

Irregular Word Formation of Lexical Innovations in James Dashner's *The Maze Runner*

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A B S T R A C T

This study investigates lexical innovations in *The maze runner* by James Dashner (2010), especially in terms of irregular word-formation techniques. 34 units of lexical innovations were found and classified according to their word classes: nouns, verbs, adjectives, and exclamations. The analysis focuses mainly on the examination of the word-formation processes undergone by the lexical units. The results reveal that four irregular word-formation techniques were used in the coinage of the new lexicon: compounding with left-headedness, compounding with unrecognizable constituent, compounding with irregular combination, and rhyming.

Keywords: *irregular word-formation technique, lexeme, lexical innovation, word-formation.*

INTRODUCTION

Language has been around for a very long time. Over the course of its existence, it is constantly changing. The rate of change varies from the evolution of pronunciation to the creation of new words.

The creation of new words is not a new phenomenon. People create new words all the time for numerous purposes. For example, companies make new names for new products they produce or sell, members of communities creates various new words used as codes to prevent outsiders from understanding in-group conversation(s), and authors and poets come up with countless new words to express their ideas and meaning across into their works.

Bodle (2016) makes an excellent point when he says that it should not come as a great surprise that writers are behind many of our lexical innovations. Indeed, a lot of common words we usually come across in real life first appeared in literary works (MacKenzie, 2014), such as *nerd* from Dr. Seuss' book *If I Ran the Zoo* (1950) and *robot* from Karel Čapek's science fiction *R. U. R.*

(*Rossum's Universal Robots*) (1920) (Tearle, 2013). Although this phenomenon is not necessarily limited to a genre, it is interesting to note that the products of fantasy genre have been particularly rife with the inventions of new words. This is made apparent with best-selling novels like *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy or blockbuster movies and hit television series like *Avatar* and *Star Trek*.

One particular fantasy series that features lexical innovations that has risen to fame recently is James Dashner's *The maze runner* (2010). It is a best-selling young adult science fiction adventure pentalogy, which includes three serial novels and two prequel novels. *The maze runner* tells a story of Thomas, a boy sent into a huge glade surrounded by an endless maze with no memory other than his name, and his adventure in escaping the glade. With the fictional world the characters live in, comes the set of the way the fictional society lives. This may include the environmental landscape, the values of the society, the lifestyle, and the way of speaking. Together all of these aspects contribute to the various sectors of the ample new terms coined by the author. These lexical innovations may include

both new terms that are completely created by the author and existing words that have been given new meanings.

A lot of linguistic studies have discussed the process of morphological constructions. Long (1996), for instance, carried out a descriptive analysis of formation process study on Japanese language, while Bitrus (2015) described the morphological process in Berom language.

Different from both Long (1996) and Bitrus (2015), Owoeye (2013) carried out a comparative analysis of morphological rules in French and in Yoruba (one of the official languages of Nigeria) and focused on the analysis of agent noun formation rules. Nouns were also the focus of Alonso's morphological study (2011), although he was concerned more specifically with complex nouns of Old English. He analyzed the interaction of morphological processes of complex nouns in recursive formations in order to discover the degree of complexity displayed by Old English nouns.

Another study on the morphological process of an ancient language was done by Sharifi (2014) by examining the word-formation process of abbreviated form in Middle Persian.

The present study is similar to the one done by Long (1996). It examines the formation processes of the new words found in James Dashner's *The maze runner*. Word-formation processes vary and they often enable speakers and writers to create new words (Levison & Lessard, 1995). The arbitrariness in creating new words is still tangible. The same is true with James Dashner's lexical innovations in *The maze runner*: it is possible that all or some of the terms he coins do not follow the regular English word-formation processes and that he has formed them arbitrarily. It is therefore interesting to examine the word-formation processes of the lexical innovations in the novel.

It is important to note that *The maze runner* is the first book of *The maze runner* pentalogy, with *The scorch trials* and *The death cure* as its sequels, and *The kill order* as well as *The fever code* as its prequels. Some of the data discussed in this study also appear in the sequels, but since their usage is the same in the three books, the

ones being examined in this study were those found in the first book. Furthermore, although the first book *The maze runner* has been adapted for the big screen under the same title, the data for this study were taken only from the novel.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Morphology

According to Plag (2003: 18-22) and Bauer (2008: 1), the realm of morphology can be simply conceptualized into two processes: inflection and word-formation. While inflection refers to the change of word-form according to the traditional grammatical function, word formation refers to the formation of lexeme. The distinction between word-form and lexeme has to be carefully noted. The present study distinguishes lexeme as the notion of word in an abstract sense (Booij, 2007: 3; Katamba, 1993: 18), while word-form as the notion word in the sense of "concrete word as used in a sentence" (Booij, 2007, p. 3) or "the particular physical realization of that lexeme in speech or writing" (Katamba, 1993, p. 18); for example, *walk*, *walks*, *walking*, and *walked* are four word-forms belonging to the same lexeme *WALK*. Due to its irrelevance, inflection will not be discussed further in the present study.

For the sake of simplicity, the elaboration of the morphological structure of each of the identified data in the present study mostly follows Booij (2007) when representing the morphological structure for compounding, i.e. using labelled brackets.

In the present study, the following abbreviations are used: 'adj' for 'adjective', 'adv' for 'adverb', 'd' for 'determiner', 'e' for 'exclamation', 'n' for 'noun', and 'v' for 'verb'.

Derivation: Affixation

Simply put, affixation is a morphological process whereby at least an affix (bound morpheme) is attached to a morphological base (Plag, 2003: 90).

Derivation: Non-Affixation Conversion

In conversion, a lexeme of a certain part of speech "is simply converted" into another (Carstairs-McCarthy, 2002: 48). It is a way to form

a morphologically complex word without modifying the base at all, which is why sometimes it is also called zero-derivation.

Since the new lexeme is formed without having to add anything at all to the base, this process poses the question of which member of the couple serves as the base and which as the derivative. Plag (2003, pp. 135-140) calls this problem 'directionality of conversion' and offers a solution to this by listing the following to consider:

- 1) the history of the language,
- 2) the semantic complexity of the lexemes,
- 3) the lexeme's past tense form, if one of them is verb, and
- 4) the frequency of the use of the lexeme.

The first one is to look at the history of the language and see which one appeared first. Unfortunately, however, this will not be possible to be applied to the present study since all of the identified data here are new and therefore cannot be looked up on any dictionaries.

Truncation

Truncation (or sometimes called clipping) is a word formation process that involves deletion of parts of the base, like *condo* (from the word *condominium*). Plag (2003) states that sometimes this process can occur together with affixation, called diminutive, usually done to express intimacy or smallness.

Compounding

Compounding can simply be defined as the juxtaposition of lexemes (Booij, 2007, p. 75). In simple cases, compound words consist of two lexemes, one of which modifies the other. Parts of compound constructions start as separate entities before becoming a single unit after the process.

The four morphological processes above are the most common morphological techniques in English (Lieber, 2010, p. 51). Simonini, Jr. (1966) outlines several other additional minor methods. Among the 15 possible methods of forming a new lexeme he lists, there are three methods that are distinct from other morphological processes

addressed in most literature. They are further explained below.

Semantic change

This method does not particularly produce new words with distinct word-forms. Rather, it adds new meaning to the existing words. Simonini, Jr. (1966) notes that the sources of semantic change words are mostly teenagers' slang, occupational jargons, names of places, and personal names.

Coinage

This method allows the formation of an entirely new lexeme, in the sense that it never existed before in the language, from "existing possible sounds and sound sequences natural to the structure of the language" (Simonini Jr., 1966, p. 755).

Onomatopoeia

A new lexeme is formed through this method by imitating the sound of the object it denotes.

METHODS

The data for this study were the lexical innovations featured found in the novel *The maze runner* by James Dashner (2010). In this study a lexical innovation is defined as "the use of a new lexical unit, the modification of the root or of the semantic structure of a word in a language" (Rus, n.d.). The 'new lexical unit(s)' here were the ones whose definitions cannot be found in the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary 8th Edition* (henceforth 'OED') (Hornby, 2013) and *The Concise New Partridge Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English* (henceforth 'slang dictionary') (Partridge, Dalzell & Victor, 2008).

The collection of the data was done by reading the book closely. This allowed the rough collection of the supposed lexical innovations and their derivative forms (if any) from the data source. These supposed lexical innovations were further looked up on the OED and slang dictionary. This was done to make sure that their definitions were not available and/or that they did not conform to the ones within the contexts of the novel.

The analysis of the data started with the classification of the lexical innovations according to their word classes. The next step was to observe their use as well as their derivative forms (if any) in various contexts in the novel. Aside from context, the description by the characters in the novel was also taken into consideration. By doing so, their possible meanings intended by the author of the novel could be inferred. The understanding of the meaning of the data was somewhat important to the analysis of the formation process, as the existence of systematic form-meaning correspondences between words was pivotal in assigning morphological structure of a word (Booij, 2007, pp. 7-8). The final step of the analysis was determining the morphological process of each new term. Any of the morphological process(es) analyzed from the identified data that did not conform to or comply with the common morphological mechanisms of standard English were referred to as 'irregular word-formation process(es)'.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As discussed previously, *The maze runner* tells the story of a teenage boy named Thomas who is sent to a place called *the Glade* with no memory but his name. The place is quite self-explanatory: it is a large open forest. The Glade is surrounded by a huge maze and run by its inhabitants, called *Gladers*, who, like Thomas, are also teenage boys. The maze is also the home of the strange and lethal creatures called *Griever*s. So when venturing and trying to navigate the maze, Gladers usually have to run in order to keep themselves away from them (hence the title of the novel *The maze runner*).

It should be noted that the Glade and the maze are artificial places created as part of the aforementioned experiment, with Gladers being the trial samples without their knowledge. They are portrayed as if they live in a world of their own and that they develop a distinct way of speaking, creating distinctive spoken words.

The author of the novel, James Dashner, has coined different new terms for these things (names of places in the Glade, terms for

occupation(s), names of artificial creatures, and spoken words). Not all of these words are newly coined. The definitions of some of the words that are not newly coined can be found in dictionaries, but their meanings may not be the same as the ones being referred in the book.

The identified new terms are classified according to their word classes. The classification only covers noun, adjective, verb, and exclamation, since not every word class in English is represented by these words. It should be noted that some of them are capitalized, while others are not. There is no particular reason behind this except the one that such is the way these words are written in the novel by the author James Dashner.

Nouns

James Dashner (2010) created 22 new terms in the form of nouns. They are formed either through compounding, suffixation, conversion, semantic change, truncation, or onomatopoeia.

Compounding

Most of the nominal new terms identified in the study are formed through compounding. They include *Blood House*, *Deadheads*, *Trackhoe*, *Medjack*, *Bricknick*, *beetle blade*, *runtcheeks*, *Greenbean*, *slinthead*, *klunkhead*, and *shuck-face*. Most of them are endocentric compound words. Because of the limited space, only the first three will be discussed here as examples.

- (1) [[blood]_Nhouse]_N

Blood House is one of the names of the places in the Glade. It is derived from two existing lexemes *blood* ("the red liquid that flows through the bodies of humans and animals") and *house* ("a building for people to live in, usually for a family") through compounding. A definition entry of *house* in the OED (Hornby, 2013) even specifies that in compounds, *house* means "a building for a particular purpose". Meanwhile, in the novel, *Blood House* is described as "animal pens and barn", and it can also be deduced that the place also serves as a slaughterhouse. Accordingly, *Blood House* is, in a way, a kind of *house* despite not having a transparent meaning. It does not simply mean "a house full of blood" or "a house where one keeps blood". Nevertheless, the

right element of this compound word (House) does indeed serve as the head. Therefore, with regard to its form, Blood House is an endocentric compound.

- (2) a. [[dead]^A [[head]^N -s]^N]^N
 b. [[deadhead]^N -s]^N

Deadheads is also one of the name of the places in the Glade. The formation process of Deadheads is a bit more complicated than of Blood House. The lexeme *deadhead* already exists in English. The OED (Hornby, 2013) lists it as a verb and defines it as “to remove dead flowers from a plant”. Meanwhile, the slang dictionary offers several definitions, among others, as “(noun) a person who rides free on a railway, bus or aeroplane”, “(noun) a follower of Grateful Dead, a band strongly associated with psychedelic drugs”, “(verb) (used of an airline or railway employee) to ride as a passenger in available seating”, and “(adverb) without cargo”. Having existing definitions in English dictionaries that do not align with the intended meaning in the novel, *Deadheads* may be an instance of the formation process of semantic change. After undergoing semantic change, *deadhead*, bearing a new meaning, is then added with the suffix -s. However, the suffix cannot be the inflectional suffix indicating plural because as it is known in the novel, there is only one graveyard in the Glade. It is possible to assume that the suffix -s is an attempt of the author of the novel to create a new nominal derivational affix. However, if this is the case, it then becomes unclear what the suffix really signifies.

Since analyzing the formation process of *Deadheads* with semantic change proves to be neither satisfactory nor sufficient, a different approach is needed. *Deadheads* comprises of two different lexemes: *dead* (“no longer alive”) and (in its stem form) *head* (“the part of the body on top of the neck containing the eyes, nose, mouth, and brain”). This means that its formation process is compounding. *Deadheads* is the Glade’s equivalent to a graveyard, which indicates that it is an exocentric compound since its semantic head is outside of the compound word. Again, it should be noted that the ‘s’ is not the inflectional suffix indicating plural, as *Deadheads* itself is neutral

with respect to number and is always spelled with ‘s’ throughout the novel. For these reasons, it seems that (2a) provides a better analysis than (2b). The illustration in (2a) shows that the ‘s’ belongs to and is an inflectional suffix indicating plural to the right element of the compound word (*head*). This strengthens the foremost argument that *Deadheads* is an exocentric compound because as Booij (2003, p. 80) observes, the plural nominal constituents in compound words do not function as heads.

- (3) [[track]^N [hoe]^N]^N

A *Track-hoe* is a person who is responsible to tend to the equivalent of farm in the Glade. The work of a *Track-hoe* includes “tilling, weeding, planting and such” (Dashner, 2010, p. 98). The nominal compound word is derived from the two nouns track (“a rough path or road, usually one that has not been built but that has been made by people walking there”) and hoe (“a garden tool with a long handle and a blade, used for breaking up soil and removing weeds”). It is clear that a Track-hoe is not a kind of hoe, but a person whose job is indeed to do what hoes do. With regards to its head, therefore, *Track-hoe* is an exocentric compound word as its semantic heads is neither of its constituents.

Suffixation

Most of the new terms in the present study were formed through suffixation (particularly by -er) which denotes status and occupations of the Glader. In addition, suffixation by -er also forms one of the names of artificial creatures. Moreover, other than suffixation by -er, suffixation by -in’ also forms a derivative noun of other new nominal terms.

- (4) [[glade]^N -r]^N
 [[slice]^V -r]^N
 [[blood house]^N -r]^N
 [[bag]^N -er]^N
 [[slop]^N -er]^N

The general status of the characters and most of the terms denoting occupations that are categorized as new lexemes are formed through suffixation with the nominal suffix -er. As Plag (2003, p. 112) suggests, the addition of the suffix -

er simply means “person or thing having to do with X”. *Glader* is derived from the noun *Glade* and the suffix –er, forming a proper noun indicating a place of residence. In *Slicer*, the insertion of the suffix –er to the verb ‘to slice’ (“to cut something easily with or as if with a sharp blade”) forms an agent noun indicating the doer of the action, although the task of a *Slicer* in the Glade is not only slicing (or slaughtering) farm animals, but also feeding and cleaning them, fixing a fence, and scraping animal waste (Dashner, 2010, p. 78). The suffix –er in *Blood Houser* from the compound *Blood House* seems to be relatively clear; it forms a proper noun indicating a place of work. *Bagger* is possibly derived from the American nominal slang word meaning “a police uniform” or “duty as uniformed police officer”, since *Baggers* act as the police among Gladers. The suffix –er in *Slopper* indicates “a person that has the quality resembling X”, with X being the noun ‘slop’ (“waste food, or liquid or partly liquid waste”), since *Sloppers* are the leftovers and unwanted Gladers due to their lack of aptitude of doing anything.

(5) [[grieve]_V–r]_N

Suffixation by –er also forms one of the artificial creatures, called *Griever*. It is described as a bulbous “horrific mixture of an animal and a machine” (Dashner, 2010, p. 39). It is made of shiny metal and its gait is portrayed as a slug. *Griever*s live in the maze and harass any Gladers who venture into the maze. They can sting or prick them, as their whole bodies are supported by “wicked instrument-tipped appendages” like a saw blade, a set of shears, and long rods. The sting or prick causes extreme pain or even lethal wound to its victim. From its depiction in the book, it can be inferred that the word *Griever* is derived from the verb to grieve (“to cause (someone) to feel sad/unhappy or distress”) and the nominal suffix –er to form agent noun, indicating the doer of an action.

(6) [[klunk]_V–in’]_N

Another type of suffixation, suffixation by –in’ (the alternative form for colloquial use of the suffix –ing), is used to form a derivative of *klunk*, i.e., *klunkin’* (see below in the sub-classification onomatopoeia for more information on *klunk*).

The line wherein it is mentioned is the following: “Most of us spent a week klunkin’ our pants and bawlin’ our eyes out.” (Dashner, 2010, p. 179). The suffix –in’/-ing forms a deverbal noun, which is used to indicate processes, results, habits, etc. (Plag, 2003, p. 114; Mattiello, 2008, p. 109; Lieber, 2010, p. 39). In the case of *klunkin’*, the suffix –in’ denotes a process or habit.

Truncation

There is only one new nominal term derived through truncation, i.e. *Greenie*. *Greenie* is the derivative form of *Greenbean*. Similar to *Greenbean*, *Greenie* can be used both for name-calling and common noun. Below are some of the use of the word in the novel (2010):

- (7) a. “**Greenie**, what you’re feelin’, we’ve all felt it.” (p. 11)
- b. “Hold on there, **Greenie**.” (p. 17)
- c. “Tried to send a slinthead **Greenie** back in the Boxone time—thing wouldn’t move till we took him out.” (p. 42)
- d. “Can’t be coincidence. Two days, two **Greenies**, one alive, one dead.” (p. 56)
- e. “Call her **Greenie**—my name’s Thomas.” (p. 97)
- f. “He’s not the **Greenie** anymore.” (p. 152)

Greenie undergoes the word-formation process of both truncation/clipping and suffixation by –y, whose orthographic variants include –ie and sometimes –ee (Plag, 2003, p. 146). In the case of *Greenbean*, as with most diminutives in English (Plag, 2003, p. 153), the first syllable survives truncation and is attached with the suffix –ie. The function of the suffix –y/–ie, as Mattiello (2008) points out and as illustrated in this case, is “to form pet terms (terms of endearment) and familiar diminutives expressing jocularity” (Plag, 2003, p. 104).

(8) [greenbean]_N → [[green]–ie]_N

Semantic change

Semantic change also only forms one new nominal term, i.e. *shank*. If one is to observe the samples of its use, *shank* mostly denotes “person/boy/man” derogatorily. Below are some examples:

- (9) a. “Look at that *shank*.” (p. 3)
 b. “Get up, *shank*, get up!” (p. 10)
 c. “We don’t kill *shanks* like you here, I promise.” (p. 9)
 d. “And don’t let anyone fool you. I’m the real leader here, not the two geezer *shanks* upstairs.” (p. 18)

For instance, (9a) is uttered by a random Glader upon Thomas’ arrival. The arrival of a new Glader is always spectated by the whole Gladers and so this random Glader hurls the demeaning comment at Thomas because at the time of his arrival he looks alarmed and messy. Example (9d) is spoken by Gally when he is talking about Alby and Newt with Thomas. Thomas is looking for the two people who are in charge of the Glade because he still needs some explanations about the place but Gally tells him that he is the real leader and not Alby and Newt. The word *shanks* in the line then refers to Alby and Newt.

Shank is an existing word that has an extended meaning. In the OED (Hornby, 2013) it is defined as “the part of an animal’s or a person’s leg between the knee and the ankle”. Meanwhile, according to the slang dictionary, the word *shank* (noun, US) means “a homemade knife or stabbing and slashing weapon”. The inferred meaning of the new word *shank* used in *The maze runner* does not have any correlations with the existing definitions of the word *shank*. The formation process that it undergoes is therefore semantic change.

Onomatopoeia

Out of all of the new terms identified in the present study, only one is formed through onomatopoeia, i.e. *klunk*. The meaning of *klunk* is explicitly explained in the book by one of the characters: “*Klunk*’s another word for poo. Poo makes a klunk sound when it falls in our pee pots.” (Dashner, 2010, p. 15). With that in mind, *klunk* as a lexeme is therefore a noun and onomatopoeic as it is formed from the noise similar to what it denotes, i.e. poo.

Conversion

Conversion always forms the derivatives of other new terms. As for nominal new terms,

conversion only makes up one of them, i.e. *shuck*. *Shuck* is a noun derived from its base *shuck* the verb.

The word-form of *shuck* is identical to the phonological realization of three different lexemes: *shuck* the noun, the verb, and the adjective. Since two of these lexemes undergo the same word-formation process from the same base, separating the explanation to its answer would be confusing. Therefore, the explanation of the answer to the problem of directionality of conversion of *shuck* is put on the conversion section of the adjective classification see below.

Verbs

There are only three verbal new terms formed by James Dashner. They are *slim*, *shuck*, and *klunk*. Each of them is formed through different word-formation processes.

Semantic change

This word-formation process forms the new term *slim*. The meaning of *slim* is never overtly revealed throughout the book, but in its usage, it shows repeating patterns, which can be seen in the following (Dashner, 2010):

- (10) a. “Just slim yourself nice and calm.” (p. 6)
 b. “Slim it, Greenie,” Newt said. “We’re not sayin’ you bloody killed the girl.” (p. 56)
 c. “Slim it, man.” Minho said. “You gotta see it for yourself. It’s... weird.” (p. 86)
 d. “Slim it, Greenie. Grow up and start thinkin’”. (p. 87)
 e. “Slim it, boys!” (p. 261)

Slim is always uttered by a character after his interlocutor shows any indication of panic. For example, (10a) is spoken by Alby to Thomas, moments after Thomas’ arrival, at the time when he is most confused and alarmed. Example (10c) is uttered by Minho, a Runner who has found a dead Griever in the maze, to Alby after Alby bombards him with a lot of questions about it. It can be inferred, then, that by telling someone to ‘slim it’, a speaker is actually asking the interlocutor to calm down.

Slim here undergoes what is called a semantic change, as it is an existing word that

receives a distinct new meaning. The OED (Hornby, 2013) defines slim, among others, as “(of a person) thin, in a way that is attractive” as an adjective, and “to try to become thinner” as a verb. However, in *The maze runner*, *slim* is a spoken expression used as a verb bearing the meaning “to calm down”.

Rhyming

Shuck is seemingly the ultimate swearing word in *The Maze Runner*. It can take various forms. Below are some examples taken from the novel (Dashner, 2010):

- (11) a. “**Shuck** it,” he said. “Can’t the bloody Med-jacks handle that boy for ten minutes without needin’ my help?” (p. 12)
- b. Two years we’ve tried to solve this thing, no luck. **Shuckin’** walls move out there at night just as much as these here doors. (p. 45)
- c. “Why don’t you just tell us what the **shuck** is down there, Alby?” (p. 54)
- d. “I can barely talk, **shuck**-face!” Minho yelled, his voice raw. (p.81)
- e. “Drop your sissy side and start using that **shuck** brain if you got one.” (p. 86)
- f. “You’re the **shuckiest shuck**-faced **shuck** there ever was. You’re as good as dead, just like us.” (p. 113)
- g. Not now, you dumb **shuck**.” (p. 179)
- h. “Oh, we’re **shucked** for good now,” (p. 230)
- i. “Our Map Room was set on fire and you ran to go talk to your **shuck** girlfriend? What’s wrong with you?” (p. 266)
- j. “Now you’re being a **shuck** idiot,” (p. 310)
- k. “And it’s true that ever since Thomas got here, everything’s been **shucked** and screwy.” (p. 368)
- l. “I gotta see this hanging-on-the-wall thing myself—I think you’re **shuckin’** me.” (p. 142)

- m. “**Shuck** it all and kiss a Griever goodnight. (p. 248)

In example (11a), *shuck* is used as an expletive interjection. It is uttered by Newt as a reaction of annoyance after hearing a piercing scream, presumably indicating that the Med-jacks are overwhelmed in treating a hurt Glader. Examples (11b), (11c), (11e), (11f), (11i) and (11j) illustrate the use of *shuck* (and its derivative forms *shuckin’* and *shuck-faced*) as expletive slot fillers indicating dislike and expressions of emphasis. Examples (11d), (11f), and (11g) show the use of *shuck* (and its derivative form *shuck-face*) as name-calls in direct address insulting the addressee.

Shuck is not a newly coined word as its definition can be found in the dictionary. The OED (Hornby, 2013) defines *shuck* as “(noun) the outer covering of a nut”. While this may indicate that its word formation process is semantic change, if one is to observe carefully, however, the uses of *shuck* are very similar to those of the existing swear word *fuck*.

The examples listed in (11) show that, similar to *fuck*, *shuck* is actually three different lexemes with identical phonological realizations: *shuck* used as an adjective (example (11e), (11f), (11i), and (11j)), *shuck* as a noun (example (11c), (11f), and (11g)), and *shuck* as a verb (example (11a), (11h), (11l), and (11m)). Two of these lexemes undergo the process of conversion, which is discussed below. Meanwhile, other than these two, *shuck* also forms two other derivatives that are very similar to those of *fuck*: adjectives derived from the process of suffixation with adjectival-ing/in’ *shuckin’* (example (11b)) and suffix -ed *shucked* (example (11k)). Moreover, *shuck* is spelled almost the same way as *fuck* in a way that the two have matching vowels and final consonants.

For those reasons, it seems right to assume that the existence of *shuck* in *The maze runner* is equal to, if not as the replacement of, the word *fuck*. Therefore, rather than semantic change, the formation process that *shuck* undergoes is rhyme, i.e. a repetition of identical or similar sounds in two or more different words. Rhyming as a word-formation technique is common in slang, wherein

“an item is replaced by one or more words that rhyme with it (e.g. *trouble and strife* for ‘wife’” (Mattiello, 2008, p. 42). Unlike rhyming slang, however, Dashner only coins the rhyming referent (*shuck* for ‘*fuck*’, not *X shuck* for ‘*fuck*’), so even though this technique of forming a new lexeme is not entirely newly invented by Dahnser, it is indeed unusual.

Conversion

As stated previously, conversion as a word-formation process in the present study always forms a derivative from another new term. The verbal new term that undergoes conversion is *klunk* used as a verb. To clarify its directionality (the fact that the verb *klunk* is the derivative of the noun *klunk* and not the other way around), Plag’s (2003) criteria for the solution of directionality of conversion were adopted.

(12) `N klunk → V klunk

According to the second criterion, if one of the two lexemes can be analyzed as being semantically dependent on its counterpart, then the dependent one is derived from the other form. If the noun *klunk* means “poo”, then the verb *klunk* can be defined as “to take a klunk”. This shows that the verb *klunk* is semantically dependent on the noun.

Additionally, the past tense form of the verb *klunk* is the regular –ed form, as shown in these examples taken from the novel (Dashner, 2010):

- (13) a. “Whacker, if we told you everything, you’d die on the spot, right after you **klunked** your pants. ...” (p. 10)
- b. “This shank probably **klunked** his pants when he heard old Benny baby scream like a girl.” (p. 17)

This aligns with the third criterion which specifies that newly created words are inflected regularly as they do not yet have a stored entry in the mental lexicon.

Furthermore, according to the fourth criterion, the derived word should be less frequently used than its base. If one is to observe the occurrence of *klunk*, out of a total of thirty three occurrences, the verb *klunk* appears only twice. This is due to the fact that as the base, the

noun *klunk* has a broader range of meaning. Other than denoting ‘poo’, the noun *klunk* can also serve as an expletive name-calling in referring to a third party, as illustrated in these examples (Dashner, 2010):

- (14) a. “That’s some pretty serious **klunk**, brother. Sorry, but you need to talk it up to move it forward.” (p. 160)
- b. “Just a few days after this guy shows up, he steps out in the Maze to save two shanks he hardly knows. All this **klunk** about him breaking a rule is just beyond stupid. He didn’t get the rules yet.” (p. 161)

In these contexts, the noun *klunk* can be interpreted as “nonsense”. the noun *klunk* can also serve as a name-calling in a direct address insulting the addressee, as illustrated in the following line: “You’re a piece of *klunk*. Go to sleep.” (Dashner, 2010, p. 35). Finally, the noun *klunk* can be used as an expletive slot filler to express an emphasis on the following noun, as illustrated in the following line: “Who the *klunk* are you?” (Dashner, 2010, p. 80). With these three reasons, therefore, it is safe to assume that the verb *klunk* derives from the noun *klunk*.

Adjectives

Conversion

(15) N slinthead → Adj slinthead

As a slot filler, the adjective *slinthead* serves as an expression of emphasis. It is used only two times throughout the novel (Dashner, 2010):

- (16) a. “Tried to send a **slinthead** Greenie back in the Box one time—thing wouldn’t move till we took him out.” (p. 42)
- b. “Probably think I’m a **slinthead** shank for gettin’ you ready to work your butt off today after an episode the likes of that.” (p. 77)

Its conversion’s directionality is clarified by Plag’s last criterion (2003), i.e. the frequency of occurrence and semantic range. Out of a total of nine occurrences of the word-form *slinthead*, the noun occurs seven times while the adjective only twice. This may be due to the fact that the noun

slinthead, being the base, has a broader range of meaning and thus can be used in more contexts compared to its derivative, i.e., the adjective.

(17) N shank → Adj shank

Shank almost always behaves as a noun, except one time when it acts as an adjective as seen in the following line: “I wanna know who you are, who this *shank* girl is, and how you guys know each other.” (Dashner, 2010, p. 238). The sentence is spoken by Alby when unusual things start to happen after Thomas’ arrival. All the time, the Gladers habitually receive a new teenage boy as a member once in a month. But when the time Thomas joins in, the boys receive unexpectedly two new members in two days in a row, with one member being a girl. When the girl arrives, she reaches out for Thomas before falling unconscious. With all of the oddity, Alby demands an explanation from Thomas.

(18) Alby stepped up. “I’m sick of this.” He pointed at Thomas’s chest, almost tapping it. “I wanna know who you are, who this *shank* girl is, and how you guys know each other.” (Dashner, 2010, p. 238)

Shank in this context reflects Alby’s expression of annoyance, anger, and frustration over the whole peculiar situation. It can be regarded as a swearing construction because unlike the noun *shank*, the adjective *shank* does not retain its literal meaning. As a swearing construction, it serves as an expletive slot filler indicating dislike. It is the dependent of the noun phrase “this shank girl”, modifying the head of the noun phrase “girl”. The adjective *shank* undergoes the formation process of conversion from the noun *shank*. This argument is justified by Plag’s (2003) fourth criterion in determining the directionality of conversion: the frequency of occurrence. Out of a total of ninety occurrences, *shank* appears as an adjective only once. This is perhaps because as a base, being semantically more complex, the noun *shank* has a broader range of meaning and thus can be used in more contexts compared to its derivative adjective.

(19) N klunk → Adj klunk

The adjective *klunk* only appears once throughout the novel: “We somehow got it into

our *klunk* heads that once the Doors closed, you were done—end of story.” (Dashner, 2010, p. 142). Similar to its verb counterpart, the adjective *klunk* is derived from its noun counterpart. Taking Plag’s (2003) fourth criterion to solve the directionality of conversion into consideration, the adjective *klunk* occurs far less frequently than the noun because as it is semantically less complex, its meaning is far less restricted. Indeed, compared to the various meaning of the noun *klunk*, the adjective *klunk* can only serve as an expletive slot filler expressing emphasis.

(20) V shuck → N, Adj shuck

As previously stated, the word-form *shuck* is identical to the phonological realization of the three lexemes the adjective *shuck*, the noun *shuck*, and the verb *shuck*, and that the two of which undergo the process of conversion. The problem posed by this is which one is the base. The solution remains in Plag’s (2003) criteria in determining the directionality of conversion.

The second criterion (the lexeme’s semantics complexity) is also insufficient as there is no clear definite meaning on the word *shuck*. The adjective *shuck* always behaves attributively, that is, it is always part of a noun phrase and is headed by the noun it modifies (e.g., “that *shuck* brain”, “your *shuck* girlfriend”, “a *shuck* idiot”). As an adjective, it serves as an expletive slot filler expressing dislike. The noun *shuck* bears similar meanings to *shank* as illustrated by examples (11f) and (11g) and serves as an expletive slot filler expressing emphasis as illustrated by example (11c). Meanwhile, the meanings of the verb *shuck* are more varied: As an expletive interjection “*shuck* it!” (example (11a)), it is equivalent to “dammit!” or “fuck this!”. *Shuck* in example (11h) “we’re *shucked*” carries the same meaning as “we’re doomed”. *Shuck* in example (11l) “you’re *shuckin’* me” simply means “you’re messing with me” or “you’re lying to me”. And finally, *shuck* in example (11m) “*shuck* it all” implies “suck it all up”. The directionality of conversion cannot be solved through semantics complexity because the meaning dependency of each lexeme cannot be determined.

The third criterion (the past tense form) may help eliminate the possibility of the verb

shuck as the base as its past participle is inflected regularly (example (11h)).

The last criterion, the word's frequency of occurrence shows that out of a total of forty nine occurrences of *shuck* (its derivatives excluded), the adjective *shuck* occurs twenty one times, the verb (interjections included) fifteen times, and the noun thirteen times. While this may indicate that the adjective *shuck* should be the base, it is important to bear in mind that frequency of occurrence is relevant only because base words tend to have broader range of senses and thus can be used in more contexts than their derivatives. The context wherein the adjective *shuck* is placed is restricted only within the context of swearing as a slot filler. In this case, then, it can be concluded that, having the broadest range of meanings, the verb *shuck* serves as the base from which the lexemes the adjective *shuck* and the noun *shuck* are derived.

Suffixation

(21) [[klunk]_{N-y}]_{Adj}

Another derivative form of *klunk* is the adjective *klunky*, which appears only once in novel: "Big deal—I keep hearing the world is in *klunky* shape." (Dashner, 2010, p. 326). It is derived from the process of suffixation. The nominal base *klunk* is attached to the adjectival suffix *-y*. The attachment of the suffix *-y* provides the meaning "having the qualities of" (Mattiello, 2008, p. 117).

(22) [[shuck]_{V-in'/-ing}]_{Adj, Adv}

One of the derivative adjectives of *shuck* is *shuckin'* or *shucking*. The lexeme serves as an expletive slot filler to express dislike, as shown in example (11b) and (23a) below, and emphasis as illustrated in several other examples of the use of *shuckin'/-ing*, taken from the novel (Dashner, 2010):

- (23) a. "Fight through the middle, push the *shuckin'* things toward the walls."
 b. "Chuck's a *shucking* hero!"
 c. "Half might've died, but half of us *shucking* lived."

The formation process that *shuckin'/-ing* undergoes is suffixation. The suffix *-ing* here (or

its alternative form *-in'* for colloquial use) is used to form participial adjectives. Mattiello (2008, p. 110) notes that in slang most participial adjectives are used as emphasizing adverbs. This is illustrated in example (23c).

(24) [[shuck]_{V-ed}]_{Adj}

The last adjectival derivative of *shuck* is *shucked*, which is derived from the verb *shuck* and inserted the suffix *-ed* bearing the sense of "characterized by".

(25) [[shuck-face]_{N-d}]_{Adj}

Shuck-faced is a derivative form of *shuck-face*. It is formed through suffixation with the suffix *-ed* forming an adjective with the sense of "characterized by". It is used as an expletive slot filler indicating expression of emphasis.

Other examples of the uses of *shuck-faced* can be seen in the following (Dashner, 2010):

- (26) a. "You know what, Greenie? That's usually the dumbest shuck-faced thing you could ask a Runner."
 b. "Greenie, you ain't evil. You might be a shuckfaced slinthead, but you ain't evil."

Exclamation

According to the OED (Hornby, 2013), an exclamation is "a word or phrase that expresses strong emotion, such as surprise, pleasure, or anger". Exclamations often stand on their own.

Throughout the present study, only one exclamation new term is formed, i.e. *good that*. Below are some examples of the use of *good that* found in the novel (Dashner, 2010):

- (27) a. "You'll learn a lot in the next couple of days, start getting used to things. *Good that?*" (p. 33)
 b. "And Tommy, you're not allowed to say a buggin' thing until we ask you to. *Good that?*" (p. 153)
 c. Newt nodded, looking satisfied. "*Good that*. Let's get this meeting over with and worry about Gally later." (p. 166)
 d. "*Good that*," Thomas agreed. (p. 326)

Good that is used to check whether the hearer agrees with or understands the speaker. Example (27a) is spoken by Chuck when he sees Thomas looking down and out after spending a day trying a job. Chuck is trying to give Thomas words of encouragement that he will start to get used to things in the Glade. Chuck ends his line by asking Thomas ‘*Good that?*’ to see if Thomas understands him. The same is true with (27b), where Newt leads a meeting with some Gladers and Thomas to determine whether or not they should banish Thomas. Gladers have established two fundamental rules for their own:

- 1) since the maze is so dangerous, no one other than Runners and the two leaders of Gladers can step out in the maze,
- 2) everyone, without exception, has to be back in the Glade before the walls of the Glade close.

Thomas has violated these rules because he feels that someone should save Minho and Alby, who at the time have not made it back to the Glade when the walls of the Glade are closing. Thomas’ action has triggered a growing debate among the Gladers because even though he has broken the golden rules, he did it to save others. Gladers that assemble have the right to express their choices one by one, but Newt reminds Thomas that he does not get to say about anything unless he is asked to. He makes sure Thomas understands and agrees with him by asking ‘*Good that?*’

Good that can also indicate an expression of agreement or approval. For example, in (27c) it is spoken by Newt during the same aforementioned meeting. Thomas has expressed his defense and so Newt says the line implying that he understands and is able to accept Thomas’ argument. The same thing applies to (27d), which is spoken by Thomas. He has offered Chuck the possibility of a real family outside the maze. Chuck responds by revealing that he does not care about anything but escaping the maze alive and would simply be happy if Thomas can help him do that. Thomas answers with ‘*Good that*’, implying that he agrees and willing to help. Ultimately, it can be inferred that *good that* can be interpreted as “(be) good with that” or simply “ok”.

(16) [good [that]_D]_E

Good that is a compound word, derived from the two existing lexemes *good* (high quality, pleasant, sensible/strong, favorable, skillful, (informal) showing approval, etc.) and *that* ((determiner) used for referring somebody/something that has already been mentioned or is already known about). As an English compound word, the formation of *good that* is unorthodox. Firstly, there is no English compound word combination that combine a determiner as one of its constituent (Plag, 2003, p. 185). Moreover, in terms of part of speech, the formation of a compound word in English never results in an exclamation remark (Plag, 2003, pp. 185-203, McCarthy, 2002, pp. 59-63). This complicates the matter of the semantic headedness of the compound word.

Head can be defined as the most important unit in complex linguistic structures (in this case, a compound word) in a way that it carries a subset of the entities that the compound word possibly denotes (Plag, 2003, p. 173). And since *good that* is an exclamation remark denoting agreement or approval, the lexeme “good” (in the sense of “(informal) showing approval”) is therefore the most important unit in the compound structure, hence the head of the compound. This also highlights another peculiarity in the formation process of *good that* as its headedness lies on its left constituent, whereas English compound words typically have their heads on their rightmost constituent (Booij, 2007, p. 77; McCarthy, 2002, p. 68; Plag, 2003, p. 186).

CONCLUSION

The study of lexical innovations in terms of their distinct word-formation technique(s) in James Dashner’s *The maze runner presented above* yields the following results.

Altogether, there were 34 new terms identified as lexical innovations in this study and they were classified into four classes based on their word classes: nouns, verbs, adjectives, and exclamations.

Out of these 34 lexical innovations, only four of them underwent irregular word-formation processes. The first one was *beetle blade*. It was

formed through compounding and what made its formation process irregular is that its headedness lies on the left constituent of the compound construction since its right constituent (*blade*) modifies the left one (*beetle*). The second one was *slinthead*. It was formed through compounding and the irregularity of its word-formation process was that its formation involves one unrecognizable constituent wherein it was newly coined by the author of the novel. The third one was *good that*. It was formed through compounding and there were several things that make its word-formation process distinctive: It was created by combining an adjective and a determiner, an unusual combination in English compounding construction. Additionally, the combination of the lexemes in *good that* resulted in an exclamation, a word class that has not been obtained in English compounding construction. Moreover, the headedness of *good that* lies on its left constituent although the syntactic property of the head was not passed on to the entire compound. Lastly, the fourth datum that was analyzable as being formed irregularly is *shuck*. For reasons of uses, derivative forms, and spelling, *shuck* was very similar to the existing lexeme *fuck*. And for these reasons, *shuck* was considered to be formed through rhyming. Rhyming was a common word-formation process in slang constructions, wherein one item was replaced by several words that rhyme with it (for example, *trouble and strife* for *wife*). Nevertheless, *shuck* was coined as the rhyming referent only, that is, *shuck* for *fuck* and not *X shuck* for *fuck*.

It can also be deduced from the analysis that the author James Dashner tended to coin nominal terms than others in other word classes in *The Maze Runner*. This was attested through the strikingly different number of nouns identified as lexical innovations compared to verbs, adjectives, and/or exclamations. Furthermore, compounding was the most frequently used word-formation technique in creating lexical innovations in *The maze runner*.

One of the limitations of the present study was that, among others, of time. As a consequence, unfortunately, the present study only explored the new terms along with their formation processes in a single fantasy work by a

single author, which resulted in the discovery of only four irregular word-formation techniques. In order to reveal more irregular word-formation techniques, it is recommended that the scope of the study be broadened. This can be done by, for example, adding several more works from the same author or several more works from different authors. All things considered, the present study has discovered that James Dashner has indeed developed four irregular word-formation techniques through his work *The maze runner*. This creation of irregular methods surely violated the existing word-formation rules established by morphologists. Nonetheless, it can be a useful device for other inspired writers to come up with their own lexical innovations for their work(s).

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