

Body Language in the Tetun Language: A Morphosemantic and Anthropological Analysis

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Abstract

The use of body part terms in everyday expressions is a well-documented phenomenon across many languages, yet it remains underexplored in Tetun, one of the official languages of Timor-Leste. Body part lexemes in Tetun frequently appear as components in compound words, producing words that go far beyond their literal anatomical references. This research aims to describe the form-meaning relationship in body-part compound words in Tetun and to uncover the cultural values and social concepts reflected within them. A qualitative descriptive approach was employed. Data were collected through observation and note-taking of natural speech, supplemented by dictionary consultation and interviews. The corpus consists of Tetun compound words containing body-part elements, classified and analyzed using Bauer's typology of compounding and Lieber's morphosemantic framework, alongside conceptual metaphor and metonymy theory. The analysis identifies three main categories of body-part compounds: compositional, metonymic, and metaphorical. Compositional compounds retain transparent semantic links between their elements, while metonymic compounds use a body part to refer to related functions or states. Metaphorical compounds, the most dominant category, map physical bodily experience onto abstract psychological and social domains. From an anthropological perspective, the body functions as a cultural symbol system through which Tetun speakers evaluate behavior, express emotions, and understand social roles. This study contributes to Tetun morphology documentation and enriches Austronesian linguistic studies by demonstrating how language, cognition, and culture intersect through bodily experience. The findings also have practical value for Tetun lexicography and language education.

INTRODUCTION

Use of the term member body in various expressions: Language is a phenomenon that has long attracted attention in linguistic studies (Almusallam, 2022; Foolen, 2022; Meliakova et al., 2022). In various languages, names of member body parts are not only used to refer to biological entities in humans, but also to explain various other domains of meaning, such as behavior, emotions, human nature, as well as social relations. This expansion of meaning can occur through associations that are direct and transparent, as well as through idiomatic forms that have become conventional within a speech community of a given language (Mudau et al., 2024). Through this phenomenon, it can be understood that the body is not only perceived as a biological aspect, but also as a conceptual source that reflects the cultural worldview of speakers in interpreting human experience and behavior. In the perspective of cognitive semantics, member body parts often become sources of conceptual metaphor because of their closeness to human experience and cognitive development (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). A similar phenomenon is also found in the Tetun language, where member body terms such as *matan* 'eye,' *liman* 'hand,' *oin* 'face,' and *ibun* 'mouth' are used as elements in compound words that produce meanings beyond their lexical sense. This strengthens the argument that elemental lexemes of member body parts not only refer to physical organs, but are also used to express

emotional conditions, social attitudes, and mental states (Azadehfar, 2025; Kraska-Szlenk, 2023; Loiko, 2024; Tobbi, 2024).

The Tetun language is one of the main languages used in Timor-Leste and has an important role in the social life and communication of its people. Linguistically, the Tetun language consists of a number of varieties or dialects that have developed in various regions of Timor-Leste. Among them is the Tetun Dili variety, which developed in situations of intense language contact with Portuguese and Indonesian, yet still maintains its own internal mechanisms for lexical enrichment (Hajek, 2016; Chen, 2015; Nordlinger et al., 2002). In its development, Tetun Dili has undergone a process of standardization and functions as a *lingua franca* connecting various speech communities in Timor-Leste (Klinken et al., 2002).

Unlike languages that rely heavily on derivational affixation, the Tetun language more frequently utilizes compounding and reduplication to form new lexemes (Avram, 2008; Lieber & Štekauer, 2019). Payne (2010) states that compounding is the formation of a new word from two or more words (Booij, 2019). In the Tetun language, compounding is a productive morphological process (Klamer, 2020). Through the combination of two or more lexemes, Tetun speakers form functional lexical units as single words with specific meanings (Haspelmath & Sims, 2020). For example, the word *oin-halai*, which if translated lexically into Indonesian would roughly mean ‘face-run,’ semantically carries the meaning ‘dizzy’ (Evans, 2019). This meaning is related to the cultural conceptualization of Tetun speakers, who perceive dizziness as a bodily disturbance caused by irregular movement in certain body parts (Sharifian, 2017; Kövecses, 2020). In this case, the face is categorized as the center of bodily orientation and vision. In morphological theory, compound words are understood as constructions consisting of two free forms that create a single grammatical and semantic unit (Bauer, 1983; Arcodia et al., 2020). The meaning resulting from this process is not always compositional, but can develop into metaphorical or even idiomatic meanings (Jackendoff, 2018). The phenomenon in the word *oin-halai* is not only related to structural form, but is also closely connected to underlying semantic mechanisms and conceptual frameworks.

Bauer (1983) distinguishes compound words into two main types, namely endocentric and exocentric. Endocentric compounds have a core element (head) that determines the word class and overall meaning of the construction, whereas exocentric compounds lack an internal core, so their meaning must be interpreted holistically. This distinction is relevant for analyzing Tetun language data because many compound forms appear structurally simple but cannot be semantically derived directly from the meanings of their elements. Therefore, the analysis of Tetun compounding requires an approach that focuses not only on form but also on semantic relationships between elements.

The study of the relationship between form and meaning falls within the realm of morphosemantics. Lieber (2004) emphasizes that the meaning of compound words is the result of conceptual interaction between their constituent elements and cannot always be explained based on lexical meanings alone. In many languages, including Tetun, speakers use conceptual and cultural knowledge to interpret meaning relationships in compound words. Therefore, morphosemantic analysis becomes important for revealing how morphological structures interact with semantic mechanisms in forming new meanings.

One of the most productive domains in Tetun compounding is the use of member body elements. In cognitive semantics, member body parts often serve as sources of conceptual

metaphor due to their close relationship with human experience and cognitive development (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). A similar phenomenon is observed in Tetun, where lexemes such as *matan* ‘eye,’ *liman* ‘hand,’ *oin* ‘face,’ and *ibun* ‘mouth’ function as compound-forming elements with meanings that extend beyond their lexical definitions. These member body elements not only refer to physical organs but are also used to express emotional states, social attitudes, and mental activities.

A number of examples illustrate this trend: the form *oin-halai*, which lexically means ‘face running,’ is understood by speakers as ‘dizzy’; *liman isin* (‘hand body’) conveys the meaning ‘tired’ or ‘fatigued’; while *tau matan* (‘put eyes’) means ‘to guard’ or ‘to pay attention.’ These examples show that compounding involving member body elements in Tetun cannot be explained solely through structural analysis, but requires an approach that considers metaphor, metonymy, and cultural conventions of the speech community. In other words, the meanings of these compound words are non-compositional and tend to be exocentric.

In the context of Austronesian language studies, compounding has been widely discussed; however, studies that specifically examine Tetun compounding from a morphosemantic perspective are still limited. Previous research has tended to emphasize general grammatical descriptions or aspects of reduplication, while in-depth analyses of form–meaning relationships in compound words remain scarce. In fact, as Lieber (2024) states, understanding semantic mechanisms in word formation is crucial for explaining how speakers construct new meanings through limited morphological resources.

In addition, research on compound words involving member body elements has cultural relevance. The use of body metaphors reflects how Tetun speakers conceptualize their life experiences. Analysis of forms such as *tau matan*, *foti liman*, or *nakonun inan* not only reveals linguistic structure but also the ways of thinking and cultural values within the speech community. Therefore, this study lies at the intersection of morphology, semantics, and anthropological linguistics.

Based on the description above, it can be concluded that compounding in the Tetun language, especially involving member body elements, is an important and worthy phenomenon for in-depth investigation. This research aims to describe compound word forms as well as to reveal the mechanisms underlying their meanings using Bauer’s theory (1983) on compounding typology and Lieber’s morphosemantic theory (2004). Thus, this study is expected to contribute to the development of Tetun morphological studies while enriching Austronesian linguistics.

Based on the discussion above, this study aims to identify and classify Tetun compound words that contain member body elements according to their morphological structure, to analyze the relationship between form and meaning in these compounds through a morphosemantic framework, to explain the semantic mechanisms involved—particularly metaphor and metonymy—in the construction of compound meanings, and to uncover the cultural values and conceptualizations reflected in these linguistic expressions from an anthropolinguistic perspective. Through these objectives, this research is expected to contribute to the documentation of Tetun morphology, enrich morphosemantic studies, and provide deeper insights into the relationship between language, cognition, and culture in Austronesian linguistics.

METHOD

This research was conducted using a qualitative approach with a descriptive design. The qualitative approach was chosen because this study aimed to understand and describe linguistic phenomena in depth based on empirical data obtained in the field. The research produced descriptive data in the form of words, expressions, and utterances analyzed to reveal the meanings and patterns contained within them (Moleong, 2017; Creswell, 2014).

Descriptive methods were used to describe and explain linguistic facts as they occurred, without manipulation of the research object (Mahsun, 2017). The data consisted of linguistic forms containing compounding, which were collected through observation and note-taking techniques, and were supported by interviews when necessary. Data analysis was conducted qualitatively through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing to obtain a systematic description of the characteristics of the compounding studied (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

The object of this study was compound words in the Tetun language, particularly those containing member body elements. The focus of the study was directed at the structure of compounding and the meanings produced, both compositional and non-compositional. The data sources consisted of Tetun linguistic data obtained from various sources, including speakers' utterances, written texts, and relevant linguistic references.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Connection Form and Meaning in Tetun Compound Words Containing Element Body

The morphosemantic study places the connection between form (morphology) and meaning (semantics) at the center of analysis. In compound words in the Tetun language that contain body-part elements, the relationship shows a gradation of semantic transparency, ranging from forms that are still compositional to those that have been lexicalized in an idiomatic way. These findings are in line with the view that the meanings of compound words are not always the result of the addition of the meanings of their constituent elements, but rather may undergo expansion, shift, and semantic freezing (Booij, 2010; Lieber, 2004). In this section, a number of classifications are identified based on the degree of form–meaning connection, that is, the extent to which meaning can be predicted based on form.

Morphologically, compound words in the Tetun language that contain body-part elements are formed through the combination of nouns referring to body parts with adjectives, verbs, and other nouns as modifying elements. The compounding process not only produces new lexical meanings but also involves semantic expansion through mechanisms such as metaphor and metonymy.

In morphosemantic studies, the relationship between formative elements and overall meaning is analyzed based on the level of compositionality and the mechanisms of semantic relation. The levels of compositionality include compositional, semi-compositional, and idiomatic. Meanwhile, the mechanisms of semantic relation include metaphor and metonymy. This analysis aims to reveal how body-part elements in the Tetun language function as conceptual sources in the formation of new meanings.

Based on the results of the data classification, compound words involving body-part elements in the Tetun language are classified into three main groups: (1) compositional compounds, (2) metonymic compounds, and (3) metaphorical compounds. These three groups

are analyzed in depth in this chapter to demonstrate the relationship between form and meaning, as well as the underlying body-based conceptualization.

Compound Words Compositional

From the results of data collection and reduction, as many as two categories of compositional compound words were identified. Compositional compound words are formed through the compounding of meanings in which the whole can still be understood directly from the lexical meanings of their constituent elements. In this type, the relationship between form and meaning is transparent, so no significant semantic shift occurs. The existence of compositional compound words in this research data shows that all body-related compound word elements in the Tetun language undergo semantic expansion in a metaphorical or metonymic manner. Some of them still maintain a close semantic connection with the literal meanings of their constituent elements. The following section presents the results of the analysis in the form of tables and analytical paragraphs.

a. *Oin Hanesan*

Table 1. Morphosemantic Analysis of the Tetun Compound *oin hanesan*

No	Data	Structure Morphological	Meaning Lexical	Meaning Compound	Relation Meaning	Semantic Status
1	coin Hanesan	N + V	face + same	similar	compositional	compositional

Source: Research data processed (2026)

Compound word *oin hanesan* is formed from the elements *oin*, which means ‘face,’ and *hanesan*, which means ‘same’ or ‘similar.’ In general morphological construction, this consists of a noun referring to a part of the human body, followed by an adjective as the modifying element. Lexically, the second element in the compound produces the meaning of ‘similarity,’ especially in facial appearance. The relationship between form and meaning in the word *oin hanesan* is compositional because the overall meaning can be understood directly from the meaning of each element without any significant semantic shift. The ‘face’ element maintains its reference as the body part that becomes the center of a person’s visual identification, whereas the ‘same’ element functions as a marker of similarity. Thus, this construction demonstrates high semantic transparency.

b. *Matan at*

Table 2. Morphosemantic Analysis of the Tetun Compound *matan aat*

No	Data	Structure Morphological	Meaning Lexical	Meaning Compound	Relation Meaning	Semantic Status
2	matan at	N + Adj	eyes + damaged	blind	compositional	compositional

Source: Research data processed (2026)

Compound word *matan-aat* consists of one element, *matan*, which means ‘eye,’ and *aat*, which means ‘damaged’ or ‘not good.’ Morphologically, this form is a noun–adjective compound that refers to a body part with an adjectival description of its condition. In lexical

terms, the second element produces the meaning of ‘damaged eyes,’ which directly refers to the condition of impaired vision or blindness. The relationship between form and meaning in the compound word *matan-aat* is compositional because the overall meaning can still be understood directly from the lexical meanings of its constituent elements. There is no metaphorical shift in meaning or significant metonymy. The element ‘eye’ remains referential to the organ of vision, whereas the element ‘damaged’ describes the condition of the organ’s function. Because of that, the meaning of ‘blind’ in this construction can be understood as a direct consequence of ‘damaged eyes.’

From a morphosemantic perspective, this form shows that compounding with body-related elements in Tetun is also used to express physical conditions literally. The high degree of semantic transparency in compositional compounds like *matan-aat* demonstrates a close relationship between morphological structure and lexical meaning, so that no complex conceptual interpretation is required.

Compound Words Metonymic

Based on the results of the data collection, 19 compound-word metonymy data were found. Compound-word metonymy is a form of compounding in which the overall meaning is formed through a relationship of proximity between a body element and a physical condition, emotional state, or specific function. In this construction, the body element does not undergo a conceptual comparison as in metaphor, but instead functions as a marker that is directly related to physical experience or real expression. Therefore, the relationship between form and meaning in compound-word metonymy is generally still quite transparent, although it may undergo semantic expansion.

a. *Oin halai*

Table 3. Morphosemantic Analysis of the Tetun Compound *oin halai*

No	Data	Structure Morphological	Meaning Lexical	Meaning Compound	Relation Meaning	Semantic Status
3	Oin halai	N + V	face + run	Dizzy	metonymy	semi-compositional

Source: Research data processed (2026)

Compound word *oin halai* consists of one element *oin* ‘face’ and *halai* ‘run.’ In lexical construction, this means ‘face run,’ but in an idiomatic way it is used to express the state of ‘dizziness.’ The meaning relationship is formed through a mechanism of metonymy, namely the association between the physical sensations felt in the head or face and the condition of dizziness. The *oin* ‘face’ element represents the head as the center of sensation, while *halai* ‘run’ describes rapid movement associated with a loss of control over the body. When dizzy, the sensation felt is like losing control of the body. Thus, the overall meaning still retains a direct connection with physical experience, making it semi-compositional.

b. *Oin lanu*

Table 4. Morphosemantic Analysis of the Tetun Compound *oin lanu*

No	Data	Structure Morphological	Meaning Lexical	Meaning Compound	Relation Meaning	Semantic Status
4	Oin lanu	N + N	face + alcohol	drunk	metonymy	Semicompositional

Source: Research data processed (2026)

Compound word *oin-lanu*, formed from *oin* ‘face’ and *lanuk* ‘alcohol; hard drink.’ In a lexical sense, it means ‘alcohol face’; however, in usage it refers to the condition of being drunk (after drinking alcohol). The semantic relationship in this construction is metonymic because the consumption of alcohol becomes the primary cause of someone feeling drunk. The ‘face’ element functions as a marker of the physical condition of someone who appears affected by alcohol. This relationship shows a proximity between cause and effect, so the overall meaning can still be traced from its constituent elements and is classified as semi-compositional.

c. *Oin wild*

Table 5. Morphosemantic Analysis of the Tetun Compound *oin buis*

No	Data	Structure Morphological	Meaning Lexical	Meaning Compound	Relation Meaning	Semantic Status
5	Oin bus	N + Adj	fierce + face	cynical	metonymy	Semicompositional

Source: Research data processed (2026)

Compound word *oin-buis* consists of the element *oin* ‘face’ and *buis* ‘fierce.’ In a lexical sense, it means ‘angry face,’ whereas its contextual meaning refers to a cynical or unhappy expression. The relationship of meaning in this construction is metonymic in nature because facial expression is perceived as a direct marker of a person’s attitude, which can be assessed from their expression. The element ‘face’ functions as a visible indicator of emotion, so this construction is semi-compositional in nature.

d. *Oin diak*

Table 6. Morphosemantic Analysis of the Tetun Compound *oin diak*

No	Data	Structure Morphological	Meaning Lexical	Meaning Compound	Relation Meaning	Semantic Status
6	Oin diak	N + Adj	good + face	Handsome/ friendly	metonymy	Semicompositional

Source: Research data processed (2026)

Compound word *oin-diak*, formed from *oin* ‘face’ and *diak* ‘good.’ Lexically, it means ‘good face’ and is used to refer to someone who is handsome or has an attractive appearance. The relationship of meaning in this construction is metonymic because the face, as a part of the body, becomes a representation of a person’s overall physical appearance. The ‘face’ element functions as a marker of visual identity that represents the individual’s aesthetic qualities. Thus, the relationship between form and meaning remains sufficiently transparent and can be considered semi-compositional.

e. *Oin hamanasa*

Table 7. Morphosemantic Analysis of the Tetun Compound *oin hamanasa*

No	Data	Structure Morphological	Meaning Lexical	Meaning Compound	Relation Meaning	Semantic Status
7	Oin hamanasa	N + N	face + laughter	happy	metonymy	Semicompositional

Source: Research data processed (2026)

Compound word *oin-hamanasa* is formed from the elements *oin* ‘muka’ and *hamanasa*, which refer to the expression “smile” or “happy.” Lexically, it means “smiling face,” whereas

semantically it is used to describe a happy condition. The relationship of meaning in this construction is metonymic because the expression “smiling face” becomes a direct marker of someone’s emotional state. The *oin* (“face”) element functions as a visual indicator of happiness, so the overall meaning remains closely related to its lexical meaning and is semi-compositional.

f. *Oin Monu*

Table 8. Morphosemantic Analysis of the Tetun Compound *oin monu*

No	Data	Structure Morphological	Meaning Lexical	Meaning Compound	Relation Meaning	Semantic Status
8	Oin Monu	N + V	face + fall	Embarrassed	metonymy	Semicompositional

Source: Research data processed (2026)

Compound word *oin-monu* consists of *oin* ‘face’ and *monu* ‘fall.’ Lexically, it means ‘face fall,’ whereas idiomatically it refers to shame. The meaning connection in this construction is metonymic in nature because the movement of lowering the face, or ‘face falling,’ is associated with the feeling of shame. The element ‘face’ represents a physical expression or appearance because of the emotion described. Therefore, the overall meaning still maintains a direct connection with physical experience, so it is classified as semi-compositional.

g. *Oin nakukun*

Table 9. Morphosemantic Analysis of the Tetun Compound *oin nakukun*

No	Data	Structure Morphological	Meaning Lexical	Meaning Compound	Relation Meaning	Semantic Status
9	Oin nakukun	N + adj	face + dark	faint	metonymy	Semicompositional

Source: Research data processed (2026)

Compound word *oin-nakukun*, formed from *oin* ‘face’ and *nakukun* ‘dark.’ Lexically, it means ‘dark face’ and is used to refer to the condition of being fainted. The semantic relationship is metonymic because a change in a person’s state of consciousness is often associated with a change in facial expression, such as the face appearing pale or dark. The element *oin* (‘face’) becomes a physical indicator of the body’s overall condition. This relationship shows the proximity between physical signs and bodily states, thus rendering it semi-compositional.

h. *Oin siin*

Table 10. Morphosemantic Analysis of the Tetun Compound *oin siin*

No	Data	Structure Morphological	Meaning Lexical	Meaning Compound	Relation Meaning	Semantic Status
10	Oin siin	N + adj	sour + face	frown	metonymy	Semicompositional

Source: Research data processed (2026)

Compound word *oin-siin* consists of *oin* ‘face’ and *siin* ‘sour.’ Lexically, it means ‘sour face’ and refers to the expression ‘frown’ or ‘unhappy.’ The relationship of meaning in this construction is metonymic because the expression ‘sour face’ becomes a direct marker of

someone's emotional condition. The 'face' element functions as a visual indicator of emotion, so the overall meaning remains closely related to its lexical meaning and is semi-compositional.

i. *Matan moos*

Table 11. Morphosemantic Analysis of the Tetun Compound *matan moos*

No	Data	Structure Morphological	Meaning Lexical	Meaning Compound	Relation Meaning	Semantic Status
11	Matan moos	N + adj	eyes + clean	Fresh/ not sleepy	metonymy	Semicompositional

Source: Research data processed (2026)

Compound words *matan-moos*, formed from *matan* 'mata' and *moos* 'clean'. Lexically, it means 'eyes clean' and is used to refer to a condition of not being sleepy or still fresh. The semantic relationship is metonymic because the condition of clear or clean eyes becomes an indicator that the body is still awake. The 'eye' element represents a function directly related to vision and to a person's physical condition, so that the meaning connection is still sufficiently transparent and classified as semi-compositional.

j. *Matan dukur*

Table 12. Morphosemantic Analysis of the Tetun Compound *matan dukur*

No	Data	Structure Morphological	Meaning Lexical	Meaning Compound	Relation Meaning	Semantic Status
12	Matan dukur	N + V	eyes + sleep	sleepy	metonymy	Semicompositional

Source: Research data processed (2026)

Compound word *matan-dukur* consists of *matan* 'eye' and *dukur* 'sleep.' Lexically, it means 'eye sleep' and is used to refer to the condition of being sleepy. The relationship of meaning in this construction is metonymic because the activity of sleeping is directly associated with the condition of the eyes beginning to close. The 'eye' element functions as a physical indicator of the sleepy condition, so the overall meaning remains closely related to the lexical meaning and can be classified as semi-compositional.

k. *Ulun boot*

Table 13. Morphosemantic Analysis of the Tetun Compound *ulun boot*

No	Data	Structure Morphological	Meaning Lexical	Meaning Compound	Relation Meaning	Semantic Status
13	Ulun boot	N + Adj	Big + head	Leader (politics)	metonymy	Semicompositional

Source: Research data processed (2026)

Compound word *ulun-boot*, formed from *ulun* 'head' and *boot* 'big'. Lexically, it means 'big head,' but it is used to refer to a leader or a person who holds a high position. The semantic relationship is metonymic because the head, as the uppermost part of the body, is associated with the highest position in a social structure. The element 'head' becomes a representation of status or authority, so that the overall meaning can still be traced from its constituent elements and is thus semi-compositional.

1. *Ulun Bulelu*

Table 14. Morphosemantic Analysis of the Tetun Compound *ulun bulelu*

No	Data	Structure Morphological	Meaning Lexical	Meaning Compound	Relation Meaning	Semantic Status
14	Ulun Bulelu	N + V	Head + spin	Dizzy	metonymy	Semicompositional

Source: Research data processed (2026)

Compound word *ulun-bulelu* consists of *ulun* ‘head’ and *bulelu* ‘spin’. In general, it lexically means ‘head spin’ and is used to refer to the condition of dizziness. The semantic relationship is metonymic because the sensation of spinning in the head becomes a direct indicator of the condition of dizziness. The element ‘head’ represents the center of the sensation described, so the semantic connection remains sufficiently transparent and is classified as semi-compositional.

m. *Rohan Liman*

Table 15. Morphosemantic Analysis of the Tetun Compound *liman rohan*

No	Data	Structure Morphological	Meaning Lexical	Meaning Compound	Relation Meaning	Semantic Status
15	Rohan Liman	N + N	Hand + piece (part)	inheritance	metonymy	Semicompositional

Source: Research data processed (2026)

Compound word *liman-rohan* is formed from *liman* ‘hand’ and *rohan* ‘piece/part.’ Lexically, it means ‘part from the hand’ and is used to refer to inheritance or the giving within a family. The semantic relationship is metonymic in nature because the hand is associated with ownership or gifting. Inheritance is understood as something that is ‘passed down’ through the hands of previous generations. This relationship shows a close connection between the act of giving and the objects given, so the overall meaning is semi-compositional in nature.

n. *Fuan knockers*

Table 16. Morphosemantic Analysis of the Tetun Compound *fuan tuku-tuku*

No	Data	Structure Morphological	Meaning Lexical	Meaning Compound	Relation Meaning	Semantic Status
16	Fuan tuku tuku	N + V	Heart + Knocking	nervous	metonymy	Semicompositional

Source: Research data processed (2026)

Compound words *fuan-tuku-tuku* consist of *fuan* ‘heart’ and *tuku-tuku* ‘beat.’ In lexical terms, it means ‘heart pounding’ and is used to refer to a nervous condition. The semantic relationship is metonymic because a rapid heartbeat becomes a direct indicator of someone’s emotional state. The ‘heart’ element functions as the center of emotional sensation manifested physically, so the overall meaning remains closely related to its lexical meaning and is classified as semi-compositional.

Compound Words: Metaphorical

In this section, the relationship between form and meaning demonstrates the conceptualization of the body and how the Tetun speakers' way of thinking is reflected in the terms used. A number of patterns are found in metaphorical compound words involving body elements in Tetun, namely: (1) the face pattern (*oin*), (2) the eye pattern (*matan*), (3) the head and brain pattern (*ulun / kakutak*), (4) the mouth and hands pattern (*ibun, liman*), and (5) the liver and heart pattern (*aten, fuan*). The following explains the results of the analysis of compound word forms that have metaphorical meanings.

Face-Based Metaphor (*oin*)

The use of the element *oin* 'face' in Tetun compound words shows that the face is conceptualized as the center of emotional expression and social character. In metaphorical constructions, the face not only refers to the physical part of the body but also functions as a representation of psychological conditions and moral aspects of a person. Therefore, compounds with the element *oin* are often used to describe personality traits, attitudes, and emotional conditions.

a. *Oin at*

Table 17. Morphosemantic Analysis of the Tetun Compound *oin aat*

No	Data	Structure Morphological	Meaning Lexical	Meaning Compound	Relation Meaning	Semantic Status
17	<i>Oin at</i>	N + Adj	Face + damaged	sad	metaphor	Semicompositional

Source: Research data processed (2026)

Compound word *oin-aat* consists of *oin* 'face' and *aat* 'damaged.' In lexical terms, it means 'face damaged,' whereas idiomatically it is used to refer to a sad condition. The relationship of meaning in this construction is metaphorical because physical damage to the face is mapped onto a negative emotional condition. The face, as the center of emotional expression, is understood as a reflection of one's inner state, so that 'face broken' represents sadness. The overall meaning is no longer literal but still retains conceptual relatedness to the lexical meaning; therefore, it is classified as semi-compositional.

b. *Oin barracks*

Table 18. Morphosemantic Analysis of the Tetun Compound *oin barak*

No	Data	Structure Morphological	Meaning Lexical	Meaning Compound	Relation Meaning	Semantic Status
18	<i>Oin barracks</i>	N + Adj	Face + many	Hypocritical	metaphor	idiomatic

Source: Research data processed (2026)

Compound words are formed from *oin* "advance" and *barak* "many." Lexically, *barak* denotes "many," but in this construction it is used to refer to a hypocritical nature. The semantic relationship is metaphorical, as the concept of "many faces" is understood as possessing multiple personas or different attitudes. The deeper *face* construction becomes a symbol of a person's social identity, so that variation or multiplicity of "face" represents

dishonesty or hypocrisy. The overall meaning cannot be understood literally and is classified as idiomatic.

c. *Oin lais*

Table 19. Morphosemantic Analysis of the Tetun Compound *oin lais*

No	Data	Structure Morphological	Meaning Lexical	Meaning Compound	Relation Meaning	Semantic Status
19	Oin lais	N + Adj	Face + fast	Want to know	metaphor	idiomatic

Source: Research data processed (2026)

Compound words *oin-lais* consist of *oin* ‘face’ and *lais* ‘fast’. In lexical terms, it means ‘face-fast’, whereas in usage, it refers to the nature of wanting to know. The meaning relationship is metaphorical because the speed of moving the face or turning around is mapped to a mental tendency to quickly acquire knowledge. The face is understood as an active part of the body in social interaction, so *oin-lais* describes an attitude of responsiveness to information. This meaning is semi-compositional because it still maintains a conceptual connection with its lexical meaning.

d. *Oin kraik*

Table 20. Morphosemantic Analysis of the Tetun Compound *oin kraik*

No	Data	Structure Morphological	Meaning Lexical	Meaning Compound	Relation Meaning	Semantic Status
20	Oin crack	N + Adj	Face + bottom	sad	metaphor	idiomatic

Source: Research data processed (2026)

The compound word *oin kraik* is formed from *oin* (“face”) and *kraik* (“bottom”). Lexically, it means “face below,” whereas its actual meaning is “sad.” The semantic relationship is metaphorical because the reference to “face” is mapped onto an emotional condition. The concept of “below” is not used to describe the physical layout of a face. Overall, the meaning is no longer based on literal lexical composition or direct semantic transparency, so it is classified as idiomatic.

e. *Oin toos*

Table 21. Morphosemantic Analysis of the Tetun Compound *oin toos*

No	Data	Structure Morphological	Meaning Lexical	Meaning Compound	Relation Meaning	Semantic Status
21	Oin toos	N + Adj	Face + hard	annoyed	metaphor	Semi - compositional

Source: Research data processed (2026)

Compound words *oin-toos* consist of *oin* ‘face’ and *toos* ‘hard’. In lexical meaning, it means ‘hard face’, whereas figuratively it refers to a condition of annoyance or negative emotion. The relationship of meaning is metaphorical in nature because a “hard face” is understood as a representation of emotional tension. The face becomes a medium for expressing emotions that reflect a person’s inner condition. Therefore, the overall meaning is semi-compositional in nature.

f. *Oin flare*

Table 22. Morphosemantic Analysis of the Tetun Compound *oin suar*

No	Data	Structure Morphological	Meaning Lexical	Meaning Compound	Relation Meaning	Semantic Status
22	Oin flare	N + N	Face + smoke	frown	metonymy	Semi - compositional

Source: Research data processed (2026)

Compound word *oin-suar* is formed from *oin* ('face') and *suar* ('smoke'). By lexical composition, it literally means 'smoky face' and is used to refer to a frowning or unhappy expression. The semantic relationship is metaphorical because smoke is associated with overcast or gloomy conditions. The 'smoky face' depicts an emotional atmosphere that is not pleasant. The overall meaning is no longer literal but can still be traced through conceptual association, making it semi-compositional in nature.

g. *Oin moris*

Table 23. Morphosemantic Analysis of the Tetun Compound *oin moris*

No	Data	Structure Morphological	Meaning Lexical	Meaning Compound	Relation Meaning	Semantic Status
23	Oin moris	N + Adj	Face + life	agile	metaphor	Semi - compositional

Source: Research data processed (2026)

The compound word *oin moris* consists of *oin* "face" and *moris* "life." Lexically, it combines "face" and "life," where the resulting meaning refers to an agile or responsive nature. The relationship between form and meaning is metaphorical because the concept of "life" is mapped onto an active mental and social condition. The "face" in this construction is conceptualized as a center of social response, so *oin moris* describes an individual who reacts and responds quickly in interaction. The overall meaning still maintains conceptual relatedness to its lexical components, thus it can be classified as semi-compositional.

Metaphor Based on the Eye (*matan*)

The use of the element *matan* ("eye") in compound words in the Tetun language shows that the eye is not only understood as an organ of vision but also as a symbol of perception, interest, and social judgment. In metaphorical constructions, the eye functions as a representation of how individuals see, feel, and respond to their social environment. Therefore, compounds containing the element *matan* are often used to describe a person's interest, desire, and perceptive ability.

a. *Matan dook*

Table 24. Morphosemantic Analysis of the Tetun Compound *matan dook*

No	Data	Structure Morphological	Meaning Lexical	Meaning Compound	Relation Meaning	Semantic Status
24	<i>Matan dook</i>	N + Adj	Eyes + far	witch doctor	metaphor	Idiomatic

Source: Research data processed (2026)

Compound word *matan-dook* consists of *matan* ‘eye’ and *dook* ‘far’. Lexically, it means ‘far eye’, whereas idiomatically it refers to a shaman or someone who is considered to have the ability to see things that are not visible. The relation of meaning is metaphorical because the ability to see far is mapped onto the ability to know things outside the normal range of vision. The “deep eyes” construction is conceptualized as a center of perception and knowledge, so the overall meaning is idiomatic in nature.

b. *Matan dalan*

Table 25. Morphosemantic Analysis of the Tetun Compound *matan dalan*

No	Data	Structure Morphological	Meaning Lexical	Meaning Compound	Relation Meaning	Semantic Status
25	<i>Matan dalan</i>	N + N	Eyes + road	Pointer direction	metaphor	semi-compositional

Source: Research data processed (2026)

Compound words *matan dalan* are formed from *matan* (‘*mata*’, ‘eye’) and *dalan* (‘road’). Lexically, it means ‘eye road’, whereas semantically it is used to refer to directional pointers. The relationship is metaphorical because the eye is understood as a tool that helps navigation, enabling someone to determine direction. The ability to see is mapped onto the ability to show the road or give instructions. The overall meaning still maintains a conceptual relatedness to the lexical meaning, making it semi-compositional in nature.

c. *Fasimatan*

Table 26. Morphosemantic Analysis of the Tetun Compound *fasi matan*

No	Data	Structure Morphological	Meaning Lexical	Meaning Compound	Relation Meaning	Semantic Status
26	<i>Fasi matan</i>	V + N	wash + eyes	Looking around	metaphor	semi-compositional

Source: Research data processed (2026)

Compound word *fasi-matan* consists of *fasi* ‘wash’ and *matan* ‘eyes’. In its lexical meaning, it refers to “washing eyes,” whereas idiomatically it refers to activities such as looking around or enjoying the view. The relationship of meaning is metaphorical because the act of “washing” is understood as refreshing vision. The eye is conceptualized as an organ that can experience visual pleasure. The overall meaning still retains a relationship with its lexical meaning, so it is classified as semi-compositional.

d. *Know matan*

Table 27. Morphosemantic Analysis of the Tetun Compound *tau matan*

No	Data	Structure Morphological	Meaning Lexical	Meaning Compound	Relation Meaning	Semantic Status
27	know matan	V + N	put + eyes	Looking around	metaphor	semi-compositional

Source: Research data processed (2026)

Compound-word acquaintance is formed from “know” and “put,” and *matan* “eyes.” In its lexical meaning, it refers to “put down eyes,” whereas in another sense it is used to describe the action of guarding or supervising. The relational meaning is metaphorical, because “putting one’s view on something” is understood as a form of attention and supervision. The deeper *matan* construction becomes a symbol of control and attentiveness. The overall meaning is semi-compositional in nature.

e. *Matan foun*

Table 28. Morphosemantic Analysis of the Tetun Compound *matan foun*

No	Data	Structure Morphological	Meaning Lexical	Meaning Compound	Relation Meaning	Semantic Status
28	Matan foun	N + Adj	new + eyes	New person	metaphor	semi-compositional

Compound word *matan-foun* consists of *matan* (‘eye’) and *foun* (‘new’). Literally, it means ‘new eye’, but in lexical use it refers to new people or newcomers. The meaning is metaphorical in nature, as ‘new eye’ is understood as a new perspective or presence within a social environment. Eyes are conceptualized as a symbol of individual identity. Overall, the meaning is semi-compositional in nature.

f. *Matan lakan*

Table 29. Morphosemantic Analysis of the Tetun Compound *matan lakan*

No	Data	Structure Morphological	Meaning Lexical	Meaning Compound	Relation Meaning	Semantic Status
29	Matan lakan	N + V	eyes + lit	Ladies man	metaphor	idiomatic

Source: Research data processed (2026)

Compound word *matan-lakan* is formed from *matan* “eye” and *fatin* “flame.” Lexically, it means “eyes lit up,” while idiomatically it refers to a state in which the eyes signal attraction or heightened romantic interest. The meaning is metaphorical, as the imagery of light in the eyes is mapped onto strong attraction toward someone, often outside one’s usual preference. The eyes are understood as indicators of sexual or romantic interest. Overall, the meaning is idiomatic and cannot be interpreted literally.

g. *Matan monu*

Table 30. Morphosemantic Analysis of the Tetun Compound *matan monu*

No	Data	Structure Morphological	Meaning Lexical	Meaning Compound	Relation Meaning	Semantic Status
30	Matan monu	N + V	eye + fall	crush	metaphor	semi-compositional

Source: Research data processed (2026)

Compound word *matan-monu* consists of *matan* “eye” and *monu* “fall.” Lexically, it means “eye fall,” whereas figuratively it refers to feelings of interest or falling in love. The semantic relationship is metaphorical, as “falling sight” is understood as emotional attraction or interest. The eyes are conceptualized as the starting point for the emergence of feelings. The overall meaning is semi-compositional in nature.

h. *Matan moris*

Table 31. Morphosemantic Analysis of the Tetun Compound *matan moris*

No	Data	Structure Morphological	Meaning Lexical	Meaning Compound	Relation Meaning	Semantic Status
31	Matan moris	N + Adj	eyes + life	Jelly	metaphor	semi-compositional

Source: Research data processed (2026)

The compound word *matan-moris* is formed from *matan* (“eye”) and *moris* (“life”). Lexically, it means “living eyes,” and its figurative meaning refers to someone who is observant or sensitive. The semantic relationship is metaphorical in nature, as “life in the eyes” is understood as sharpness of perception. The eyes become a symbol of alertness and intelligence in observation. Overall, the meaning is semi-compositional in nature.

Metaphor Based Head and Brain (*ulun & kakutak*)

In the *Tetun* language, compound words composed of the elements *ulun* (“head”) and *kakutak* (“brain”) indicate a conceptualization of the body as a center of mind, moral control, and social identity. The head is not only understood as part of the physical body but also as a symbol of intelligence, leadership, and individual behavior. Therefore, compounds involving the elements head and brain are often used to describe a person’s character, cognitive ability, and social attitudes.

a. *Kakutak mother*

Table 32. Morphosemantic Analysis of the Tetun Compound *kakutak mamar*

No	Data	Structure Morphological	Meaning Lexical	Meaning Compound	Relation Meaning	Semantic Status
32	Kakutak mother	N + Adj	brain + soft	clever	metaphor	semi-compositional

Source: Research data processed (2026)

The compound word *kakutak-mamar* consists of *kakutak* ‘brain’ and *mamar* ‘soft’. In general, the lexical meaning is ‘soft brain’, whereas metaphorically it refers to someone who is smart or quick to understand something. The semantic relationship is metaphorical because softness is mapped onto cognitive flexibility and the ability to accept information. The brain is conceptualized as the center of intelligence, so the ‘soft’ condition describes the ability to think well. The overall meaning is semi-compositional in nature.

b. Kakutak Laek

Table 33. Morphosemantic Analysis of the Tetun Compound *kakutak laek*

No	Data	Structure Morphological	Meaning Lexical	Meaning Compound	Relation Meaning	Semantic Status
33	Kakutak laek	N + Negation	brain + no There is	stupid	metaphor	semi- compositional

Source: Research data processed (2026)

The compound word *kakutak-laek* is formed from *kakutak* ‘brain’ and *laek* ‘no/there is none’. In its lexical meaning, it denotes ‘no brain’, whereas in figurative usage it refers to stupidity. The relationship of meaning is metaphorical because the absence of a brain is mapped onto the absence of the ability to think. The brain is understood as the center of rationality and intelligence, so its absence represents cognitive inability. Overall, the meaning still maintains conceptual relatedness with its lexical meaning and is semi-compositional.

c. Ulut at

Table 34. Morphosemantic Analysis of the Tetun Compound *ulun aat*

No	Data	Structure Morphological	Meaning Lexical	Meaning Compound	Relation Meaning	Semantic Status
34	Ulun aat	N + Adj	head + damaged	immoral	metaphor	semi- compositional

Source: Research data processed (2026)

Compound word *ulun-aat* consists of *ulun* ‘head’ and *aat* ‘damaged’. Lexically, it means ‘damaged head’, whereas idiomatically it refers to immoral behavior or “no good.” The relationship of meaning is metaphorical because head damage is mapped onto damage in morals or patterns of thought. The head is conceptualized as the center controlling behavior, so the condition “damaged” describes moral deviation. The overall meaning is semi-compositional in nature.

d. Ulun halai

Table 35. . Morphosemantic Analysis of the Tetun Compound *ulun halai*

No	Data	Structure Morphological	Meaning Lexical	Meaning Compound	Relation Meaning	Semantic Status
35	Ulun halai	N + V	head + run	senile	metaphor	semi- compositional

Source: Research data processed (2026)

Ulun-halai is formed from *ulun* (“head”) and *halai* (“run”). In its lexical sense, it literally means “head run,” whereas in usage it refers to a condition of senility or loss of concentration. The semantic relationship is metaphorical, because the “run” movement is mapped onto the disappearance of focus or memory. The head, as the center of thought, is understood as unstable or uncontrolled. The overall meaning is semi-compositional in nature.

e. *Ulun Mamar*

Table 36. Morphosemantic Analysis of the Tetun Compound *ulun mamar*

No	Data	Structure Morphological	Meaning Lexical	Meaning Compound	Relation Meaning	Semantic Status
36	Ulun Mamar	N + Adj	head + soft	immoral	metaphor	semi-compositional

Source: Research data processed (2026)

Compound word *ulun-mamar* consists of *ulun* “head” and *mamar* “soft.” In general, its lexical meaning is “soft head,” whereas in another sense it refers to intelligence or good thinking ability. The relationship in meaning is metaphorical in nature because softness is mapped onto openness and flexibility in thinking. The head is conceptualized as the center of cognition, so the “soft” condition describes a capacity for strong intellectual functioning. The overall meaning is semi-compositional in nature.

f. *Ulun Rua*

Table 37. Morphosemantic Analysis of the Tetun Compound *ulun rua*

No	Data	Structure Morphological	Meaning Lexical	Meaning Compound	Relation Meaning	Semantic Status
37	Ulun Rua	N + Num	head + two	have an affair	metaphor	idiomatic

Source: Research data processed (2026)

Compound word *ulun-rua* is formed from *ulun* (“head”) and *rua* (“two”). Lexically, it means “two heads,” whereas idiomatically it refers to behavior involving an affair or having two partners. The relationship meaning is metaphorical because the existence of two heads is mapped onto a dual identity or double commitment. The head is conceptualized as a symbol of identity and social responsibility. Overall, the meaning cannot be understood literally; thus, it is idiomatic.

g. *Ulun toos*

Table 38. Morphosemantic Analysis of the Tetun Compound *ulun toos*

No	Data	Structure Morphological	Meaning Lexical	Meaning Compound	Relation Meaning	Semantic Status
38	Ulun toos	N + Adj	head + hard	stubborn	metaphor	semi-compositional

Source: Research data processed (2026)

Compound word *ulun-toos* consists of *ulun* “head” and *toos* “hard.” In a lexical sense, it means “hard head,” whereas figuratively it refers to a stubborn or obstinate person. The semantic relationship is metaphorical, as the notion of hardness applied to the head is mapped onto steadfastness or unwillingness to change. The head is understood as the center of will and self-control. Overall, the meaning is semi-compositional in nature.

Metaphor Based on Mouth and Hands (*ibun & liman*)

In the Tetun language, compound words such as *ibun* “mouth” and *liman* “hand” indicate a conceptualization of the body in relation to social action and interpersonal interaction. The mouth is associated with speaking and verbal expression, whereas the hand is associated with actions, possession, and social relations. Therefore, compounds involving these elements are often used to describe social behavior and to evaluate individuals within a cultural context.

a. *Mother boots*

Table 39. Morphosemantic Analysis of the Tetun Compound *ibun boot*

No	Data	Structure Morphological	Meaning Lexical	Meaning Compound	Relation Meaning	Semantic Status
39	mother boot	N + Adj	big mouth	talkative	metaphor	semi- compositional

Source: Research data processed (2026)

The compound word *ibun-boot* consists of *ibun* (“mouth”) and *boot* (“big”). In lexical terms, it means “big mouth,” whereas in semantic usage, it refers to someone who is talkative or speaks a lot. The relationship in meaning is metaphorical, because the size of the mouth is mapped onto the intensity of speaking. The mouth, as a communication organ, is understood as the center of speech production, so “big mouth” represents a tendency toward excessive speech. The overall meaning is semi-compositional, as it still retains partial compositionality with its lexical components.

b. *Liman moos*

Table 40. Morphosemantic Analysis of the Tetun Compound *liman moos*

No	Data	Structure Morphological	Meaning Lexical	Meaning Compound	Relation Meaning	Semantic Status
40	liman moos	N + Adj	Hands + clean	Not guilty	metaphor	Semicompositional

Source: Research data processed (2026)

Compound words *liman-moos* are formed from *liman* ‘hand’ and *moos* ‘clean’. In a lexical sense, it means ‘clean hand’, whereas in usage, it refers to someone who is not guilty or not involved in an error or wrongdoing. The relational meaning is metaphorical in nature because the cleanliness of the hand is mapped onto moral cleanliness or freedom from wrongdoing. Hands are conceptualized as symbols of action, so ‘clean hands’ describes the absence of involvement in negative actions. The overall meaning is semi-compositional in nature.

Metaphor Based on Heart and Liver (*aten & fuan*)

In Tetun compound expressions, the elements *aten* ‘liver’ and *fuan* ‘heart’ indicate the conceptualization of the body as a center of emotions and affective experience. These elements are not only understood as biological organs but also as sources of feelings, courage, and a person’s psychological state. Therefore, compounds involving liver and heart are often used to express emotional conditions and individual character.

a. *Fuan Monu*

Table 41. Morphosemantic Analysis of the Tetun Compound *fuan monu*

No	Data	Structure Morphological	Meaning Lexical	Meaning Compound	Relation Meaning	Semantic Status
41	Fuan Monu	N + V	heart + fall	Fall Love	metaphor	semi- compositional

Source: Research data processed (2026)

Compound words *fuan-monu* consist of *fuan* “heart” and *monu* “fall.” In lexical terms, it means “heart fall,” whereas in usage it refers to the feeling of falling in love. The relationship in meaning is metaphorical because the movement of falling is mapped onto the emergence of love. The heart is conceptualized as the center of emotions, which changes when somebody feels interest. The overall meaning is semi-compositional because it still retains relatedness with the lexical meaning.

b. *Fuan moras*

Table 42. Morphosemantic Analysis of the Tetun Compound *fuan moras*

No	Data	Structure Morphological	Meaning Lexical	Meaning Compound	Relation Meaning	Semantic Status
42	Fuan moras	N + Adj	heart + pain	sad	metaphor	semi- compositional

Source: Research data processed (2026)

Compound word *fuan-moras* is formed from *fuan* ‘heart’ and *moras* ‘sick’. In its lexical meaning, it denotes ‘heart-sick’, whereas in usage it refers to feelings of sadness or emotional hurt. The relationship of meaning is metaphorical in nature because physical pain is mapped onto emotional pain. The heart is understood as the center of feelings, so the condition of being ‘sick’ represents inner suffering; overall, the expression is semi-compositional in nature.

c. *Aten boot*

Table 43. Morphosemantic Analysis of the Tetun Compound *aten boot*

No	Data	Structure Morphological	Meaning Lexical	Meaning Compound	Relation Meaning	Semantic Status
43	Aten boot	N + NumAdj	big + heart	daredevil	metaphor	semi- compositional

Source: Research data processed (2026)

Compound word *aten-boot* consists of *aten* (“heart”) and *boot* (“big”). Literally, it means “big heart,” whereas figuratively it refers to courage or generosity and expansiveness of heart. The meaning relationship is metaphorical because the size of the heart is mapped onto a person’s emotional and moral capacity. The heart is conceptualized as the center of courage and steadfastness, so “big heart” describes courage and sincerity. The overall meaning is semi-compositional in nature.

d. *Aten toos*

Table 44. Morphosemantic Analysis of the Tetun Compound *aten toos*

No	Data	Structure Morphological	Meaning Lexical	Meaning Compound	Relation Meaning	Semantic Status
44	aten toos	N + Adj	heart + hard	tough	metaphor	semi-compositional

Source: Research data processed (2026)

Compound word *aten-toos* is formed from *aten* (“heart”) and *toos* (“hard”). Lexically, it means “hard heart,” whereas in usage it refers to steadfastness or tenacity. The semantic relationship is metaphorical because the vitality of the heart is mapped onto mental and emotional strength. The heart is understood as the inner center of resilience, so “hard heart” describes steadfastness in difficult situations. The overall meaning is semi-compositional in nature.

Metaphor Based Back of the Body (kiduun)

Table 45. Morphosemantic Analysis of the Tetun Compound *kidun katar*

No	Data	Structure Morphological	Meaning Lexical	Meaning Compound	Relation Meaning	Semantic Status
45	Kidun cathar	N + Adj	buttocks + itching	girlish	metaphor	idiomatic

Source: Research data processed by the author (2026)

Compound word *kidun katar* is formed from the elements *kidun* (“butt”) and *katar* (“itch”). In general lexical construction, this literally means “itchy buttocks,” but it is used to refer to flirtatious behavior. The relationship between form and meaning is metaphorical, because the physical sensation of “itch” is mapped onto the idea of active and noticeable social or romantic behavior. The body part *kidun* (“butt”) no longer refers solely to its anatomical function but becomes a symbol of bodily movement associated with attention-seeking in a romantic context. The overall meaning cannot be understood literally; therefore, it is classified as idiomatic and demonstrates that compounding is not only structural in nature but also conceptual.

CONCLUSION

Based on morphosemantic and anthropolinguistic analysis of compound words formed from body elements in the Tetunlanguage, this research shows that meaning formation in compounding is not only structural but also conceptual and cultural. The relationship between form and meaning demonstrates the dominance of metaphor and metonymy as the main strategies in constructing meaning, so that body elements function as source domains in the conceptualization of abstract experience. In morphosemantics, body-related compound words show that meaning is formed through conceptual mapping from physical experience to psychological and social domains. The body does not only function as a biological reference but also as a semantic medium that allows speakers to understand emotions, character, and

social relationships through embodied experience. Thus, compounding in the Tetun language shows an interaction between linguistic structure and speakers' cognitive experience.

From an anthropolinguistic perspective, the use of body elements in compound words reflects the conceptualization of the body as a cultural symbolic system. The body becomes a representational framework used by Tetun speakers to evaluate behavior, express emotions, and understand individuals' social positions. This conceptualization shows that language functions as a medium that reproduces cultural values, norms, and ways of viewing social life. The findings of this study confirm that compound words containing body elements in the Tetun language represent a close relationship between language, cognition, and culture. Language does not only reflect social reality but also constructs the way people understand human experience through bodily symbolism. Thus, compounding should not only be understood as a morphological phenomenon but also as a semiotic practice that integrates physical experience, social meaning, and cultural value systems.

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