

# ENGLISH INFLECTION IN PLURAL NOUNS WITH -O, -OO, -OE, -OU -OW, AND -EAU ENDING

Suwaree Yordchim

*Faculty of Social Science and Humanity, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, Bangkok, Thailand  
E-mail: suwaree.yo@ssru.ac.th*

## ABSTRACT

The aims of this study were 1) to analyze the occurrences of English inflection in plural nouns with -o, -oo, -oe, -ou -ow, and -eau ending and 2) to find out how many types of variations there were and what these variations were in nouns -o, -oo, -oe, -ou -ow, and -eau ending. This study was a document research. There was a collection of the data from a number of different dictionaries. Variations in nouns with -o, -oo, -oe, -ou -ow, and -eau ending were analyzed and summarized for each unique environment in order to find how many types of variations in English inflection of nouns with -o, -oo, -oe, -ou -ow, and -eau ending, there were and what these variations were. The instrumentation includes the inflectional checklists on English inflectional plural nouns -o, -oo, -oe, -ou -ow, and -eau ending. The results showed that nouns with -o, -oo, -oe, -ou -ow, and -eau ending have four types: they are formed by adding 1) -s, 2) adding -es, or 3) adding both -s and -es and adding -x. For suffix -s, it occurs with the nouns ending with -o, -oo, -oe, -ou and -ow, ending while suffix -es occurs only in nouns with -o ending. Either suffix -s or -es occurs with only -o ending. In addition, suffix -x or -s occurs with only -eau ending.

**Key words:** English Inflection, Plural Nouns, -o, -oo, -oe, -ou -ow, and -eau Ending

## INTRODUCTION

Language is a systematic form of communication however, it can take a variety of forms. Thai language is normally used in general. English is used as a lingual franca in Thailand. The grammar of the Thai language is also very different to that of English because Thai is an uninflected language. Thus, nouns and verbs do not change their forms for number, gender, case or person. The use of inflections is therefore somewhat confusing for Thai learners of English.

The term “inflection” is defined by researchers in a number of different ways. Loos (2004) defines it as “variation in the form of a word, typically by means of an affix, that expresses a grammatical contrast which is obligatory for the stem’s word class in some given grammatical context”. Furthermore, he adds that inflection “does not result in a change of word class, and usually produces a predictable, non-idiosyncratic change of meaning”.

Blevins (2008) reviews the general properties of inflection as follows:

- 1) Inflection is monotonic, adding but not changing morphosyntactic features.
- 2) Inflection is paradigmatic, defining new inflected forms of existing lexemes.
- 3) Inflection is relevant for syntagmatic dependencies (Anderson 1982)
- 4) Inflection tends to be fully productive and semantically transparent.
- 5) Inflectional exponents tend to occur on the periphery of a complex word.

English inflection occurring in nouns, verbs and adjectives has eight types, they are 1) noun plural, 2) noun possessive with 2 forms of ‘s and s’, 3) verb present participle, 4) verb present simple, 5) verb past tense, 6) verb past participle, 7) adjective comparative and 8) adjective superlative. Regular and irregular forms occur with noun plural, verb present simple, verb past tense, and verb past participle, adjective comparative and adjective superlative (Yordchim, (2017).

This study focused on the occurrences of English inflection in plural nouns with -o, -oo, -oe, -ou -ow, and -eau ending.

### OBJECTIVE

The aims of this study were 1) to analyze the occurrences of English inflection in plural nouns with -o, -oo, -oe, -ou -ow, and -eau ending and 2) to find out how many types of variations there were and what these variations were in nouns with -o, -oo, -oe, -ou -ow, and -eau ending.

### METHODOLOGY

This study was a document research started with a content analysis of English inflection in nouns with -o, -oo, -oe, -ou -ow, and -eau ending including both regular forms and irregular variations. Then, there was a collection of the data from a number of different dictionaries. Variations in nouns with -o, -oo, -oe, -ou -ow, and -eau ending were analyzed and summarized for each unique environment in order to find how many types of variations in English inflection of nouns with -o, -oo, -oe, -ou -ow, and -eau ending, there were and what these variations were. The instrumentation includes the inflectional checklists on English inflectional plural nouns with -o, -oo, -oe, -ou -ow, and -eau ending. The data were analyzed by recording into the checklists provided according to each variation. There was a collection of the data from a number of different dictionaries such as Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, Merriam-Webster Dictionary, Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English and Collins Cobuild Dictionary.

### RESULTS

Nouns with -o, -oo, -oe, -ou -ow, and -eau ending have four affix types: 1) adding suffix -s, 2) adding suffix -es, 3) adding either suffix -s or -es and 4) adding suffix -x. For suffix -s, it occurs with the nouns ending with 1) -o pronounced /əʊ/, 2) -o pronounced /u:/, 3) -oo pronounced /u:/, 4) -oe pronounced /əʊ/, 5) -oe pronounced /u:/, 6) -ow pronounced /əʊ/, 7) -ow pronounced /aʊ/, 8) -ou pronounced /u:/, 9) -o + silent final sound and 10) -eau pronounced /əʊ/.

For suffix -es, it only occurs with -o pronounced /əʊ/. For suffix either -s or -es, it only occurs with -o pronounced /əʊ/. For suffix -x, it only occurs with -eau pronounced /əʊ/ as shown in Table 1.

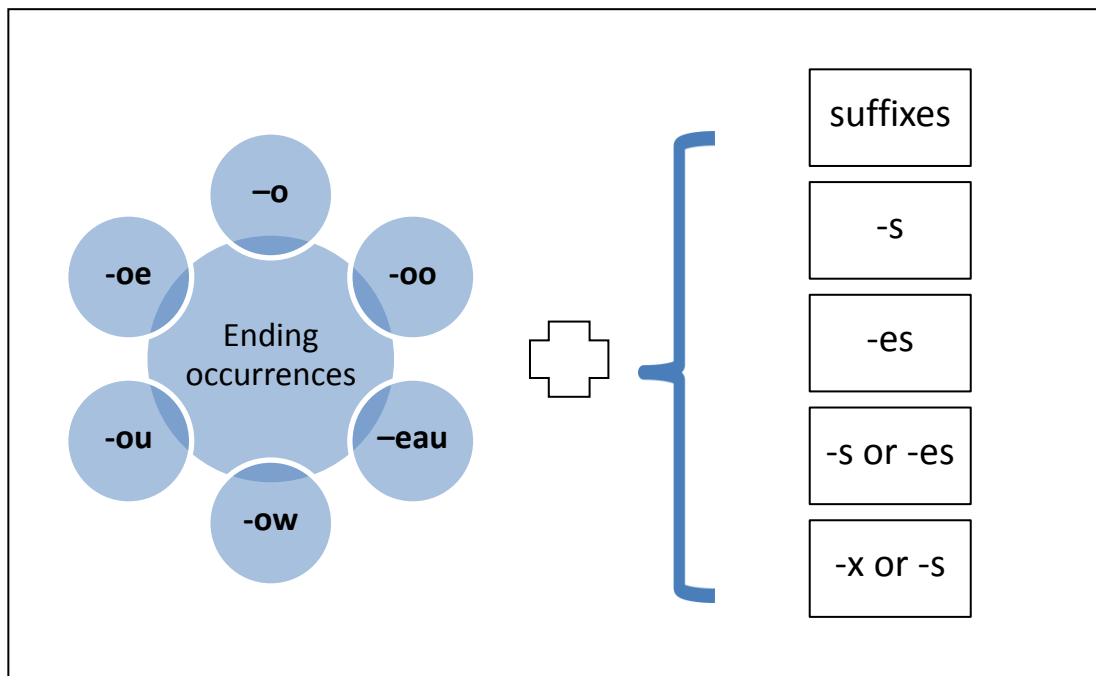
**Table 1**  
**Inflection in nouns with -o, -oo, -oe, -ou -ow, and -eau ending and their opportunities of plural occurrences**

No.	Noun ending environments	Opportunities of Plural Morpheme Occurrences			
		suffix -s	suffix -es	Either suffix -s or -es	Either suffix -x or -s
1	<b>Nouns with -o ending</b>				
	1) -o pronounced /əʊ/	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	x
	2) -o pronounced /u:/	<input type="checkbox"/>	x	x	x
	3) -oo pronounced /u:/	<input type="checkbox"/>	x	x	x
	4) -o with silent final sound	<input type="checkbox"/>	x	x	x
2	<b>Nouns with -oe ending</b>				
	1) -oe pronounced /əʊ/	<input type="checkbox"/>	x	x	x

No.	Noun ending environments	Opportunities of Plural Morpheme Occurrences			
		suffix -s	suffix -es	Either suffix -s or -es	Either suffix -x or -s
	2) -oe pronounced / u: /	☐	x	x	x
3	<b>Nouns with -ow ending</b>				
	1) -ow pronounced / oʊ /	☐	x	x	x
	2) -ow pronounced / aʊ /	☐	x	x	x
4	<b>Nouns with -ou ending</b>				
	1) -ou pronounced / u: /	☐	x	x	x
5	<b>Nouns with -eau ending</b>				
	1) -eau pronounced / əʊ /	☐	x	x	☐

☐ = occurred      x = not occurred

Noun ending environments -o, -oo, -oe, -ou, -ow, and -eau ending can be shown in Picture 1.



**Picture 1** Opportunities of plural morphemes and noun ending environments occurring with -o, -oo, -oe, -ou, -ow, and -eau ending

These are the details of words in each group.

### 1. Nouns with -o ending

1.1 -o pronounced / əʊ / + suffix -s: *radio – radios*

- |                |            |              |                |
|----------------|------------|--------------|----------------|
| 1. albino      | 7. bimbo   | 13. bongo    | 19. calypso    |
| 2. alto        | 8. biro    | 14. casino   | 20. cameo      |
| 3. archipelago | 9. bistro  | 15. chicano  | 21. cappuccino |
| 4. auto        | 10. bolero | 16. combo    | 22. demo       |
| 5. banjo       | 11. bozo   | 17. concerto | 23. dodo       |
| 6. barrio      | 12. bronco | 18. credo    | 24. duo        |

25. dynamo	42. inferno	59. proviso	76. supremo
26. embryo	43. kiddo	60. psycho	77. taco
27. espresso	44. kilo	61. physio	78. tempo
28. euro	45. kimono	62. piano	79. trio
29. falsetto	46. libido	63. piccolo	80. turbo
30. fandango	47. lido	64. pistachio	81. tyro
31. fiasco	48. lingo	65. placbo	82. vibrato
32. flamenco	49. metro	66. quango	83. video
33. folio	50. nuncio	67. risotto	84. virtuoso
34. gaucho	51. ouzo	68. saddo	85. yobbo
35. gazebo	52. palomino	69. scenario	86. yo-yo
36. gigolo	53. panto	70. silo	87. zero
37. gizmo	54. patio	71. sombrero	
38. gringo	55. politico	72. soprano	
39. gumbo	56. poncho	73. stereo	
40. hippo	57. portfolio	74. stiletto	
41. imbroglio	58. pro	75. studio	

1.2 -o pronounced /əʊ/ + suffix -es: *potato - potatoes*

1.calico	5.echo	9. lasso	13.volcano
2.cargo	6.embargo	10.portico	
3.dingo	7.halo	11.tomato	
4.domino	8.hero	12.salvo	

1.3-o pronounced /əʊ/ + either suffix -e or -es: *commando - commandos or commandoes*

1. buffalo	4.fresco	8.libretto	11.mosquito
2. flamingo	5.ghetto 6.grotto	9. mango	12. motto
3. farrago	7.hobo	10.manifesto	

1.4 -o pronounced /u:/ + suffix -s : *do - dos (also do's)*

1.5 -o with silent final sound + suffix -s : *dough - doughs*

1.argot	2.borough	3.furlough
---------	-----------	------------

## 2. Nouns ending with -oo

2.1-oo pronounced /u:/ + suffix -s: *bamboo - bamboos*

1. cuckoo	3. kangaroo	6. tattoo
2.didgeridoo	4.kazoo	
	5.taboo	7.yahoo 8. zoo

## 3. Nouns ending with -oe

3.1 -oe pronounced /əʊ/ + suffix -s : *doe - does*

1.hoe	2.foe	3.floe	4.oboe
5.toe	6.woe		

3.2 -oe pronounced /u:/ + suffix -s : *shoe - shoes*

#### 4. Nouns ending with -ow

4.1-ow pronounced / oʊ / + suffix -s : show - shows

1.arrow	8.crossbow	15.inflow	22.scarecrow
2.barrow	9.crow	16.marrow	23.shadow
3.bedfellow	10.elbow	17.meadow	24.wheelbarrow
4.bellow	11.eyebrow	18.minnow	25.widow
5.bow	12.fellow	19.pillow	26.window
6.bungalow	13.glow	20.rainbow	
7.burrow	14.harrow	21.row	

4.2-ow pronounced / aʊ / + suffix -s : bow - bows

1.brow	4.eyebrow	7.prow	10. scow
2.cow	5.mow	8.row	11.vow
3. dhow	6.plow	9.sow	

#### 5. Nouns ending with -ou

5.1 -ou pronounced / u: / + suffix -s : bayou - bayous

#### 6. Nouns ending with -eau + suffix -s

6.1-eau pronounced / əʊ / + either suffix -x or -s: bureau - bureaux or bureaus

1. château 2. plateau 3. tableau

**Note:** A notice of the word in this group is: It is an -x plural affix that originates from French inflection, so all of these nouns are from French.

### CONCLUSION

The main findings showed that inflectional variation in the English language is significant, especially for plural noun inflection with nouns with -o, -oo, -oe, -ou -ow, and -eau ending have four affix types: 1) adding suffix -s, 2) adding suffix -es, 3) adding either suffix -s or -es and 4) adding suffix -x. For suffix -s, it occurs with the nouns ending with 1) -o pronounced / əʊ /, 2) -o pronounced / u: /, 3) -oo pronounced / u: /, 4) -oe pronounced / əʊ /, 5) -oe pronounced / u: /, 6) -ow pronounced / əʊ /, 7) -ow pronounced / aʊ /, 8) -ou pronounced / u: /, 9) -o + silent final sound and 10) -eau pronounced / əʊ /.

For suffix -es, it only occurs with -o pronounced / əʊ /. For suffix either -s or -es, it only occurs with -o pronounced / əʊ /. For suffix -x, it only occurs with -eau pronounced / əʊ /.

The study of English inflectional variation especially in L2 learners is useful for language classroom to help them better understanding the language diversity, avoiding in making inflectional errors and also collections of vocabulary in each environment group. It is according to the study of Darus & Subramaniam (2009) found that the most common errors for Malaysian second language learners include plural forms, verb tense, word choice, prepositions, subject-verb agreement and sentence construction. Out of these common errors, three of them involve inflection: plural forms, verb tense and subject-verb agreement.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Rajabhat Suan Sunandha University to support through this research.

## REFERENCES

- [1] Blevins, J. P. (2008). **The handbook of English linguistics**. Retrieved January 18, 2012 from <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/9780470753002.ch22/summary>.
- [2] Darus. S., & Subramaniam, K. (2009). Error Analysis of the Writing English Essays of Secondary School Students in Malaysia: A Case Study .European Journal of Social Sciences. Volume 8, Number 3 (pp.483-495).
- [3] George, Y.(1998).The British National Corpus (BNC) Web site :<http://www.natcorp.ox.ac.uk/>
- [4] Hornby, A. S., Cowie, A. P., & Lewis, J. W. (1974). **Oxford advanced learner's dictionary of current English**. London: Oxford University Press.
- [5] Merriam-Webster s collegiate dictionary ( 10th ed. ) . ( 1999 ) . Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster Incorporated.
- [6] Procter, P. (1978). **Longman dictionary of contemporary English**. Harlow England: Longman.
- [7] Sinclair, J. ( 2003 ) . **Collins COBUILD advanced learner's English dictionary**. Glasgow: HarperCollins Publishers.
- [8] Yordchim,S. (2017). **English Inflection in Plural Nouns with -f and /f/ Ending**. Conference Proceedings: International Business Economic Tourism Sciences Technology Humanities Social Sciences And Education Research Conference, Zurich, Switzerland.