

NOUN COMPOUNDS II: EXTENDED & CHAIN STRUCTURES

by Seda Sürel

INTRODUCTION

1. Function

Extended noun compounds allow Turkish to stack multiple noun units into a single structured expression.

These structures are used both in:

- everyday spoken Turkish
- descriptive narration
- media and informational texts
- professional and academic writing

The primary function is information packing:

relationships that could be explained with full sentences are instead encoded inside noun chains.

2. Forms

Extended noun compounds are created by combining compound units, not by adding suffixes randomly.

Two core principles apply:

- The head noun is on the right
- All modifiers accumulate to the left

Meaning is decoded from right to left.

3. Morphology

A) Compound Units inside Chains

Indefinite noun compounds form self-contained units and retain their internal possessive marking when used inside longer chains.

Structure:

Noun1 + Noun2 + -(s)l → compound unit

Examples:

eğitim sistemi

education system

eğitim sistemi reformu

education system reform

şehir ulaşım planı

city transportation plan

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şehir ulaşım planı değişikliği
change in the city transportation plan

The possessive suffix inside the unit does not drop.

B) Hierarchy and Nested Structure (Matruşka Logic)

Extended compounds follow a nested hierarchy.

Visual decoding guide:

Left → modifiers

Right → head noun

Example:

((eğitim sistemi) reformu)

- **Head noun:** reform
- **Core meaning:** reform
- **Modifiers:** education + system

Another example:

((şehir ulaşım) planı) değişikliği

Each new noun wraps around the previous unit.

This nested structure allows Turkish to compress complex relations.

C) Possessive Chains and the Bridge Role (Pronominal n)

In definite extended chains, the middle noun often plays a bridge role.

This bridge is not just grammatical buffering.

It connects two noun relations into a single chain.

Example:

şirketin politikasının sonuçları
the results of the company's policy

Morphological logic:

şirket-in
genitive (owner)

politika-sı
possessive

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-n-

pronominal n

a structural connector linking two noun relations

-in

genitive (bridge)

sonuç-lar-I

final head noun

Here, pronominal n functions as a morphological joint, allowing one possessive unit to attach to another.

D) Case Marking and Pronominal n

After any possessive suffix, pronominal n appears before any case marker, regardless of whether the marker begins with a vowel or consonant.

Examples:

enerji kaynağı-n-a

to the energy source

şirketin politikası-n-i

the company's policy (accusative)

planı-n-da

in the plan

This rule applies to both indefinite and definite compounds.

4. Structural Guide

Everyday Spoken Use

Extended compounds are common in daily speech:

telefon şarj kablosu

phone charging cable

mutfak dolap kapağı

kitchen cabinet door

hafta sonu planı

weekend plan

çocuk oyun alanı

children's play area

These structures feel natural and efficient in conversation.

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Adjective Scope and Ambiguity

Adjectives may modify different layers of the chain.

Example:

eski belediye binası

Two readings:

[eski belediye] binası

the building of the former municipality

eski [belediye binası]

the old municipal building

Ambiguity arises from adjective scope, not word order mistakes.

5. Usage

Extended noun compounds are used to:

- describe objects and systems efficiently
- express relationships without full clauses
- sound fluent and natural in speech
- manage dense information in formal contexts

They are a structural choice, not advanced vocabulary.

Examples

A) Everyday Context

araba anahtarı kutusu
car key box

kahve makinesi filtresi
coffee machine filter

B) Media / Informational Context

hava durumu tahmin raporu
weather forecast report

şehir altyapı çalışmaları planı
city infrastructure works plan

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C) Professional / Academic Context

eğitim sistemi reformu taslağı
draft of the education system reform

veri analiz yöntemi geliştirilmesi
development of a data analysis method

strateji planlanması süreci
strategy planning process

analiz yapılması gerekliliği
the necessity of conducting an analysis

Notes

- Extended noun compounds are used in both spoken and written Turkish.
- Longer chains increase cognitive load but remain grammatical.
- Very long chains are often broken using postpositions (hakkında, dair, yönelik).
- Indefinite compounds behave as single lexical units inside chains.
- Meaning is always determined by identifying the final head noun.
- Adjective scope determines interpretation and may create ambiguity.
- Foreign origin nouns such as hukuk, evrak, anket typically do not undergo consonant softening (hukuk sistemi, evrak akışı).
- Pronominal *n* is not only a buffer but a structural connector linking possessive relations.