

# Journal of Social, Culture, and Language

Vol 4 No 1 pp 27- 45

## Figurative Language in Pananaroon: A Linguistic and Cultural Analysis of Meranaw Proverbs

**Isnihaya M. Ampuan**

*Mindanao State University-Main Campus, Philippines*

[ampuan.im518@s.msumain.edu.ph](mailto:ampuan.im518@s.msumain.edu.ph)

**Adiah A. Ali**

*Mindanao State University-Main Campus, Philippines*

[ali.at712@s.msumain.edu.ph](mailto:ali.at712@s.msumain.edu.ph)

**Norhamidah H. Singer**

*Mindanao State University-Main Campus, Philippines*

[singer.sh305@s.msumain.edu.ph](mailto:singer.sh305@s.msumain.edu.ph)

**Alican M. Pandapatan\***

*Mindanao State University-Main Campus, Philippines*

[alican.pandapatan@msumain.edu.ph](mailto:alican.pandapatan@msumain.edu.ph)

**Johara D. Alangca-Azis**

*Mindanao State University-Main Campus, Philippines*

[johara.alangca-azis@msumain.edu.ph](mailto:johara.alangca-azis@msumain.edu.ph)

*Received 7 July 2025; 6 August Revised 2025; 18 September Accepted 2025*

*\*Corresponding Author: [alican.pandapatan@msumain.edu.ph](mailto:alican.pandapatan@msumain.edu.ph)*

### Abstract

The study delves into the figurative language of Pananaroon (Meranaw Proverbs) examines their linguistic structures as well as cultural significance. This grounded in a deep-rooted oral tradition which uses a qualitative naturalistic approach. The data gathered from key informants across three towns in Lanao del Sur, Bakolod-Kalawi, Maguing, and Masiu. One-on-one discussions and focus group discussions are conducted. The results indicate that the literal and the connotative meanings reveal essential values such as humility, wisdom, honor, and emotional strength. Semantically and semiotically, the analyses reveal that Pananaroon are rich with metaphors, personification, symbolism, hyperbole, irony, and imagery. Each Pananaroon reflects deeply held Meranaw values such as wisdom, humility, honor, emotional strength, and community harmony. The findings show that Pananaroon not only serve as poetic expressions but also transmit moral teachings across contexts such as courtship, patriotism, leadership, and pride. These cultural contexts act as vessels of knowledge, sustaining Meranaw identity and philosophy in the face of challenges. The study underscores the essence of preserving oral traditions and recommends to integrate them into cultural and educational programs to strengthen linguistic appreciation and cultural heritage among younger generations.

**Keywords:** Figurative language, Pananaroon, Meranaw proverb, Linguistic analysis, Cultural analysis

## Abstrak

*Penelitian ini menjurusi bahasa kiasan Pananaroon (Peribahasa Meranaw) dan meneliti struktur linguistik serta signifikansi budayanya. Hal ini didasarkan pada tradisi lisan yang menggunakan pendekatan naturalistik kualitatif. Data dikumpulkan dari informan kunci dari tiga kotamadya di Lanao del Sur, Bakolod-Kalawi, Maguing, dan Masiu. Diskusi satu lawan satu dan diskusi kelompok terfokus dilakukan. Hasilnya menunjukkan bahwa makna literal dan konotatif mengungkapkan nilai-nilai penting seperti kerendahan hati, kebijaksanaan, kehormatan, dan kekuatan emosional. Secara semantik dan semiotik, analisis mengungkapkan bahwa peribahasa kaya dengan metafora, personifikasi, simbolisme, hiperbola, ironi, dan citraan. Setiap peribahasa mencerminkan nilai-nilai Meranaw yang dipegang teguh seperti kebijaksanaan, kerendahan hati, kehormatan, kekuatan emosional, dan keharmonisan masyarakat. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pananaroon tidak hanya berfungsi sebagai ekspresi puitis, tetapi juga menyampaikan ajaran moral dalam berbagai konteks seperti pacaran, patriotisme, kepemimpinan, dan kebanggaan. Konteks budaya ini berperan sebagai wadah pengetahuan, yang menopang identitas dan filosofi Meranaw dalam menghadapi berbagai tantangan. Penelitian ini memberi kepentingan pelestarian tradisi lisan dan merekomendasikan untuk mengintegrasikannya ke dalam program budaya dan pendidikan guna memperkuat apresiasi bahasa dan warisan budaya di kalangan generasi muda.*

**Kata kunci:** bahasa kiasan, pananaroon, peribahasa meranaw, analisis linguistik, analisis budaya

## INTRODUCTION

Figurative language has a crucial and persuasive function in the richness of literary and oral tradition. It is not just for ornamentation; instead, it is a forceful linguistic device for conveying complex feelings, abstract concepts, and cultural information. Writers and speakers employ it to convey in manners that appeal to the imagination and provoke profound emotional reactions. Figurative language, as defined by Arp and Johnson (2020), refers to words that cannot or ought not to be read literally. Figurative language diverges from the literal meanings of words in order to attain special effects or to express meaning in a more powerful manner. Figurative language, through symbolism, simile, personification, metaphor, and other rhetorical devices, enables people to communicate meanings that cannot be easily described directly (Perrine & Arp, 2002, as referred to in Arp & Johnson, 2020). It is this conveyance capability which makes figurative language a basic component not merely of literature, but also in ordinary communication, folk tales, and oral lore.

As opposed to depending exclusively on literal terms, figurative language allows writers and speakers to make ideas more alive, expressing subtle shades of meaning and feeling that literal words cannot convey. It makes communication more powerful by injecting it with rhetorical and aesthetic potential. In most instances, figurative phrases are more persuasive than literal words, especially in expressing abstract or moral ideas (Yule, 1996). This is particularly so in folk oral genres, including proverbs, where the wisdom is condensed into brief, effectual expressions. These proverbs, being laden with figurative senses, play a pivotal role in conveying social values, norms, and group knowledge across generations (Nursyanti et al., 2020). Proverbs not only serve as stylistic resources but also as didactic tools for moral education and cultural dissemination, determining the ways in which groups think, act, and decide.

# Journal of Social, Culture, and Language

Vol 4 No 1 pp 27- 45

Proverbs are vivid sources of indigenous knowledge and Meranaw identity, beyond being mere linguistic ruins. Here, figurative language, or pananaroon, about the people's experiences, values, and ethics, makes the most impact. Pananaroon surveys the layered meanings through figurative language which have moral philosophy, practical wisdom, and worldview embedded in them. Griffiths (2006) argues in Nursyanti et al. (2020) that figurative language consists of nonliteral words whose meanings are influenced by mutual understanding, culture, and context. Pananaroon captures how language and culture intersect with real-world metaphors and analogies through values emphasizing social harmony, perseverance, caution, and respect. One meets clearly the attitudes of the Meranaw, whether concerning authority, kinship, courage, honor, or even conflict resolution. In all these aspects, special linguistic forms peculiar to their culture records these proverbs.

Interpretations of Pananaroon's figurative language owe their origins to linguistic and cultural factors. From a linguistic point of view, the proverbs differ from everyday speech in that they have a specific pattern of meaning and applicability different from the ordinary. Culturally, they offer us a glimpse of the values, beliefs, and traditions that constitute Meranaw existence. As Arp and Johnson (2020) describe, sensory imagery and language—both modes of figurative language—enable people to recreate experience and feeling through verbal art. Grasping the figurative meaning in these proverbs thus entails a discussion of the ways that language conveys common cultural meaning and calls up common memory. This twofold analysis of form and function serves to shed light on the more profound function of language in reinforcing cultural identity. In addition, figurative language may be used as a resistance or preservation mechanism in colonized or marginalized communities to preserve oral traditions and pass on indigenous knowledge from one generation to the next (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980).

Despite its importance, there has been lack of academic focus on the study of figurative language in indigenous oral literature, particularly in the Philippine context. The Meranaw community, being one of the significant ethnolinguistic groups of Mindanao, have an entrenched oral culture informed by history and Islamic religion. Most of such rich culture has, however, remained untapped in any academic inquiry, much less in print or publications. Analyzing Pananaroon figurative language thereby responds to a dire void within Philippine linguistics as well as culture studies. It also gives a model of how metaphorical thinking and symbolic expression work within the specific socio-cultural context of the Meranaw community. Analyzing these proverbs through a pragma-linguistic and ethnolinguistic approach, researchers can find out how figurative language not only conveys individual wisdom but also mirrors collective consciousness.

This research thus seeks to examine the use of figurative language in Pananaroon, the indigenous proverbs of the Meranaw, both linguistically and culturally. More specifically, it seeks to answer the following questions: (1) What are the connotative and denotative meanings of the pananaroon; (2) What are the types of figurative language used in the pananaroon; (3) How do the pananaroon reflect cultural values of Meranaw? By answering these research questions, the research supports the areas of ethnolinguistics, cultural heritage, and literary studies and highlights the value of indigenous oral traditions as sound sources of knowledge and heritage. As Yastanti et al. (2018) underlines, understanding figurative language involves not just linguistic expertise but also awareness and sensitivity regarding culture. Through this study, the figurative language abundance and cultural significance of Meranaw proverbs will be appreciated, demonstrating how language remains as a living repository of indigenous knowledge and identity.

## METHOD

This research employed qualitative research design specifically employing a qualitative

naturalistic or interpretive approach. This was utilized because this study focuses on understanding the meaning and cultural context of meranaw. Pananaroon are inherently qualitative in nature. The location of this study was in Lanao del sur, specifically Bacolod-Kalawi, Maguing, and Masiu. These places are known to be the richest places of pananaroon. Purposive sampling was used to select the informants for this study. Researchers are able to outsource names from the community who are the experts and reknowned rhetors of the Meranaw proverbs. Eight key informants were interviewed for the collection of the proverbs based on the set criteria to ensure the authenticity and determine the authority of the informants. The criteria for choosing the informants are a. Knowledgeable Meranaw who are familiar with the proverbs and its meaning, b. They are respected people in their community who serve as leaders or advisers, c. They are native speakers, and, d. They are living in the mentioned municipalities for long time. To cross-check the data from the informants, experts from the academe and the researchers themselves as native speakers have evaluated thoroughly the data. Moreover, these proverbs are commonly schema among community members. The data were analyzed through Semiotic and Semantic Analysis Approach. The denotative and connotative meanings of pananaroon were analyzed through semantic analysis. The types of figurative speech found in the pananaroon were analyzed through the semiotic analysis by Roland Barthes (1957).

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

### The Denotative and Connotative Meanings of Pananaroon

The Meranaw *pananaroon* (proverbs) are more than poetic expressions; they are vessels of cultural wisdom that articulate values central to Meranaw identity. The following table presents selected *pananaroon* along with their denotative and connotative meanings.

**Table 1.** Meranaw Proverbs Meanings

Data	Pananaroon(Proverbs)	Denotative Meaning	Connotative Meaning
1.	<i>"So palaw ko marandang na a di mang akowala ka da kon a rimbang iyan na k'na oto a bnar o ba da a rimbang iyan ka aya rinugun ko ron na godun pl'ngil'ngin na miya inungka iyan so buklod sa tingagun a palaw sa tingaraan"</i>	The strong mountain that is concealed inner arrogance because it is incomparable but the truth is (the persona) believe that albeit inquire the observed solid mountain seen from above.	It is about arrogance and delusion, reinforcing humility as a virtue.

# Journal of Social, Culture, and Language

Vol 4 No 1 pp 27- 45

2.	<i>“Madakul a phipikir ko parandaraka adilan na maidan pamikirun e makaakop baratun a makaraw progongan”</i>	Many were thinking that the offering is thought to be greedy to take and accept challenges.	It paints the woman as a symbol of nobility and virtue.
3.	<i>“Maarno bilang sa kaban sa kaolonan na di makaphangondaya ka maarun so panikan ko towak a limpa ala”</i>	Hindered to belong in the box in the headrest but do not have the choice because it was hindered by the stairs.	Speaks to the burdens placed on men to provide materially in courtship and marriage.
4.	<i>“Phamola kon sa gambor na kagya pakathadun na kalokop a domithong a da matatagoon”</i>	Planting huge but when it results, it appears an empty container.	Boastfulness and unfulfilled promises, especially in the context of marriage, a significant social institution in Meranaw culture.
5.	<i>“Kanogon den o ranon a miyabarangka rupa”</i>	The wasted longings because of the ruined face.	Failed love or broken relationships leave emotional scars that render the past feelings insignificant or worthless.
6.	<i>“Minsan oray bolawan e oran a di ta ingud mapagiroy taden man e tarintik sa ngganatan”</i>	Even if its beauty rains with gold, but not in our home place then still recalling of the drizzle of leaving.	Reflects a sense of belonging and identity rooted in place,
7.	<i>“Apya pn mbabarit sansarae mangkoron tomoongko so lawig a lumilintad ako ron”</i>	Even if it bent struggling, I would rather want the Nipa hut with harmony.	True contentment and well-being cannot be bought with wealth if peace is absent.
8.	<i>“Madabo so ganita na sumambi so gagaw”</i>	The anger will eventually fade and concern will take place.	Suggests that anger is fleeting, and with time, people often return to understanding and empathy
9.	<i>“So sanggibo a ranun na piyatay o taduman sa myaka isa isa”</i>	A thousand of longings is killed by a memory of one.	Reflects the fragility of trust and the cultural weight placed on moral behavior.
10.	<i>“Kanogon o lininding a khadayon a khabolos khadaan sa taritib so miyapasad a ingud na lininding a di ka mooba</i>	Useless defense that continues on to lose the recognized order the established homeland and defense with no one to blame for giving much burden of the lineage because you know that the part of	Suggests that emotional restraint and humility are essential

# Journal of Social, Culture, and Language

Vol 4 No 1 pp 27- 45

	<i>sa piyakarondan ka ko iriging ka o bansa ka ati katawan ka man a sarompong na aya man tatanggongen ko miyapasad a ingud ogayd na o lalag ka so lalag ka o makapmbaya ako na aya kapiya niyan na impitun so pithaong na kowaanon so daway ka an makowa so sinta a piyalanndonga a mala”</i>	established hometown. However, with your firm opinion, if given the opportunity to choose, the right one is restrained and remove the blame to achieve deep thought.	for communal well-being.
11.	<i>“Badun matao thatanding sa katanog sa tintikan na di matao thandayaw sa kareg sa pandaopan”</i>	One knows only to manage the loud sound but does not know how to praise the unreal position.	Speaks to the gap between ambition and capability, cautioning against individuals who, despite their claims, are unable to fulfill the responsibilities of leadership.
12.	<i>“Sapolo si pimbago na tomo si phithagama”</i>	Despite ten innovations, accustomed is preferable.	Wisdom gained from experience outweighs the novelty of unproven leadership.
13.	<i>“So sagipak a nara na maregen  katimbangan o sabekes a rasaas”</i>	The fragments of Nara Tree are difficult to weight by the whole low quality of wood.	That one dependable and capable individual holds more worth than a group of unreliable ones.
14.	<i>“Dikaden makaphantao ko pangkatan a mipuro o di ngka kapanagadi”</i>	You cannot be positioned in high level if you miss experience.	The inevitable link between success and hardship, reinforcing the idea that challenges are not only necessary but also essential for growth.
15.	<i>“Da makaabolog ko rindan bolog ko piyakada kayamat o kandodi na bangkit o mbalingani”</i>	No broken trust is lost but the broken it is end of the word if looking back.	Suggests that once someone is emotionally abandoned due to heartbreak, betrayal, or despair, reconciliation is no longer an option—indicating both pain and finality.
16.	<i>“Inokon sa ranonun a data sa pikir yan”</i>	Why should I feel longing when I am not in his mind.	Revolves around themes of self-worth, emotional awareness, and discernment in relationships.

# Journal of Social, Culture, and Language

Vol 4 No 1 pp 27- 45

17.	<i>“Ba diden taw si mandar ka ba sabapan sa isa so taw a Diyako ron na inokon sa di kami”</i>	Does my existence depend on others who don’t accept me, the we won’t get along.	Emphasizes dignity and mutual affection: it conveys that a person should not lower themselves or sacrifice self-worth for someone who does not value them.
18.	<i>“So taw a Diyako ron manaya na inoko sa diranun”</i>	The person who disrespects me then we are not good.	Centers on reciprocity in relationships, particularly in emotional and social contexts, emphasizing dignity and self-respect—key values in culture.
19.	<i>“Somirong ta ko tamok thitha di ta oranan matag ta ko bansa phanarisidun tawn, thomo den so ilmo e liyan a lindongan a kota a panarigan”</i>	Seeking shelter on wealth with the thought of avoiding the slash rain of lineage, better to be protected through knowledge as fortress.	Suggests that true power lies not in birthright or possessions, but in intellectual and moral grounding.
20.	<i>“Baden kasasanai dalidigan so kota na di bo kaphanarigan ka ingaran ta so senang na da ta ko rangka iyan”</i>	Just merely considered the stronghold fortress but not reliable for it assumed brightness but not in its frame/structure.	Speaks to the fragility of trust and the disappointment that comes when someone who is supposed to be reliable turns out to be indifferent or selfish.

## Courtships

The Meranaw proverb, *“So palaw ko marandang na a di mangakowala ka da kon a rimbang iyan na kena oto a benar o ba da a rimbang iyan ka aya rinegen ko ron na goden pelengilengen na miya inengka iyan so buklod sa tingagen a palaw sa tingaraan,”* literally refers to a strong and majestic mountain that appears unmatched and unmovable, concealing its inner arrogance. However, this belief is that wise men can mimic fools and make fools seem wise; that mountain, although deemed masterful, can be overcome if seen closer by looking at it from a distance. It is an impressive figure when denoted; it has self-confidence and independence, but it does not get to survive without criticism. In addition, it warns people not to be fooled by appearances of strength or pride, which in itself comments about conceit and self-delusion. This proverb teaches the cultural value of humility, encouraging people not to think too highly of themselves above others.

Bantog and Sarip Macarambon (2021) reiterate this point in their study "So Manga Pananaroon Sa Ranaw: Reflections of Meranaw Culture and Worldview", wherein they discuss how pananaroon reflect not only the Meranaw virtues of patience, humility, nobility, and harmony but also in the context of romantic and interpersonal relationships, where it serves as not only rhetorical devices but judgments or standards to ascertain the moral acceptability of that romantic or interpersonal relationship.

## Patriotism

# Journal of Social, Culture, and Language

Vol 4 No 1 pp 27- 45

"Minsan oray bolawan e oran a di ta ingud mapagiroy taden man e tarintik sa ngganatan," literally meaning "even if a place is showered with gold and beauty, if it is not one's homeland, the memory of the soft rain or gentle experiences from home still lingers in the heart," is a Meranaw proverb. The proverb denotatively contrasts basic, but comforting comforts one's own community with a foreign place of merry wealth and splendor. Strongly conveys a sense of identity, belonging, and emotional ties to one's mother country.

Notwithstanding these, the Meranaw culture communicates that the attachment of a person to one's roots, family, and homeland is *uwak* than any wealth one could amass or distance towards worldly fulfilment. This is corroborated in the study titled "Families on the Streets: Placemaking in an Urban Heritage Site in Cebu City, the Philippines" authored by Bonifacio M. Amper (2023).

Along these lines, street ethnography has been employed in the study to investigate how street families in Cebu City's historic area cope with challenges that serve as barriers to enjoying a home and livelihood in public spaces because of poverty and relocation. It is established through the action of families in these intervened urban spaces that identity and existential connection can be made by and for oneself: home is not only the physical buildings, but also cultural and emotional attachments to a place. Amper's work affirms the Meranaw proverb's call for the specialbred value of one's nation by showing how individual and collective can create and preserve a sense of home and identity even in temporary or marginalized states.

## *Values*

The Meranaw proverbial saying literally states, "Apya pen mbabarit sansarae mangkoron tomoongko so lawig a lumilintad ako ron", indicating preference for a bent and weary hut of Nipa over a more reliable but discordant dwelling. Denotatively, it means a simple house which is comfortable, even though perhaps rather imperfect. The symbolic meaning of the proverb further focuses on the cultural belief that harmony and peace overshadow wealth or luxury-things of material worth. It encompasses the Meranaw belief that true happiness in life can only come from balance, emotionally and socially, no matter how outwardly deficient one may be.

Indeed, the phrase, "Madabo so ganita na sumambi so gagaw," means that we are likely to get angry with anxious or concerned things. While in this light, it does mean that anger can easily convert into different emotions over time. Perhaps, even anger can yield to understanding and empathy as well as that of peace-seeking. Therein, it mainly reaffirms the need for forgiveness and pity in social settings, thus fostering emotional maturity and strength.

The idea conveyed by the saying *So sanggibo a ranun na piyatay o tademan sa myaka isa isa*, is that the mind can extinguish a thousand desires. This sort of puts the picture of one traumatic or powerful event negating a thousand hopes. It signifies the fragility of trust and underscores the Meranaw values of moral discipline and emotional restraint. Implicitly, it carries forward the cultural ethos regarding loyalty and moral behavior, suggesting that one act of betrayal or disappointment can shatter years of love.

The statements mentioned above corroborate the recent study of Shamsi and Asad (2023), entitled "Emotional Maturity, Forgiveness, and Marital Satisfaction among Dual Earner Couples", which shows the beneficial relationship between emotional maturity, forgiveness, and marital fulfillment.

Proverbs on emotional growth and the strength of relationships go together because mature people tend to forgive, creating healthy emotional relationships. The research also shows that emotional maturity enhances marital adjustment because it allows individuals to accept their spouses' growth and development, which conforms with the sayings of building



# Journal of Social, Culture, and Language

Vol 4 No 1 pp 27- 45

strong, long-lasting relationships through empathy and understanding. This study harnesses these cultural values represented in the Meranaw proverbs to observe the dynamics of the relationships in today.

## **Leadership**

The Meranaw proverb "*Kanogon o lininding a khadayon a khabolos khadaan sa taritib so miyapasad a ingud...*" literally describes a situation where a persistent but ineffective defense causes disorder within an established homeland, burdening the lineage with unresolved blame. It suggests that although one may hold strong opinions, making the right decision often requires restraint and thoughtfulness. Denotatively, it highlights a defense or leadership that fails to maintain order. Connotatively, the proverb emphasizes that emotional control, humility, and wise decision-making are crucial in leadership, especially when collective welfare is at stake. The message reflects Meranaw expectations for leaders to uphold stability, integrity, and accountability. It supports at current leadership theory, which is associated to emotional intelligence and transformational leadership when humility and emotional restraint are essential elements for cohesiveness in teams and resolution of conflict (Goleman, 1995).

The proverb "*Baden matao thetanding sa katanog sa tintikan na di matao thendayaw sa kareg sa pandaopan*" literally refers to someone who can handle loud noises but cannot appreciate subtle or hidden meanings. Denotatively, it contrasts surface-level control with a lack of deeper understanding. Connotatively, it warns against leaders who are loud and ambitious but lack the capacity for meaningful leadership, pointing to the gap between appearance and substance. It underscores the importance of genuine competence over showmanship, cautioning against those who seek power but cannot carry its responsibilities. Northouse (2021) further claims that good leaders have skills and an ethical disposition beyond the authority they wield.

Further, in "*Sapolo si pimbago na tomo si phitagama,*" the proverb means that even ten new ideas are less preferable than something familiar. Denotatively, it expresses a preference for what is known over what is untested. Connotatively, it values experience and tradition, asserting that wisdom gained through proven leadership is more trustworthy than innovation without grounding. This reflects the Meranaw belief in practical knowledge and time-tested guidance as the basis for effective leadership.

Lastly, "*So sagipak a nara na maregen katimbangan o sabekes a rasaas*" compares the weight of solid Nara wood fragments to a whole bundle of light and inferior wood. Denotatively, it portrays a single strong piece as more substantial than many weak ones. Connotatively, it affirms that one reliable and capable individual is more valuable than a group of unreliable or ineffective people. This proverb champions quality, dependability, and strength of character as essential traits of a true leader.

## **Achievement**

The literal translation of the Meranaw proverb, "*Di kaden makaphantao ko pangkatan a mipuro o di ngka kapanagadi,*" connotes "One doesn't get to a high position without going through the ranks". The denotative idea being communicated is that there must have been some trials or efforts prior to elevation in status or accomplishment. Connotatively, this proverb serves as a very basic reminder of another strong relationship: that between success and suffering. True elevation is acquired by hard work, suffering, and lessons learned. Central to the Meranaw code of existence is the idea that perseverance, fortitude, and life experience constitute a proper pathway for both personal and community development. The entire journey-dignity is found not only in the end goal-was rather honored; thus, it rather denigrated instant

# Journal of Social, Culture, and Language

Vol 4 No 1 pp 27- 45

victory. In 2016, Angela Duckworth, in her publication on the topic, defined grit as passion and perseverance for long-term goals. "Success" is said to depend more upon sustained endurance than upon native endowment.

As a result, the proverb's connotative meaning maintains that overcoming obstacles is a necessary component of the success. Its other synonymous meaning conveys that success is synonymous with hardship, thus correlating well with the tenets of growth mindset theory, which states that "notwithstanding all challenges and failures in life, such are quite relevant in an individual's learning and personal development". Meranaw traditional wisdom, as well as modern psychological studies, describe a road to success that is not easy, but one that requires persistence, failures, and, finally, accomplishments. This determined knowledge establishes that the cultural principles concealed in ancient Meranaw proverbs are pertinent to the structures by which society judges' success and achievement today.

## ***Pride and Dignity (Maratabat)***

The Meranaw proverb "*Da makaabolog ko rindan bolog ko piyakada kayamat o kandodi na bangkit o mbalingani*" literally expresses that broken trust cannot be restored, and once shattered, it marks the end—even when looking back. Denotatively, it speaks of the irreparability of trust once it is broken. Connotatively, the proverb reflects emotional finality in the face of betrayal, heartbreak, or deep disappointment, suggesting that once someone is emotionally abandoned, reconciliation becomes impossible. This illustrates the Meranaw cultural value of maratabat, where honor and emotional dignity are held with the utmost importance.

In the phrase that say, "*Inokon sa ranonen a data sa pikir yan,*" the speaker is asking why they should feel longing or yearning for someone who does not think of them. A term denoting one-sided emotional attachment is well set up by being put into a situation. The opposite connotations speak of being cognizant of oneself in a relationship, emotional discernment, and respect for oneself. Above all, it speaks of the Meranaw values of keeping emotional boundaries and dignity, especially when such feelings are not returned.

The proverb asks if value lies within a person being unvalued by another: "*Ba diden taw si mandar ka ba sabapan sa isa so taw a Diyako ron na inokon sa di kami.*" Literally, it contests the need for someone to hang around whom he/she knows--or feels--to ignore him/her. Emotionally the proverb highlights the importance of love and respect for each other in a relationship. It affirmatively gainsays emotional dependence and pride and supports the Meranaw cultural opinion that never should one sacrifice her/himself in order to gain acceptance from another.

Last but not least is, "*So taw a Diyako ron manaya na inoko sa diranun,*" which is an explanation that you've got to be able to have a relationship with me if you can be disrespectful to the same; in the denotative sense, it restrains disrespect, and in a connotative sense, it aligns with the Meranaw ideals of respect and reciprocity in mesta affairs or between people of different social standings. The greatest mark of maratabat-the defense of personal honor and emotional scrutiny when ignored and insulted-is mirrored here in this proverb just as it is in many others of this theme.

They refer to maratabat (pride or personal honor), which denotes disrespect for one another, emotional self-control, and dignity-these have been considered eternal principles, consistent with present-day theories of emotional intelligence, self-integrity, and moral limits regarding interpersonal relationships. The current philosophical perspective displays emotional closure along with an overemphasis on self-preservation whenever betrayal or heartache shows its ugly face. It suggests that if ever one would say, "I picked and I picked until I opened up the door...", it would mean heavy heart resolution. The dignity once broken or the trust when

violated shall never, ever become restored (Brown, 2012).

## **Wisdom**

In the Meranaw proverb, "Somirong ta ko tamok thitha di ta oranan matag ta ko bansa phanarisiden tawn, thomo den so ilmo e liyan a lindongan a kota a panarigan", it states knowledge is a fortress of safety, but a true shelter is the one that comes with knowledge. Denotatively, the proverb contrasts material riches with the intellectual and moral strength gained through wisdom. Connotatively, it conveys the Meranaw belief that true power, protection, and guidance stem not from inheritance or possessions, but from knowledge, moral clarity, and learned experience. It reflects a cultural value that intellectual grounding and ethical principles are the most dependable sources of strength, especially in times of personal or communal adversity.

This wisdom also resonates well with recent studies underlining transformational leadership in education. For example, Sharma, Kaur, and Mittal published their 2024 study in *Global Knowledge, Memory and Communication* about transformational leadership's mediating roles in employee engagement and organizational citizenship behaviors concerning Education 4.0 in higher education institutions. It found evidence that transformational leadership is positively related to the implementation of Education 4.0, thus emphasizing the need for intellectual and moral grounding for effective leadership.

Even the 2024 Global Leadership Development Study conducted by Harvard Business Publishing indicates that 70% of the leaders sampled perceived a need for mastery in a wider variety of leadership behaviors to resolve the current and future business needs. This finding corroborates the need for lifelong learning and flexibility in leadership roles, which resonates with the Meranaw's view of knowledge as primarily the institution of leadership.

These contemporary studies have indeed affirmed that, like modern thought, wisdom and knowledge have never been merely means for personal gain but are the best guiding principles for a dignified efficacy and an entire society's betterment in the Meranaw culture.

## **Arrogance**

The Meranaw proverb "*Baden kasasanai dalidigan so kota na di bo kaphenarigan ka ingaran ta so senang na da ta ko rangka iyan*" literally refers to a fortress that appears strong but is, in truth, unreliable—its perceived brilliance is not reflected in its actual foundation or structure. Denotatively, it describes something (or someone) that looks dependable and admirable from the outside but lacks the internal strength or substance to justify that appearance. Connotatively, the proverb warns against deceptive appearances and misplaced trust, especially when someone expected to be strong or dependable reveals themselves to be indifferent, selfish, or hollow. It reflects the Meranaw cultural value that true reliability lies in inner character, not in surface-level image, and cautions against arrogance masked as strength. This expression reinforces the importance of genuineness, integrity, and humility in social and personal relationships.

That wisdom from the ancients would stand in line with today's psychological research on betrayal trauma. This involved a study by Das and Jain (2024) in the *European Journal of Trauma & Dissociation*, which investigated the influence of partner betrayal on the psychological lives of young adults and found that betrayal trauma contributes largely to that sickening trust and cultivates anxious and avoidant attachment styles and low self-esteem among youths. Then trust was put as a mediator in the relationship between negative psychological consequences and betrayal trauma, thus highlighting its importance in emotional health.

Additionally, this, study conducted by Candel and Covaş (2004) proved that the

# Journal of Social, Culture, and Language

Vol 4 No 1 pp 27- 45

mediating role of emotional intelligence between dyadic trust and betrayal trauma and has been well known. This only means that this kind of people who have higher emotional intelligence would be better disposed in coping with conditions that emerge from betrayals and thus adoring healthier trust levels in their relationships.

This research offer evidence on the Meranaw proverb's significance across the fact and the ages that stunted trust has complicated and serious implications. Traditional wisdom and modern research both promoter for careful judgement in relationships to protect one's emotional well-being.

## Types of Figurative Language Used in the Pananaroon

As presented below, *types of figurative language used in the Pananaroon* were found; figures of speech such as metaphor, hyperbole, personification, symbolism, irony, and imagery.

**Table 2.** Figurative Language Used in the Meranaw Proverb

Data	Pananaroon	Figures of Speech
1	<i>"So palaw ko marandang na a di mang akowala ka da kon a rimbang iyan na kena oto a benar o ba da a rimbang iyan ka aya rinegen ko ron na goden pelengilengin na miya inengka iyan so buklod sa tingagun a palaw sa tingaraan."</i>	Metaphor
		Hyperbole
2	<i>"Madakel a phipikir ko parandaraka adilan na maidan pamikiren e makaakop baraten a makaraw progongan."</i>	Metaphor
		Hyperbole
3	<i>"Maarno bililang sa kaban sa kaolonan na di makaphangondaya ka maaren so panikan ko towak a limpa ala."</i>	Personification
		Metaphor
		Hyperbole
4	<i>"Phemola kon sa gambor na kagya pakathadem na kalokop a domithong a da matatagoon."</i>	Metaphor
		Symbolism
		Irony
		Imagery
5	<i>"Kanogon den o ranon a miyabarangka rupa."</i>	Metaphor
		Hyperbole
6	<i>"Minsan oray bolawan e oran a di ta ingud mapagiroy taden man e tarintik sa ngganatan."</i>	Personification
		Metaphor
		Hyperbole
7	<i>"Apya pn mbabarit sansarae mangkoron tomoongko so lawig a lumilintad ako ron."</i>	Metaphor
		Hyperbole
		Symbolism
8	<i>"Madabo so ganita na sumambi so gagaw."</i>	Metaphor

# Journal of Social, Culture, and Language

Vol 4 No 1 pp 27- 45

		Symbolism
9	<i>“So sanggibo a ranun na piyatay o tademan sa myaka isa isa.”</i>	Metaphor
		Hyperbole
10	<i>“Kanogon o lininding a khedayon a khebolos khedaan sa taritib so miyapasad a ingud na lininding a di ka mooba sa piyakarondan ka ko iriging ka o bansa ka ati katawan ka man a sarompong na aya man tatanggongen ko miyapasad a ingud ogayd na o lalag ka so lalag ka o makapmbaya ako na aya kapiya niyan na impiten so pithaong na kowaanon so daway ka an makowa so sinta a piyalanndonga a mala.”</i>	Metaphor
		Hyperbole
11	<i>“Baden matao thatanding sa katanog sa tintikan na di matao thandayaw sa kareg sa pandaopan.”</i>	Metaphor
		Symbolism
		Irony
		Imagery
12	<i>“Sapolo si pimbago na tomo si phithegama.”</i>	Metaphor
		Hyperbole
13	<i>“So sagipak a nara na maregen katimbangan o sabekes a rasas.”</i>	Metaphor
		Symbolism
14	<i>“Di kaden makaphantao ko pangkatan a mapuro o di ngka kapanagadi.”</i>	Metaphor
15	<i>“Da makaabolog ko rindan bolog ko piyakada kayamat o kandodi na bangkit o mbalingani.”</i>	Metaphor
		Hyperbole
16	<i>“Inokon sa ranonen a data sa piker yan.”</i>	Mataphor
		Symbolism
17	<i>“Ba diden taw si mandar ka ba sabapan sa isa so taw a Diyako ron na inokon sa di kami.”</i>	Metaphor
		Symbolism
18	<i>“So taw a Diyako ron manaya na inoko sa diranun.”</i>	Metaphor
		Symbolism
19	<i>“Somirong ta ko tamok thitha di ta oranan matag ta ko bansa phenarisiden tawn, thomo den so ilmo e liyan a lindongan a kota a panarigan.”</i>	Metaphor
		Hyperbole
20	<i>“Baden kasasanai dalidigan so kota na di bo kaphanarigan ka ingaran ta so senang na da ta ko rangka iyan.”</i>	Hyperbole
		Irony

The study revealed that Meranaw Pananaroon (proverbs) embrace an assortment of figurative languages, each acting as a channel for indigenous philosophy and cultural values. One of the examples is: "So palaw ko marandang..." which metaphorically and exaggeratively

# Journal of Social, Culture, and Language

Vol 4 No 1 pp 27- 45

states emotional fortitude and the unending suffering of memory. The same metaphor and exaggeration are employed in saying, "Madakel a phipikir ko parandaraka..." to stress the importance of one's moral responsibility along with the emotional consequences that accompany such responsibility.

Using personification, metaphor, and hyperbole, "Maarno bililang sa Kaban sa Kaolonan..." demonstrates how memory and nature become animated to represent emotional burdens. One proverb that stands out for its complexity is: "Phamomola kon sa gambor..." which, through the fusion of metaphor, symbolism, irony, and imagery, carries criticism of false appearances and the transitory nature of material wealth.

And again, through the expression "Kanogon den o ranon..." and "Minsan oray bolawan...", metaphor and hyperbole are employed. The second one also uses personification to show how wealth is meaningless in the absence of social harmony. On the other hand, "Apya pn mbabarit sansarae..." stresses that spiritual and emotional well-being far exceeds material luxuries through metaphor, hyperbole, and symbolism.

The proverb "Madabo so ganita na sumambi so gagaw" then employs both metaphor and symbolism to signify the ephemeral yet fragile nature of beauty. On the contrary, "So sanggibo a ranun na piyatay..." communicates emotional downpour and excruciating grief with extreme dramatization through metaphor and hyperbole.

It is in those long and more deeply philosophic words which say, "Kanogon o lininding a khedayon...", as it is most interesting to use metaphors and hyperbole as it describes the agonizing complexity of social and emotional inequality. Similar phrase, "Baden matao thatanding sa katanog..." would mean a statement concerning inequalities within society and its shallow pretensions-religious and otherwise - through metaphORIZATION, symbolism, irony, and imagery.

So, continue the example of Sapolo si pimbago and So sagipak a nara, but also punch in brevity. They still engage in allusion, metaphor, and hyperbolic saying while emphasizing in moral importance and frailty of men. The proverb "Di kaden makaphantao ko pangkatan." employs a single but powerful metaphor to think about stagnation in society and spirituality.

In this way, the hyperbolic and metaphorical use of language traces patterns in "Da makaabolog ko rindan bolog..." which should communicate the most devastating results of alienation and regret. "Inokon sa ranonen...", "Ba diden taw si mandar..." and "So taw a Diyako ron..." are all metaphorical expressions employed to represent moral and spiritual abandonment.

A further case is "Somirong ta ko tamok thitha..." which has called for unity and perseverance in the face of deterioration within the society through heightened rhetoric mixed with metaphors. Meanwhile, "Baden kasasanai dalidigan..." reveals the false strength and stability through irony and hyperbole.

## ***The Cultural Values in Meranaw Pananaroon***

These proverbs are a very strong expression of the deeply ingrained cultural values, convictions, and social expectations of the community; they embody the Meranaw traditions. The proverbial teachings talk about the lived experiences of Meranaw, from pride, wisdom, and patriotism to courtship and leadership and, through metaphor, symbol, and other forms of expression, give moral lessons. Below is a list of twenty selected pananaroon and the cultural values they signify, demonstrating how oral tradition serves as an eclectic storehouse for culture and an ethical compass.

**Table 3.** Cultural Values Reflected in Meranaw Proverbs

# Journal of Social, Culture, and Language

Vol 4 No 1 pp 27- 45

Data	Pananaroon	Cultural Values Reflected
1.	<i>“So palaw ko marandang na a di mang akowala ka da kon a rimbang iyan na kena oto a benar o ba da a rimbang iyan ka aya rinugun ko ron na goden pelengilengin na miya inengka iyan so buklod sa tingagen a palaw sa tingaraan.”</i>	Emphasizes humility and discourages arrogance, especially in romantic relationships.
2.	<i>“Madakel a phipikir ko parandaraka adilan na maidan pamikiren e makaakop baraten a makaraw progongan.”</i>	Highlights female dignity and promotes respect in courtship.
3.	<i>“Maarno bililang sa kaban sa kaolonan na di makaphangondaya ka maaren so phenikan ko towak a limpa ala.”</i>	Reflects the burden of male responsibility and economic expectations in relationships.
4.	<i>“Phemola kon sa gambor na kagya pakathaden na kalokop a domithong a da matatagoon.”</i>	Warns against boastfulness and unfulfilled promises, especially in marriage.
5.	<i>“Kanogon den o ranon a miyabarangka rupa.”</i>	Expresses the emotional consequences of failed relationships and the value of genuine connection.
6.	<i>“Minsan oray bolawan e oran a di ta ingud mapagiroy taden man e tarintik sa ngganatan.”</i>	Reinforces love for one's homeland and a strong sense of cultural identity.
7.	<i>“Apya pn mbabarit sansarae mangkoron tomoongko so lawig a lumilintad ako ron.”</i>	Promotes contentment, peace, and emotional harmony over material wealth.
8.	<i>“Madabo so ganita na sumambi so gagaw.”</i>	Encourages forgiveness, empathy, and emotional maturity.
9.	<i>“So sanggibo a ramun na piyatay o tademan sa myaka isa isa.”</i>	Highlights the fragility of trust and the importance of moral conduct.

# Journal of Social, Culture, and Language

Vol 4 No 1 pp 27- 45

10.	<i>“Kanogon o lininding a khedayon a khebolos khedaan sa taritib so miyapasad a ingud na lininding a di ka mooba sa piyakarondan ka ko iriging ka o bansa ka ati katawan ka man a sarompong na aya man tatanggongen ko miyapasad a ingud ogayd na o lalag ka so lalag ka o makapembaya ako na aya kapiya niyan na impiten so pithaong na kowaanon so daway ka an makowa so sinta a piyalanndonga a mala.”</i>	Promotes emotional restraint, humility, and collective well-being in leadership.
11.	<i>“Baden matao thetanding sa katanog sa tintikan na di matao thendayaw sa kareg sa pandaopan.”</i>	Advocates for genuine competence and responsible leadership.
12.	<i>“Sapolo si pimbago na tomo si phithagama.”</i>	Values wisdom through experience over untested innovation.
13.	<i>“So sagipak a nara na maregen katimbangan o sabekes a rasas.”</i>	Emphasizes quality over quantity and individual reliability.
14.	<i>“Di kaden makaphentao ko pangkatan a mipuro o di ngka kapanagadi.”</i>	Asserts that success requires hardship and experience, not shortcuts.
15.	<i>“Da makaabolog ko rindan bolog ko piyakada kayamat o kandodi na bangkit o mbalingani.”</i>	Reflects emotional dignity and the finality of broken trust.
16.	<i>“Inokon sa ranonen a data sa piker yan.”</i>	Emphasizes self-worth and emotional discernment.
17.	<i>“Ba diden taw si mandar ka ba sabapan sa isa so taw a Diyako ron na inokon sa di kami.”</i>	Promotes reciprocal affection and self-respect in relationships.
18.	<i>“So taw a Diyako ron manaya na inoko sa diranun.”</i>	Upholds mutual respect and social dignity.
19.	<i>“Somirong ta ko tamok thitha di ta oranan matag ta ko bansa phenarisiden tawn, thomo den so ilmo e liyan a lindongan a kota a panarigan.”</i>	Advocates for wisdom and knowledge over wealth or inheritance.



# Journal of Social, Culture, and Language

Vol 4 No 1 pp 27- 45

20.	<i>"Baden kasasanai dalidigan so kota na di bo kaphenarigan ka ingaran ta so senang na da ta ko rangka iyan."</i>	Warns against superficial strength and emphasizes trustworthiness and integrity.
-----	---	--

The twenty Pananaroon examined in this study represent a variety of Meranaw cultural values ingrained in common speech and knowledge. Proverbs illustrate humility in courtship, such as "So palaw ko marandang ...," which states that from this base one tends to caution against conceit and self-delusion, particularly in association pertaining to romantic relationships. Some, such as "Madakel a phipikir ...," and "Maarno bililang sa kaban ...," emphasize the Meranaw respect for women's dignity and the material responsibilities expected of men, reaffirming gender roles through decency and accountability. "Phemola kon sa gambor ..." condemns boastful suitors whose words don't match their deed; thereby stressing the cultural importance of commitment and sincerity. The emotional agony of failed relationships is vividly portrayed-in "Kanogon dun o ranon" while impressing upon the reader the sincere emotional tie in a relationship.

Patriotism is so important to Meranaw that one may say, Minsan oray bolawan... In other words, the wealth of this world is no substitute for the land of one's forefathers. The concepts espoused by sayings such as: Apya pen mbabarit... and Madabo so ganita... embody ideals of emotional maturity and harmony, underlining values such as peace over materialism and empathy over anger. Further, an example of a saying that teaches trust could be eroded by one action, So sanggibo a ranun... It touches on their preference for loyalty against the moral rightness of the act.

The wisdom conveyed by proverbs like "Kanogon o lininding...", "Baden matao thetanding...", "Sapolo si pimbago...", and "So sagipak a nara..." honors humility, competence, and wisdom based on experience in leadership, and places an indictment against leaders lacking such fortitude. The proverbs show fituallly that the traits which truly define a leader are actually integrity and ability, not name or title. In this way, "Di kaden makaphentao...." expresses disapproval of entitlement while proclaiming that experience and hardship are prerequisites for success.

Here are a few proverbs that relate to pride (maratabat). The Meranaw emphasize the importance of dignity and self-respect when they utter, "Da makaabolog ko rindan bolog..." and, "Inokon sa ranonen...", meaning that it is far better, once trust is betrayed or love is unreciprocated, to just let go. In the same vein, "Ba diden taw si mandar..." and "So taw a Diyako ron manaya..." suggest reciprocity in relationships and point toward a dignified alternative presented to one so disgraced by another.

Proverbs such as these highlight the issues of wisdom and pride. "Somirong ta ko tamok titha...", which extols the superiority of knowledge over bequeathed wealth, can further be paralleled with "Somirong ta ko tamok thitha...". "Baden kasasanai dalidigan..." drives home the point of honesty and dependability but warns against strength that comes from deceit. All these Pananaroon show how language teaches, warns, directs, and preserves the cultural heritage of the community, while at the same time portraying their poetic thought and moral compass points as regards Meranaw social life.

## CONCLUSION

The study examines the analysis of figurative language used in the pananaroon. The results indicate that the literal and the connotative meanings reveal essential values such as humility, wisdom, honor, and emotional strength. Some proverbs on courtship teach people to

# Journal of Social, Culture, and Language

Vol 4 No 1 pp 27- 45

be respectful and sincere, while others warn against dishonesty or pride in leadership and love. The proverbs are also utilized in various contexts such as courtship, patriotism, leadership, values, pride (Maratabat), achievement, wisdom, and arrogance. These highlight the aspirations of community for integrity, authenticity, and harmony.

The study uses different types of figurative language, such as metaphor, hyperbole, personification, symbolism, irony, and imagery. These figures of speech make the pananaroon more meaningful, memorable, and emotional. They also make the language used in the proverbs powerful and poetic, how wisdom and creativity are part of the Meranaw culture. Lastly, the pananaroon reflect reflect meranaw cultural values. They teach significant life lessons as being content with what you have, respecting others, being responsible in relationships, and valuing wisdom over wealth.

Based on the findings, the researchers recommend that pananaroon should be preserved, shared, and should be taught to younger generation to keep the Meranaw culture alive. Additionally, this study fills an important gap in Philippine cultural and linguistic studies in documenting under researched corpus of oral tradition. It illuminates the value of preserving the knowledge within language and engagement with oral traditions. The Meranaw Pananaroon highlight that figurative language is a powerful tool in articulating communal identity, moral philosophy, and wisdom of people embedded in tradition yet navigating a modern world.

## REFERENCES

Amper, B. M. (2023). *Families on the Streets: Placemaking in an Urban Heritage Site in Cebu City, the Philippines*.

Arp, T. R., & Johnson, G. (2020). *Patterns of prose: A rhetoric and reader*. Cengage Learning.  
Aydemir, M., Kuryel, A., & Roei, N. (2025). The future of cultural analysis.  
<https://doi.org/10.5117/9789048559794>

Bantog, A. M., & Sarip-Macarambon, N. T. (2021). *So Manga Pananaroon Sa Ranaw: Reflections of Meranaw Culture and Worldview*.

Brown, B. (2012). *Daring greatly: How the courage to be vulnerable transforms the way we live, love, parent, and lead*. Gotham Books.

Collins, J. (2001). *Good to great: Why some companies make the leap... and others don't*. HarperBusiness.

Das, S., & Jain, A. (2024). *Impact of partner betrayal on young adults' psychological well-being*. *European Journal of Trauma & Dissociation*.

Duckworth, A. L. (2016). *Grit: The power of passion and perseverance*. Scribner.

Goleman, D. (1995). *Emotional intelligence: Why it can matter more than IQ*. Bantam Books.

Griffiths, P. (2006). *An introduction to English semantics and pragmatics*. Edinburgh University Press.

Lakoff, G., & Johnson, M. (1980). *Metaphors we live by*. University of Chicago Press.

# Journal of Social, Culture, and Language

Vol 4 No 1 pp 27- 45

Northouse, P. G. (2021). *Leadership: Theory and practice* (9th ed.). Sage Publications.

Nursyanti, A., Mahdi, S., & Nababan, M. R. (2020). Figurative language in Madurese proverbs: A linguistic anthropological study. *Aksis: Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa dan Sastra Indonesia*, 5(2), 206–215. <https://doi.org/10.21009/AKSIS.050208>

Nursyanti, E., et al. (2020). Study on figurative language in oral traditions.

Perrine, L., & Arp, T. R. (2002). *Sound and sense: An introduction to poetry* (8th ed.). Harcourt Brace.

Shamsi, S., & Asad, S. (2023). *Emotional Maturity, Forgiveness, and Marital Satisfaction among Dual Earner Couples*.

Sharma, R., Kaur, A., & Mittal, S. (2024). *Transformational leadership and Education 4.0 in higher education. Global Knowledge, Memory and Communication*.

Yule, G. (1996). *The study of language* (2nd ed.). Cambridge University Press.