be understood from their components alone, such as *butterfly* or *honeymoon*. Interpreting these words often requires an understanding of context and cultural knowledge. This classification provides a useful framework for analyzing how structure and meaning interact in compound words, especially in creative texts like song lyrics.

This phenomenon can be seen in the soundtrack of the animated movie *Encanto*. Released by Walt Disney Animation Studios in 2021, *Encanto* features a series of songs written by Lin-Manuel Miranda that creatively combine English and Spanish. These songs not only support the storytelling and character development but also reflect elements of Colombian culture. Within the lyrical content, many compound words are used to add rhythm, emphasize meaning, and enhance the poetic quality of the songs. The frequent use of these compound structures makes the *Encanto* movie soundtrack a compelling subject for linguistic analysis, especially in terms of morphology and semantics. Previous studies on compound words have mostly focused on formal texts such as

news articles or written narratives, while their use in song lyrics particularly in musical movie soundtracks has rarely been explored as a subject of linguistic. The *Encanto* soundtrack presents a rich context for such exploration. Its songs not only convey stories and emotions but also display creative linguistic features, including the use of compound words. This makes *Encanto* a relevant and meaningful subject for examining the linguistic function of compound structures in musical texts.

The purpose of this study is to identify the types of compound words and analyze how their meanings are formed in the lyrics of the *Encanto* movie soundtrack. To achieve this, the study addresses the following questions: (1) What are the types of compound words found in the *Encanto* movie soundtrack? (2) How is the meaning of compound words formed in the lyrics of the soundtrack? This research classifies compound words in the English lyrics of *Encanto* using Lieber's (2009) structural theory dividing them into endocentric and exocentric types and analyzes their meanings based on Saeed's (2016) semantic classification of transparent and opaque meanings. Although compound words are common in everyday language and media, many learners do not fully understand their role in shaping meaning, especially in creative forms like music. While previous research has mainly focused on written texts or news media, this study provides a new perspective by exploring compound words in the context of a musical animated film. This area remains relatively underexplored in linguistic studies.

2. Method

This research employs a descriptive qualitative method. Qualitative research aims to better understand ideas, opinions, or experiences by collecting and analyzing non-numerical data, such as texts, audio, or visual content (Ugwu et al., 2023). In this context, the study aims to identify and analyze the types and meanings of compound words found in the lyrics of the *Encanto* movie soundtrack. The central focus of this approach is the process of meaning construction through word structure and semantic relationships. The study applies morphological theory by Rochelle Lieber (2009) to classify compound words based on their structure, namely into endocentric and exocentric compounds. In addition, the semantic theory by John I. Saeed (2016) is used to interpret the meaning of compound words in terms of transparent and opaque, depending on the extent to which their meanings can be inferred from their components.

The data collection technique used in this study is documentation. Documentation techniques are used to obtain data from various relevant written sources, including archives, reports, letters, books, and official documents related to the research focus (Ardiansyah et al., 2023). In this study, documentation involved accessing and analyzing song lyrics directly from trusted sources such as Spotify, Musixmatch, and Genius. The researcher also watched the *Encanto* movie on an official platform to better understand the contextual meaning of the lyrics within the storyline. The research procedure began with downloading and verifying the song lyrics, followed by identifying the compound words present. These compound words were then classified and analyzed based on the relevant theoretical frameworks. Each compound word was examined from two perspectives: its morphological structure and semantic meaning.

The data were analyzed through three stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The researcher chose Lieber's (2009) structural theory because it clearly distinguishes between endocentric and exocentric compound types, making it suitable for identifying structural patterns in the data. Meanwhile, Saeed's (2016) semantic theory was used to analyze meanings,

as it effectively differentiates between transparent and opaque meanings, providing a deeper understanding of how compound words contribute to meaning in lyrical texts.

In the data reduction stage, the researcher selected relevant data by identifying compound words from the lyrics that were related to the research focus. During the data display stage, the identified compound words were organized into tables according to their classification based on Lieber's structural theory and Saeed's semantic theory. Finally, in the conclusion-drawing stage, the researcher interpreted the results and summarized the findings to answer the research questions and draw meaningful conclusions about how compound words are used in the Encanto movie soundtrack.

To ensure data validity, the researcher applied investigator triangulation by consulting with linguistic experts. This process was implemented to ensure objectivity and accuracy in the analysis. Overall, the research is theoretically grounded, empirically based on concrete data from song lyrics, and systematically conducted through well-structured and sequential stages.

3. Results and Discussion

In the findings, the researcher found and collected several compound words from the lyrics of the *Encanto* movie soundtrack. To make the analysis clearer, the researcher provided the lyrics and used tables to present the data. The analysis focuses on classifying the compound words both morphologically and semantically. Morphologically, the classification is based on Lieber's (2009) theory, which divides compound words into endocentric and exocentric types. Semantically, the classification follows Saeed's (2016) theory, which categorizes compound words into transparent and opaque meanings. These analysis of compound words are presented by the researcher using the following table:

Tabel 1. The data of compound word

No	Compound Word	Song Title	Structure Type	Meaning Type
1	Everybody	The Family Madrigal	Endocentric	Transparent
2	Everything	The Family Madrigal	Endocentric	Transparent
3	Everyone	The Family Madrigal	Endocentric	Transparent
4	Somehow	The Family Madrigal	Endocentric	Transparent
5	Grandkid	The Family Madrigal	Endocentric	Transparent
6	Pin drop	The Family Madrigal	Exocentric	Opaque
7	Golden child	The Family Madrigal	Exocentric	Opaque
8	Accident prone	The Family Madrigal	Endocentric	Transparent
9	Prima donna	The Family Madrigal	Exocentric	Opaque
10	Shape shifts	The Family Madrigal	Endocentric	Transparent
11	Grown-ups	The Family Madrigal	Endocentric	Transparent
12	Someone	Waiting on a Miracle	Endocentric	Transparent

13	Something	Waiting on a Miracle	Endocentric	Transparent
14	Steadfast	Waiting on a Miracle	Endocentric	Transparent
15	Tightrope walker	Surface Pressure	Endocentric	Transparent
16	Three-ring circus	Surface Pressure	Exocentric	Opaque
17	Iceberg	Surface Pressure	Endocentric	Transparent
18	Heavy lift	We Don't Talk about Bruno	Endocentric	Transparent
19	Seven-foot frame	We Don't Talk about Bruno	Endocentric	Transparent
20	Someday	We Don't Talk about Bruno	Endocentric	Transparent
21	Boyfriends	We Don't Talk about Bruno	Endocentric	Transparent
22	Strangling figs	What Else can I do?	Endocentric	Transparent
23	Hanging vines	What Else can I do?	Endocentric	Transparent
24	Sundew	What Else can I do?	Endocentric	Opaque
25	Anything	All of You	Endocentric	Transparent
26	Sometimes	All of You	Endocentric	Transparent
27	Sunlight	All of You	Endocentric	Transparent
28	Goodbye	All of You	Exocentric	Opaque
29	Doorknob	All of You	Endocentric	Transparent
30	Mother nature	Colombia, Mi Encanto	Exocentric	Opaque

To provide a clearer overview of the research findings, the researcher presents the data in the form of a distribution table. This table shows the frequency of compound words found in the lyrics of the *Encanto* movie soundtrack based on structural morphological classification (Lieber, 2009) and their semantic meaning (Saeed, 2016).

Tabel 2. Distribution of Compound Words Morphological Structure

No	Structure Type	Frequency	Percentage
1	Endocentric Compounds	24	80%
2	Exocentric Compounds	6	20%
Total		30	100 %

Tabel 3. Distribution of Compound Words Semantic Meaning

No	Meaning Type	Frequency	Percentage
1	Transparent Meaning	23	77 %
2	Opaque Meaning	7	23 %
Total		30	100 %

The table above shows the frequency of compound word types found in the lyrics of the *Encanto* movie soundtrack. Based on their structural classification, the compound words are divided into two types: endocentric and exocentric, with 24 endocentric (80%) and 6 exocentric (20%). This suggests that most compound words used in the lyrics have a clear head element that determines their grammatical function and overall meaning. From a semantic perspective, following Saeed's (2016) classification, the compound words are categorized into those with transparent and opaque meanings. The analysis reveals an unequal distribution, with 23 compound words (77%) having transparent meanings and 7 (23%) being opaque. This suggests a preference for compound words whose meanings are directly understandable, while still incorporating idiomatic or metaphorical expressions to convey deeper emotional and symbolic meanings. This indicates that the *Encanto* lyrics predominantly use compound words with clear and easily understandable meanings, although some still employ idiomatic or metaphorical meanings to convey deeper emotional or symbolic messages.

The following compound words are selected as representative examples of each category based on their structural and semantic classifications. The word *grandkid* is categorized as endocentric and transparent. It is formed from *grand* and *kid*, with *kid* serving as the head. The meaning of *grandkid* refers to a "grandchild" or the child of one's child, and its meaning can be directly inferred from its components. Another example is *sunlight*, which is also endocentric and transparent. Derived from *sun* and *light*, with *light* functioning as the head, this compound means "sunlight." The meaning is literal and easily recognizable. A rather unique example is *sundew*, which is structurally an endocentric compound with *dew* as the head, indicating that the word refers to a type of plant. However, its meaning is somewhat opaque because the actual meaning as a carnivorous plant cannot be directly inferred from the combination of *sun* and *dew*. In the lyric "Can I deliver us a river of sundew?" the word *sundew* is used metaphorically to convey the image of something delicate yet mysterious, emphasizing the poetic and symbolic nature of the phrase rather than its original, literal meaning. This highlights an interesting case where the structural classification is clear, but the actual meaning requires deeper contextual understanding to be fully grasped.

Conversely, *mother nature* is an example of an exocentric and opaque compound. In the lyric "Mother nature blessed you," this phrase personifies nature as a maternal figure who bestows blessings. There is no structural head, and the meaning cannot be directly predicted from *mother* and *nature*. Similarly, the compound *three-ring circus* in the lyric "I feel berserk as a tightrope walker in a three-ring circus" is also exocentric and opaque. The expression is used idiomatically to describe a chaotic or overwhelming situation rather than a literal circus. Lastly, *pin drop* in the lyric "Cousin Dolores can hear a pin drop" is an idiomatic expression meaning complete silence. Since neither component acts as the grammatical head and the meaning is not literal, it is classified as exocentric and opaque.

Through these examples, it becomes evident that the lyrics of *Encanto* employ compound words not only as linguistic elements but also as expressive tools rich in meaning. The variation in compound word structures and their semantic interpretations helps to enhance character portrayal, create emotional atmosphere, and convey moral messages throughout the songs.

The dominance of endocentric structures and transparent meanings in *Encanto* lyrics reinforces the depiction of characters, emotional tone, and the delivery of moral values. These findings are in line with the study by Sakti et al (2021), which found that endocentric compound words were the most dominant type in the lyrics of Deep Purple's *Infinite* album. A similar pattern was reported by Rahmawati (2020) who found a dominance of endocentric compounds in the *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* movie script. Although these studies analyzed different genres rock music and fantasy film, they both highlight a tendency toward compound word structures with clear grammatical heads. Furthermore, Maulidia & Mustika, (2022) in their study of a lifestyle column article in *Jakarta Globe*, identified both endocentric and exocentric compounds, and categorized them based on lexical classes such as noun, verb, and adjective compounds. Although the data they examined were journalistic texts rather than song lyrics, the results still demonstrate the frequent use of endocentric structures to ensure clarity and coherence in meaning. These findings support Lieber's (2009) theory that endocentric compounds are more structurally productive due to the presence of a clear grammatical head. From a semantic perspective, the preference for transparent meanings is also consistent with Saeed's (2016) view that predictable meanings are easier to process, particularly in narrative and emotionally driven texts.

This study, while offering valuable insights, has several limitations. The analysis is restricted to English language lyrics from the *Encanto* movie soundtrack, which limits its linguistic scope. In addition, the classification of compound word meanings may involve a degree of subjectivity, as word interpretation often depends on context and the individual understanding. Nevertheless, this research contributes to the development of linguistic studies by demonstrating how compound words function both structurally and semantically in musical texts. It emphasizes the relevance of applying morphological and semantic theories to the analysis of popular media and opens up opportunities for further research across genres, languages, and cultural contexts to better understand patterns of creative language use.

4. Conclusion

Based on the findings and discussion, the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. The compound words found in the lyrics of the *Encanto* movie soundtrack are classified into two morphological types as proposed by Lieber (2009) namely is endocentric and exocentric compounds. Among the 30 data identified, 24 (80%) are endocentric compounds, and 6 (20%) are exocentric compounds. This indicates that most compound words used in the lyrics have a clear grammatical head, aligning with the typical structure of endocentric compounds.
2. Based on Saeed's (2016) semantic theory, the meanings of the compound words are categorized into transparent and opaque. The results show that 23 (77%) of the compound words have transparent meanings where their meanings can be inferred from their components while 7 (23%) are opaque, meaning their meanings are idiomatic or metaphorical and cannot be predicted directly from their parts.

These findings indicate that compound words in the *Encanto* lyrics are not merely used for grammatical structure or stylistic choices, but also serve as expressive tools. They help shape the tone and atmosphere of the songs, strengthen character portrayal, and reinforce the overall messages delivered through the lyrics.

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