

Is he hot-blooded or hot inside? Expression of emotion and character in Tetun Dili

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1. Introduction

- Tetun Dili is a creole-like lingua franca spoken in East Timor, only recently acquiring native speakers.
- Tetun and Portuguese are the official languages of East Timor.
- Austronesian, based on Tetun Terik, with much deep-seated Portuguese influence, and some Indonesian.
- Formerly an oral language with ‘low’ functions. Used in the Catholic liturgy since 1982. Since 1999 used in public life and in writing.

2. Emotions and character

Most emotion and character terms are collocations of a body-part noun and a verb/adjective/noun; e.g. *laran moos* (inside clean) ‘inside clean’. This is typical of the Austronesian languages of central/eastern Indonesia and East Timor (Klamer 2001, 2002).

Other options are single words of Tetun origin (e.g. *tauk* ‘afraid’) or of Portuguese origin (e.g. *kontenti* ‘happy’).

Tetun Dili emotion terms don’t match English well at all. This is a challenge for language learning, translation, and bilingual dictionary writing.

3. Aspects of emotions

Beatty (2005) distinguishes (amongst other things): the initial situation that triggers an emotion, the feeling state, how it is expressed, and the consequences of the emotion.

Triggers: Some emotion terms are associated with particular triggers or situations. As many authors have pointed out, what triggers shame in Australian Anglo culture is not the same as what triggers shame in Japanese culture.

- *matan been moruk* (eye juice bitter) ‘cry with “bitter” tears’. This is a response to someone inflicting physical or emotional suffering on you. The consequence is that the person who caused it is cursed.

Physical expressions: Many feelings are associated with particular bodily expressions. Often Timorese refer to the expression rather than the underlying feeling. Often face or eye. *oin mean* (face red) ‘flushed, blush’

- *oin boot* (face big) ‘scowl’
- *matan fuan naklosu* (eye ball pop.out) ‘eyes “pop out of your head” (in staring at something/someone that one desires)’

- *fuan tuku-tuku* (heart beat-beat) ‘heart beats wildly’

Consequences: Some feelings are associated with specific consequences. *laran todan* ‘inside heavy’

- ‘trepidation’ (usually unease about going somewhere): If you go despite being *laran todan*, it is believed something bad is indeed likely to happen to you
- ‘grudging’. If you give something to someone with *laran todan*, the gift is likely to quickly malfunction.
- ‘depressed’: Three Tetun-English dictionaries list this meaning, but nobody I have asked recognises it or accepts it.

4. Variation

There is a lot of variation, as is typical in creole-like languages. This includes much inter-speaker variation in which expressions are accepted, and how they are primarily interpreted. Some expressions are also specific to certain registers, such as church, or youth slang.

Some expressions have various interpretations, some of which would seem to allow for dangerous misunderstanding. This makes it risky to use many of these expressions in written work. Yet often people will claim an expression is new to them, or that they have never heard it with that meaning before, yet will still be able to interpret it with the help of context.

- *liman naruk* ‘arm long’
 1. light-fingered thief [
 2. Last year a politician urged that the new Prime Minister Ramos Horta be *liman naruk, para hakoak ema hotu* (arm long to embrace people all) ‘accepting of all’.
 3. able to attack from afar (cf. *liman badak* ‘arm short)
- *iis kotu* ‘breath severed’
 1. die
 2. out of breath.

5. Mixed metaphors

Tetun Dili has two very different cultural inputs – Austronesian (Tetun Terik and some Indonesian) and European (Portuguese). These involve some very different underlying metaphors for emotion.

The locus of emotion and character

laran ‘inside’ is the primary locus for emotion and character in Tetun Dili, just as it is in Tetun Terik:

- *laran moras* (inside sick) 1. ‘sad’; 2. ‘jealous’
- *laran kontenti* (inside happy) ‘happy’
- *laran aat* (inside bad) 1. ‘nasty, evil’; 2. ‘prone to motion sickness’ (physical *laran*)
- *laran kanek* (inside wounded) ‘hurt’ (e.g. by evil which others have done to you)
- *laran metin* (inside firm) ‘confident, trust’
- *laran monu ba* (inside fall to) ‘fall in love with’
- *laran ru-rua* (inside two-two) ‘in two minds, unsure’

fuan ‘heart’: Especially in liturgical and heavily Portuguese-influenced Tetun, the locus of emotion and character is often *fuan* ‘heart’. This must be a calque on Portuguese *coração*, as *fuan* ‘heart’ is not used metaphorically like this in Tetun Terik.

- *fuan toos* ‘stubborn, refuse to give in’ – cf. *ulun toos* ‘stubborn, slow learner, rebellious’
- *fuan moras* ‘sad, distressed’ = *laran moras*

Some speakers use *fuan* in this way, then reiterate with a more native Tetun expression.

- (1) ... *toka ho fuan maus no haraik-an, ... laran maus ho haraik-an*
 ... play.music with heart tame and lower-self ... inside tame and lower-self
 A Protestant preacher: ... (you should) play music with a gentle and humble heart, ...
 with a gentle and humble inside. [neither are standard expressions]

- (2) ... *ita buka atu rai pontu haat nee iha ita ida- nia fuan, ita ida- nia hanoin*
idak idak
 ... 1PI seek IRR place point four this LOC 1PI each POS heart 1PI each POS think
 A Catholic priest: ... we (must) seek to keep these four points (of my sermon) in each of
 our hearts, in each of our thinking,

atu nune'e ita bele moris iha pas nia laran, moris iha hakmatek nia laran
 IRR like.this 1PI can live LOC peace POS inside live LOC calm POS inside
 so that we can live in peace, live in calmness,

- (3) ... *buka halo malirin ulun ... liu-liu halo malirin fuan.*
 ... seek make cool head ... more-more make cool heart.
 President Xanana: (We must seek to) cool our heads... (and) especially cool our hearts.

Funu hotu-hotu ita bele halo iha meza leten.

war all-all 1PI can do LOC table top

We can do all our warring on the table. (i.e. cool down and calmly resolve our problems
 by dialogue around the table, not by fighting).

aten ‘liver’ is the locus for courage:

- *aten barani* (liver brave) ‘brave, courageous’

raan ‘blood’ is a locus for temper and anger:

- *raan manas* (blood hot) ‘bad-tempered, hot-tempered’ - cf. *laran manas* ‘furious’
- *raan nakali* (blood boil) ‘furious to the point of violence’ = *laran nakali* ‘furious’

kakutak ‘brain’ is a locus for mindset and for intelligence:

Mindset:

- *kakutak aat* (brain bad) – prone to violence
- *kakutak foer* (brain dirty) – habitually have bad intentions
- *kakutak malirin* (brain cool) ‘calm (e.g. resolve problems calmly; rested after a break from study)’ = *ulun malirin* (head cool) ‘calm’

Intelligence/stupidity:

- *kakutak la iha* (brain not have) ‘stupid, brainless, senseless’ = *ulun la iha* ‘head not have’
- *kakutak iha* (brain have) ‘wise’
- *kakutak joga* (brain play) ‘smart’
- *kakutak perigu* (brain danger) ‘smart’

Temporary mental exhaustion:

- *kakutak manas* (brain hot) ‘mentally exhausted’ – cf. *ulun manas* (head hot) ‘have a fever’

ulun ‘head’ or *ulun fatuk* ‘head’ is the locus for ability/willingness to learn and cooperate and behave right, and of stress.

- *ulun (fatuk) toos* (head stone hard) ‘stupid, stubborn, rebellious, slow learner’
- *ulun (fatuk) mamar* (head stone soft) ‘cooperative, compliant, fast learner’
- *ulun moruk* (head bitter) ‘stubborn, headstrong’
- *ulun la iha* (head not have) ‘senseless’ = *kakutak la iha* (brain not have)
- *ulun bulak* (head crazy) ‘acts crazy, plays up’
- *ulun fatuk moras* (head stone sick) 1. ‘have a headache’; 2. ‘be sick and tired of something, feel stressed’

hirus ‘angry’ comes from the Tetun Terik noun *hirus* ‘chest’. In Tetun Dili, ‘chest’ is *hirus matan* ‘anger source’.

The meaning of heat and cold

In Tetun, *manas* ‘hot, warm’ is dangerous, *malirin* ‘cold, cool’ is good.

<i>manas</i>	<i>malirin</i>
hot, warm	cold, cool
angry, in a rage	clear-thinking, cool-tempered
dangerous	
evil	
violent	
poisonous	
strongly alcoholic	

In Portuguese (as in English), ‘hot, warm’ can be positive (e.g. accepts other people, treats them well), while ‘cold, cool’ can be negative (e.g. indifferent to the suffering of others). Some use this in Tetun too:

- *laran manas* ‘inside hot’
 1. Tetun metaphor: furious (native Tetun); *laran nakali* ‘inside boil’ = ‘really furious’
 2. Physical temperature: feel hot on your inside
 3. Portuguese metaphor: enthusiastic (Portuguese/Biblical influence).
- *laran malirin* ‘inside cold’
 1. Tetun metaphor: no longer angry
 2. Physical temperature: feel cold on the inside

3. Portuguese metaphor: One old Portuguese-speaking man explained it negatively as ‘doesn't go to church, doesn't forgive, doesn't work’. My students rejected this meaning, but one said, “He probably used to be a church catechist!”

6. Conclusion

To adequately use and describe emotion terms in Tetun, we often need to know:

- What is the typical trigger or situation?
- What is the typical bodily expression?
- Are there specific consequences?
- If there are multiple meanings, which is the main one?
- For each meaning: Is this standard, or used by only some sectors of society, or in certain registers?

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