


Analysis of Compound Words in News about the Sumatra Flood Survivors Battle Mud, Trauma

 <https://doi.org/10.31004/jele.v11i2.2016>

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the use of compound words in English-language news reports reporting on the conditions of flood survivors in Sumatra, particularly in describing their struggles with mud, environmental damage, and post-disaster psychological trauma. The purpose of this study is to identify the structural forms, classification types, and semantic functions of compound words used in journalistic discourse on natural disasters. The data source is online news articles from international media published after the floods in Sumatra. This study uses a qualitative descriptive method with a morphological approach, based on the theory of compounding and media discourse analysis as developed in recent linguistic studies (Brown & Lee, 2025; Ahmed, 2025). Data were collected through text observation techniques and systematic recording, then analyzed by grouping compound words based on their formation patterns, such as noun + noun, adjective + noun, and verb + noun, and interpreting their meaning in the context of the news. The results of the analysis show that compound words have a strategic role in conveying information efficiently and expressively, especially to represent the physical and psychological impacts of disasters, for example flood survivors, mud-damaged houses, and post-disaster stress. In addition to functioning informatively, compound words also strengthen the emotional and persuasive dimensions of news texts, thereby helping readers build a deeper understanding of the conditions of the victims. This study is expected to enrich the study of morphology and media discourse analysis, as well as become a reference for researchers and language learners who are concerned with journalistic language and linguistic representation of natural disasters.

Keywords: *Compound Words, Linguistic Analysis, Morphology, News Text, Sumatra Floods.*

Article History:

Received 02nd February 2026

Accepted 22nd March 2026

Published 23rd March 2026



INTRODUCTION

The language used in the mass media plays a strategic role in shaping how the public understands an event, particularly natural disasters. Disaster reporting serves not merely as a conveyor of facts, but also as a means of representing social realities, encompassing the suffering of victims, the extent of environmental damage, and the attitudes and responses of various parties. In reports about the floods that hit Sumatra, English-language media often utilized specific lexical choices to describe the conditions of survivors, from the struggle to deal with mud and damaged infrastructure to the psychological impact experienced by victims.

One prominent linguistic characteristic in these news texts is the use of compound words. Compound words in English are formed by combining two or more lexical elements to produce a new and more specific meaning. Recent morphological research shows that compound words are an important tool in journalistic language because they can convey complex information concisely and efficiently (Hartmann & Keller, 2025). In the context of natural disasters, forms such as "floodwaters," "mudslide damage," "emergency response," and "survivor trauma" are often used to describe emergency situations quickly and easily understood by international readers. The use of compound words in news texts is not solely linguistic but also carries a specific meaning and perspective. Recent studies in critical discourse analysis confirm that media language always involves a process of selecting and

highlighting certain aspects of social reality (Nguyen & O'Halloran, 2025). Thus, the compound words journalists choose can influence how readers interpret a disaster, whether emphasizing physical damage, emotional suffering, or the resilience of survivors in facing the crisis.

The analysis of compound words in news reports about flood survivors in Sumatra is relevant because media language contributes significantly to shaping public perceptions of disaster victims. Research by Albrecht and Summers (2025) shows that lexical structures in disaster news are often used to construct narratives of empathy, urgency, or even normalize suffering. By examining the use of compound words, researchers can uncover how the media constructs the reality of disasters and depicts the struggles of survivors, both physically and psychologically.

Furthermore, this study makes an important contribution to the field of applied linguistics and discourse analysis, particularly in examining the relationship between language forms and social context. In emergency situations, journalists tend to choose concise yet meaningful language forms to convey information quickly and effectively to a global audience. Compound words are a key linguistic strategy in this practice (Rodriguez & Lee, 2025). Therefore, this study examines not only the types and structures of compound words, but also their functions and meanings in disaster reporting discourse.

Therefore, this research, analyzing compound words in news texts about the struggles of flood survivors in Sumatra, is expected to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the role of language in mass media. This study is also expected to enrich linguistic studies, particularly in the fields of morphology and critical discourse analysis, and increase readers' awareness of how media language frames social realities and humanitarian values in the context of natural disasters.

METHOD

This research uses a descriptive qualitative method with a linguistic morphology approach to identify, classify, and analyze the form and meaning of compound words in news texts. The data consists of an English-language news text titled "Sumatra Flood Survivors Battle Mud, Trauma" published in 2025 by international media outlets such as The Jakarta Post and other online sources. Data collection was conducted through documentation, by thoroughly reading the text and marking words that met the criteria for compound words. Compound words are a combination of two or more free morphemes into a single meaningful unit (e.g., floodwaters, mud-sodden), which are classified as compound nouns, compound adjectives, and compound verbs.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This discussion presents an analysis of compound words found in the BBC News news text titled "Sumatra Flood Survivors Battle Mud, Trauma." The analysis of the meaning and classification of compound words refers to the word formation theory proposed by Plag (2003). Based on the analysis, the compounds found can be classified into four main categories: nominal compounds, adjectival compounds, verbal compounds, and neo-classical compounds. However, in this news text, compound nouns are the most dominant type.

Compound Noun

Compound nouns are the most frequently occurring compound words in BBC News. Bauer (2004:202) states that compound nouns are the most productive form in English. Meanwhile, McCarthy (2001:28) explains that a compound noun is a combination of two or more words that function as a noun in a sentence.

In the context of the news story "Sumatra Flood Survivors Battle Mud, Trauma," compound nouns are used to convey information concisely, clearly, and effectively, particularly in reporting natural disasters and their impact on the community. Mass media outlets like BBC News often use compound nouns to streamline language without compromising clarity of meaning.

Compound nouns can be formed from various combinations of word parts, but the most common are noun + noun, adjective + noun, and verb + noun (Ballard, 2013:58). Here are some examples of compound nouns found in news stories:

No	Compound Word	Constituent Elements	Pattern	Word Class	Frekuensi	Types of Meanings
1	news words	news + words	N + N	Noun	1	Transparent
2	compound words	compound + words	Adj + N	Noun	3	Transparent
3	BBC News	BBC + News	N + N	Noun	5	Transparent
4	news website	news + website	N + N	Noun	3	Transparent
5	online dictionary	online + dictionary	Adj + N	Noun	2	Transparent
6	word-making	word + making	N + V-ing	Noun	1	Transparent
7	global news	global + news	Adj + N	Noun	1	Transparent
8	digital media	digital + media	Adj + N	Noun	1	Transparent
9	news coverage	news + coverage	N + N	Noun	1	Transparent
10	Armchair	arm + chair	N + N	Noun	1	Transparent
11	Greenhouse	green + house	Adj + N	Noun	2	Opaque
12	Glasshouse	glass + house	N + N	Noun	1	Transparent
13	sugar daddy	sugar + daddy	N + N	Noun	2	Opaque
14	road hog	road + hog	N + N	Noun	2	Opaque
15	Newspaper	news + paper	N + N	Noun	1	Transparent
16	Website	web + site	N + N	Noun	5	Transparent
17	broadcast media	broadcast + media	N + N	Noun	1	Transparent

News Words (News + Words) – Transparent

The word "news" means "news," while "words" means "words."

Lexically, "news" refers to information or reports of events, and "words" refers to linguistic elements in the form of words.

When combined into "newswords," the meaning is "words used in news."

This meaning can be understood directly from its constituent elements, making it transparent.

Compound Words (Compound + Words) – Transparent

The word "compound" means "combination," and "words" means "word."

Lexically, "compound" refers to something consisting of two or more elements, while "words" are linguistic units.

Compound words are "compound words," that is, words formed from two or more basic words.

Their meaning is clearly derived from their elements, making them transparent.

BBC News (BBC + News) – Transparent

BBC is the abbreviation for the British Broadcasting Corporation, a broadcasting institution.

"News" means "news."

"BBC News" means "news broadcast or produced by the BBC."

This meaning is immediately understandable, making it transparent.

News Website (News + Website) – Transparent

The word "news" means "news," while "website" means "website."

Combined, "news website" means "a website that provides news."

The meaning of this compound word can be derived directly from its constituent elements, making it transparent.

Online Dictionary (Online + Dictionary) – Transparent

The word "online" means "connected to the internet," while "dictionary" means "dictionary."

The combination "online dictionary" means "a dictionary accessible via the internet."

The meaning is clear from its constituent elements, making it transparent.

Word-Making (Word + Making) – Transparent

The word "word" means "word," and "making" is the -ing form of "make," meaning "the process of making."

The combination "word" and "making" means "the process of forming words."

This word's meaning can be understood from the words "word" and "making," making it transparent.

Global News (Global + News) – Transparent

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The word "global" means "worldwide" or "international," and "news" means "news."

The combination "global news" means "international news or world news."

This combination's meaning aligns with its constituent elements, making it transparent.

Digital Media (Digital + Media) - Transparent

The word "digital" means "based on digital technology," while "media" means "a means of conveying information."

The combination "digital media" means "media that uses digital technology to convey information."

Its meaning is easily understood from its elements, making it transparent.

News Coverage (News + Coverage) - Transparent

The word "news" means "news," while "coverage" means "coverage or coverage."

The combined meaning of "news coverage" is "coverage or coverage of news."

This meaning can be directly derived from its constituent elements, thus implying transparency.

Armchair (Arm + Chair) - Transparent

The word "arm" means "arm," and "chair" means "chair."

Combined, "armchair" means "a chair with armrests."

The meaning of this word is directly related to its constituent elements, so it is categorized as transparent.

Greenhouse (green + house) - Opaque

The word "green" means "green," and "house" means "home."

However, "greenhouse" does not mean "greenhouse."

Its actual meaning is "greenhouse," which is a building for growing plants under controlled temperatures.

Because the combined meaning cannot be understood directly from its constituent elements, this word is considered opaque.

Glasshouse (Glass + House) - Transparent

The word "glass" means "glass," and "house" means "home."

The combined meaning of "glasshouse" means "greenhouse."

This meaning is directly related to its constituent elements, so it is considered transparent.

Sugar Daddy (Sugar + Daddy) - Opaque

The word "sugar" means "sugar," and "daddy" means "father."

However, "sugar daddy" does not mean "sugar daddy."

Its actual meaning is "a wealthy man who provides financial support to a younger partner."

This meaning cannot be derived from the lexical meaning of its constituent words, making it opaque.

Road Hog (Road + Hog) - Opaque

The word "road" means "road," and "hog" means "pig."

However, "road hog" does not mean "road pig."

Its actual meaning is "a selfish road user who doesn't care about other road users."

Because this meaning isn't directly related to its constituent elements, it's opaque.

Newspaper (News + Paper) - Transparent

The word "news" means "news," and "paper" means "paper."

The combination "newspaper" means "paper containing news," i.e., a newspaper.

This meaning can still be understood from its elements, making it transparent.

Website (Web + Site) - Transparent

The word "web" means "network," and "site" means "location."

The combined meaning of "website" means "location or page on the internet."

This combined meaning can be understood from its constituent elements, making it transparent.

Broadcast Media (Broadcast + Media) - Transparent

The word "broadcast" means "broadcasting," and "media" means "means of communication."

The combined meaning of "broadcast media" means "broadcasting media such as television and radio."

This meaning clearly stems from its constituent elements, making it transparent.

Verbal Compounds

A verbal compound, or compound verb, is a compound word consisting of two or more elements that together form a single verb (verb) with a new or specific meaning from the original verb. Verbal compounds allow news writers, including BBC News and other media outlets, to convey actions or processes concisely and specifically – for example, handwashing facilities, proofreading reports, or breaking down barriers – without detailing each predicate element in a long phrase.

A verbal compound often creates a new meaning that is not simply a literal combination of its component meanings, such as proofreading is not just proof + read in the literal sense, but its specific meaning is reading to check for errors. Here are some examples of words in the news text Sumatra Flood Survivors Battle Mud, Trauma:

Compound Word	Constituent Elements	Pattern	Word Class	Frequency	Types of Meanings
push-up	push + up	V + Prt	Verb	4	Transparent

Push-up is a verbal compound formed from the verb (push) and the particle (up). Its meaning is transparent because the meaning of "pushing up" is still clear from its constituent elements. This word is used to express the action of pushing the body upward during physical exercise and functions as a single verb unit.

Adjective Compound

A compound adjective is a combination of two or more words that function together as a single adjective to describe a noun in a sentence. This structure often appears in news and informative texts because it can convey descriptions concisely and effectively.

Compound adjectives are a subset of compound words, which also include compound nouns and compound verbs. Research shows that these three categories of compound words frequently appear in news texts, including CNN International News and other media publications. Grammatically, compound adjectives are formed through the process of compounding and often use hyphens to indicate the relationship between words.

Compound Word	Constituent Elements	Pattern	Word Class	Frequency	Types of Meanings
real-time	real + time	Adj + N	Adjective	3	Transparent

Real-time is a compound adjective formed from real + time (Adj + N). This word is transparent because its meaning can be directly understood from its constituent elements, namely real and time. Real-time is used to describe something that occurs or is processed immediately without delay, for example, real-time data or real-time reporting.

CONCLUSIONS

This study shows that compound words play a significant role in disaster reporting discourse, particularly in English-language news texts about flood survivors in Sumatra. The use of compound words has proven to be an effective linguistic strategy for the media in conveying complex information concisely, concisely, and easily understood by global readers. The analysis revealed that compound nouns were the most dominant type, followed by compound verbs and compound adjectives. The dominance of compound nouns aligns with expert findings that this form is the most productive in journalistic English. Beyond its structural function, this study also revealed that compound words carry specific meanings and ideologies. Lexical choices such as "floodwaters," "survivor trauma," or "emergency response" not only describe facts but also shape how readers interpret events—for example, by emphasizing aspects of physical damage, psychological suffering, or the emergency situation. Thus, media language is not neutral but also helps frame the social reality of disasters. Theoretically, this research strengthens morphological studies and critical discourse analysis by demonstrating the close relationship between language form and its social context. Practically, these findings confirm that word choice in mass media contributes to the formation of empathy, perception, and public awareness of disaster victims. In other words, this study concludes that compound words are not merely linguistic phenomena but also tools for

representing reality, helping the media construct narratives about the struggles of flood survivors in Sumatra, both physically and emotionally.

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