

## COMPOUND WORDS IN THE FILM DUNE BY DENIS VILLENEUVE (A MORPHOLOGICAL ANALYSIS)

Gloria E. Kemby<sup>1</sup>, Donald R. Lotulung<sup>2</sup>, F. Ari Anggriani Sebayang<sup>3</sup>  
<sup>1,2,3</sup>Sam Ratulangi University, Indonesia

E-mail: [gloriakemby.est@gmail.com](mailto:gloriakemby.est@gmail.com)<sup>1</sup>; [ringgo25@gmail.com](mailto:ringgo25@gmail.com)<sup>2</sup>; [arisebayang@unsrat.ac.id](mailto:arisebayang@unsrat.ac.id)<sup>3</sup>

**Abstract:** This study is titled “Compound Words in the Film Dune (A Morphological Analysis).” The primary objective of this study is to identify, categorize, and analyze the meanings of compound words found within the film’s dialogue. The analysis is grounded in morphological theories, particularly those proposed by McCarthy (2002) and Nida (1949), which serve as the main theoretical framework for identifying and interpreting the data. This research adopts a qualitative descriptive approach to provide a detailed examination of how compound words function in the context of the film. The result of this study revealed that there are 50 compound words, distributed as 30 compound nouns, 1 compound verb, 6 compound adjectives, 5 compound adverb, and 8 compound pronouns. Four formation patterns were observed in compound nouns—Noun + Noun, Verb + Noun, Adjective + Noun, and Preposition + Noun. One compound verb with Verb + Noun pattern. Four patterns underlie compound adjectives—Noun + Adjective, Verb + Adjective, and Adjective + Adjective and Adjective + Noun—and one compound adverb are formed by Preposition + Noun. In addition, there are 30 endocentric and 20 exocentric compound words found in this research.

**Keywords:** *compound words, dune, morphological analysis, word formation*

### INTRODUCTION

Culture plays a central role in shaping how humans communicate, adapt and express their thoughts. It is not inherited but learned through interaction, experience, and shared values. As Tylor (1871:1) describes, culture surrounds knowledge, beliefs, art, morals, law, and customs. Meanwhile, Hofstede (2011: 3) emphasizes it as the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes one group from another. One of the most powerful expressions of culture is language, which both reflects and shapes the way people think.

To better understand how language works within culture and society, it is important to study it through the lens of linguistics. Chomsky (2006: 163) describes linguistics as the study of the knowledge that enables humans to produce and understand an infinite number of sentences. It aims to examine the structural elements of language, including how words are formed, and how sentences

construct meanings. Meanwhile, according to Saussure (1959), language is not just a set of words or grammar rules. It is something people build and share together as a community. Saussure (1959) described language as a social system that works because people in a community more or less agree on how to use it, and this perspective helped move linguistics beyond just studying structure and rules, leading to broader approaches like macrolinguistics. Even though both views are important, this research focuses more on the structural side of language, which falls under microlinguistics.

According to Crystal (1952:305), microlinguistics refers to the core areas of linguistic study, particularly phonology, morphology, and syntax. This research focuses on morphology, which examines the internal structure of words and how they are formed. Morphology sees words as being made up of smaller parts that are arranged in regular ways. This idea is supported by Verhaar (1992:52) that defines morphology as the branch of linguistics concerned with the grammatical arrangement of the components that make up a word. Through this perspective, morphology provides insight into the principles underlying word formation in language and allows for a systematic analysis of how smaller units of meaning combine to create more word structures.

Word formation plays a key role in the study of morphology because it looks at how new words are created and added to a language. According to Bauer (1983:7) word formation involves the different ways simpler elements like roots and affixes come together to form more complex words. Studying this helps us understand the patterns behind how people regularly build new words to express new ideas or describe changing realities. Among the various types of word formation, one of the most common and productive processes is compounding, where two or more existing words are combined to create a new one with its own meaning.

Compounding is one of the processes used to create new words. Fromkin and Rodman (1973:148) said that compounding is thus a large common and frequent process for enlarging the vocabulary of all languages. This process forms new words by putting together two or more existing ones, and it plays an important role in building and expanding a language's vocabulary. According to Szymanek (1989:37), compounding involves the combination of at least two bases that can function as independent words. These bases may come from different grammatical categories such as adjective (Adj), verb (V), or noun (N), depending on the type of compound being formed. For example, the word *whiteboard* is created from *white* (Adj) and *board* (N), resulting in a new noun.

Compound words are formed by joining two or more individual words, each with its own meaning to create a new word that often carries a different meaning. For example, the English word *hearsay* is made up of *hear* and *say*, but it does not mean 'to hear and to speak.' Instead, it refers to information passed from one person to another, basically in a rumour or gossip. Another example is

*well-to-do*, which might seem to mean ‘healthy to do’ when taken literally, but actually refers to someone who is wealthy or financially well-off (Lotulung, 1995: 2-3). This shows that compound words don’t always mean exactly what each word means on its own. It also shows how language can create new meanings by joining simple words together.

This study examines the use of compound words in the film *Dune*. *Dune* is a science fiction film by Denis Villeneuve that explores theme of power, prophecy, and survival. The story centers on Paul Atreides, a young nobleman with a mysterious fate, as he faces political conflict, cultural encounters, and personal growth. This film was chosen as the subject of this research not only because of its intriguing plot, but also because of its extensive use of language, especially the frequency of compound words with both technical and symbolic meanings. Its combination of science fiction and cultural elements make it a relevant subject for morphological analysis.

The title “Compound Words in the Film *Dune* by Denis Villeneuve (A Morphological Analysis)” was chosen because the film features a wide range of meaningful compound words. In sci-fi films, compound words are usually used to describe new ideas and concept, and *Dune* is one of great examples. The way these words are constructed and applied reflects both the fictional universe and deeper symbolic meanings behind the story. These linguistic features raise interest in examining how compound words work in the film, both in terms of their structure and meaning, using *Dune* as the primary source of analysis. Through this analysis, the study seeks to gain a better understanding of how compound words contribute to the film’s language and build its unique story world.

## METHOD

This study adopted a qualitative research method to give a clear and detailed overview of compound words used in the film *Dune*. Creswell (2014:2) explains that qualitative research involves posing emerging questions, analyzing patterns from specific details to broader themes, and making interpretations based on those patterns. Within this framework, the study focused on the analysis of textual data, drawing on Creswell’s (2018:254) qualitative research model to explore, describe and gain a deeper understanding of compound words. This study then divided into three main stages, which are preparation, data collection, and data analysis.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### 1. Identification and Classification of Compound Words Found in the Film *Dune*

This study has classifies all compound words found in the film *Dune*, using the theoretical framework of McCarthy (2002:59). According to this framework, compound words are categorized into three major types: compound nouns, compound verbs, and compound adjectives.

**a. Compound Noun**

**Crysknife**

“It’s a **crysknife**.” (D/17)

**b. Compound Verb**

**Court-martialed**

“Are you trying to get me **court-martialed**?” (D/5)

**c. Compound Adjective**

**Dance-like**

“...a **dance-like** motion with irregular rhythm which emulates...” (D/20)

**2. Analysis of the Word Formation Process and the Meanings of Compound Words in the Film**

**Dune by Denis Villeneuve**

**2.1 Compound Noun Formation**

**a. N + N = N**

Below are the compound nouns formed by a noun + noun structure, as found in the dialogue of *Dune*.

**Crysknife**

“It’s a **crysknife**.” (D/17)

Crys (N) + knife (N) = Crysknife (N)

Shadout Mapes pulled a knife from beneath her garments and presented it carefully to Jessica, assuming she would not what it was. But to her surprise, Jessica recognized it at once. The almost an arm length knife looked like a blade made from tooth of some giant beast that looked pale and sharp.

Here, *Crys* refers to a crystal-like substance in *Dune* that made from the tooth of a sandworm, while *knife* refers to a bladed weapon. *Knife* is clearly the head, defining the object as a weapon, while *crys* marks it as a special kind with ceremonial and cultural significance. The term *crysknife* condenses a whole system of symbolism, ritual, and identity into one word, demonstrating the power of morphology in worldbuilding.

**a. V + N = N**

This section highlights compound nouns that are built by combining a verb (or verb-like base) with a noun, resulting in a new noun that carries a more specific meaning than either word alone.

**Handwriting**

“This is Dr. Yueh's **handwriting**.” (D/29)

Hand (V) + writing (N) = Handwriting (N)

Inside the tent that almost buried by the sand outside, Paul opened a box and unfold a small scroll of paper that left by Dr. Yueh, their personal physician that forced to betray the Duke and his household by the Harkonnen.

In this sentence, the word *handwriting* is used to describe the way Dr. Yueh writes by hand. It is a compound noun made up of *hand*, which relates to the act of doing something manually, and *writing*, which refers to the letters or words written down. When combined, the two words form a noun that means a person's writing style when using their hand, usually with a pen or pencil. The compound is used in a clear and direct way to point out that the writing belongs to Dr. Yueh. It shows how compound nouns can be made by putting a verb and a noun together to create a new word with a specific meaning.

**b. Adj + N = N**

This type of compound noun is formed by combining an adjective and a noun, where the resulting compound functions as a single nominal unit.

**Stillsuits**

"...And **stillsuits**, and sand compactors, and all kinds of ingenious things."

**(D/24)**

Still (Adj) + suits (N) = Stillsuits (N)

During their breaks, Duncan chatted with the men on the rest area. He brought up the topic of the devices the Fremens built, such as paracompact, stillsuit—a suit that specifically designed to hydrate one's body that recycled the body's moisture to hydrate and survive in a harsh Arrakis heat—and sand compactors.

The term *stillsuits* denotes a specialized piece of clothing designed to preserve body moisture in extreme desert conditions. The adjective *still* is associated with the process of distillation or conserving fluids, while *suit* refers to a full-body garment. As a compound, *stillsuit* functions as a noun that encapsulates both form and function, as an outfit engineered to support survival in arid environments. In the narrative of *Dune*, this compound represents an essential technology for life on Arrakis and reflects the adaptation of language to describe fictional inventions.

**c. Prep + N = N**

This type of compound noun is formed by combining a prepositional element and a noun, where the resulting structure functions as a single nominal unit.

**Outsiders**

"The **outsiders** race against time to avoid the heat of the day."

**(D/2)**

Out (prep-like) + side (N) +er = outsiders (N)

The harvesters or the outsiders, carried by the balloon-topped craft, collected the spice that is not theirs, while the Fermen, the native people of Arrakis, watched them from afar.

The word *outsiders* is formed by combining the prepositional element *out* with the noun *siders*. In this context, *out* does not function as a spatial preposition but as a prefix-like element that implies exclusion or being beyond a certain group or boundary. The base noun *sider* refers to someone who belongs to a side or faction, and the compound *outsiders* then refers to individuals who do not belong to a particular group, often viewed as unfamiliar or alien. In the film context, it reflects the perception of characters who are not native or integrated into the society being referred to.

## 2.2 Compound Verb Formation

Compound verbs are formed by combining two words, often a verb, noun, or preposition to create a new verb with a more specific meaning. These combinations usually describe actions in a more detailed way. Although not as common as compound nouns or adjectives, compound verbs also appear in the film *Dune*. Based on the data, the study found one example of a compound verb that fits the **V + N = V** pattern.

### Court-martialed

“Are you trying to get me **court-martialed**?” (D/5)

Court (Verb) + Martial (Noun) = Court-martialed (Verb)

Duncan returned flying and landed his craft in the hangar. He is then welcomed by Paul that insisted on joining Duncan and his team on their next mission to Arrakis, but Duncan did not want to risk a court-martial so he refused Paul’s requests.

The word court-martialed is a compound verb made from court and martial. It means to bring someone, especially a soldier, to a military trial. Even though the base form court-martial is a noun, it can be used as a verb when talking about taking legal action in a military setting. In the sentence above, court-martialed is used in the past tense.

## 2.3 Compound Adjective Formation

### a. N + Adj = Adj

In this structure, the noun provides the topic or source of reference, while the adjective describes its quality or condition. These types of compounds are often used to deliver specific and efficient descriptions without needing extra explanation, like the examples from the film *Dune* below.

### Nutrient-poor

“These plants cling to life in a parched, **nutrient-poor** landscape” (D/19)

Nutrient (N) + Poor (Adj) = Nutrient-poor (Adj)

The compound *nutrient-poor* describes an environment that lacks essential nutrients. The noun

*nutrient* gives the subject being described, like something the environment is lacking, while *poor* shows the degree or condition, meaning “low in” or “lacking.” When used together, they act as a single adjective to modify *environment*. This kind of compound allows the speaker to convey a specific condition in a short and clear way. Instead of saying “an environment that does not have enough nutrients,” the compound *nutrient-poor* simplifies that into just one precise modifier.

**b. V + Adj = Adj**

**Deep-rooted**

“...who have cultivated **deep-rooted** terranic plants...” (D/18)

Deep (V) + rooted (Adj) = Deep-rooted (Adj)

During this scene, the hollogram showed plants that almost look like a bush that planted on Paul’s floor.

The compound adjective *deep-rooted* here describes the *Terranic plants* as being firmly planted and well established. The word *deep* adds a sense of physical and metaphorical depth, while *rooted* means fixed or grounded. When combined, they express how the plants have strong, lasting roots, both literally in the soil and figuratively, as something intentionally cultivated and preserved over time.

**c. Adj + Adj = Adj**

**High-born**

“Bene Gesserit ain't all **highborn**.” (D/28)

High (Adj) + born (Adj) = High-born (Adj)

Paul and Jessica were seated with their hands bound by the armed men in dark armors. They were taken hostage by the Harkonnen soldiers into this dim, green-colored light aircraft and soon would throw them off the craft to feed their bodies to the sandworm. One of men broke the silence and claimed that Benne Gesserit, the sisterhood Jessica belonged to, were not highborn at all. In another words, Benne Gesserit were not nobles.

The compound *high-born* describes individuals of noble or aristocratic birth. The adjective *high* refers to elevated social status, while *born* relates to origin or lineage. Combined, they form a single compound adjective used to characterize someone as being born into a high-ranking family. In this context, it emphasizes that not all members of the Bene Gesserit come from elite backgrounds, indicating social diversity within the group.

**d. Adj + N = Adj**

**High-efficiency**

“A stillsuit is a **high-efficiency** filtration system.” (D/25)

High (Adj) + efficiency (N) = High-efficiency (Adj)

On the hangar, the blue-eyed lady in a stillsuit spotted standing next to an aircraft. Dr. Liet Kynes, the imperial ecologist approached the Duke and the other men as the Duke welcomed her. She took a step closer to adjust the men's stillsuits as she explained how the suit works to them and how complex yet highly effective the stillsuit was to survive in Arrakis. The compound word high-efficiency combines the adjective *high* and the noun *efficiency*. Together, they form a compound that describes the quality of the "filtration system". Even though *efficiency* is a noun, the whole phrase *high-efficiency* works like an adjective because it describes the noun filtration system. This type of word is pretty common in technical or scientific contexts, where people often use combinations like this to show the level or quality of something.

## 2.4 Compound Adverb Formation

From the Dune film data, the study identified one compound adverb with the formation pattern **Prep + Noun = Adverb**:

### Off-world

"If we can't refine spice and ship it **off-world**..."

(D/21)

Off (Prep) + world (N) = Off-world (adverb)

While resting themselves between the towering stone cliffs after their escape from the sandworm, Paul and his mother were suddenly ambushed by the group of Fremen. The Fremen surrounded them and threatened to take their lives but Jessica offered them wealth as a reward if they help her and her son to Caladan.

In this sentence, off-world acts as a compound adverb describing the destination of the shipment, beyond the world or planet. The word off indicates movement away from something, while world refers to a planet. Together, they create an adverbial compound expressing direction or place.

## Endocentric Compound

Endocentric compounds are formed when the compound keep the grammatical category of one of its components, typically the final element, which acts as the head. In this type of compound, the overall word functions within the same word class as its head. Based on the morphological analysis of the film Dune, the following endocentric compounds were identified: *birthright*, *bloodlines*, *clockwork*, *crysknife*, *filmbooks*, *handwriting*, *heatstroke*, *housekeeper*, *hunter-seeker*, *newcomers*, *nightfall*, *outsiders*, *outworlders*, *sandstorms*, *sandwalk*, *sandworms*, *spaceport*, *stillsuits*, *well-dipper*, *wormsign*, *court-martialed*, *dance-like*, *deep-rooted*, and *nutrient-poor*. These compounds are called endocentric because the overall meaning still centers on the core word in the compound. For example, in *sandstorms*, the main idea is still a storm (with sand giving extra detail), and in *crysknife* (*crystal knife*), the focus is still on the knife, just with added description.



### **Exocentric Compoun**

From the compound words identified in the film *Dune*, the following are classified as exocentric based on their structure: *grandfather*, *hellhole*, *highborn*, *mind-killer*, *high-efficiency*, *slip-fashion*, and *off-world*. These are considered exocentric because their meaning cannot be fully understood just by looking at the two words that form them. For example, *grandfather* is not a kind of father but a different role entirely, and *off-world* does not describe a specific world but rather a location or direction away from Earth. Similarly, *hellhole* is not literally a hole in hell but just refers to a terrible place. These compounds do not follow the usual head-dependent pattern and are more idiomatic or abstract in meaning. Each of these compounds displays a structural pattern where the resulting word class shifts from its internal parts, making them morphologically exocentric.

### **CONCLUSION**

To conclude, this study supports the theories of McCarthy (2002) and Nida (1949) and has identified a total of 50 compound words that appear throughout the film *Dune*. These compounds found in the film consist of 30 compound nouns, 1 compound verb, 6 compound adjectives, 5 compound adverbs, and 8 compound pronouns. The compound nouns follow 4 types of formation patterns, including noun + noun, verb + noun, adjective + noun, and preposition + noun. The only compound verb identified is formed through verb + noun. Compound adjectives show 4 patterns, such as noun + adjective, verb + adjective, adjective + adjective, and adjective + noun. Additionally, there was only one pattern found in compound adverb that formed by preposition+ noun. From the total data, 30 compound words are endocentric, meaning that the overall meaning of the compound is determined by one of its immediate parts, while 20 are exocentric, where the meaning goes beyond or is not directly traceable to the meaning of the individual components.

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