

A Sociolinguistic Analysis of Meranaw Youth's Knowledge of Meranaw Idioms

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Abstract. This study examines the idiomatic knowledge of Meranaw youth and explores the relationship between educational status and their ability to recognize and interpret Meranaw idioms. It specifically compares the idiomatic knowledge of youth who are attending school and those who are not attending school and examines how community-based linguistic and cultural experience may contribute to idiomatic competence. Using a descriptive comparative design, the study involved twenty (20) Meranaw youth aged 15–17 years, equally divided into two groups: ten (10) attending school and ten (10) not attending school. Forty-five (45) Meranaw idioms were documented and validated through interviews with three elderly native speakers before being presented to the youth respondents for interpretation. Their responses were categorized as correct, close to the correct meaning, or incorrect and were compared across the two groups and across idiom categories. The findings show that both groups demonstrated knowledge of Meranaw idioms. All ten respondents attending school obtained scores within the reported passing range of 23–37, while most respondents not attending school obtained scores within the 24–31 range, with two respondents obtaining 21–22. Across the idiom categories, several expressions received high numbers of correct responses in both groups, while some give literal or contextually related interpretations. These patterns suggest that educational status alone does not adequately account for idiomatic knowledge among the respondents. Consistent with the view of idioms as conventionalized expressions whose meanings extend beyond literal composition, the findings further indicate that familiarity, community exposure, and cultural knowledge contribute to idiomatic interpretation. The study highlights the role of everyday linguistic interaction and cultural transmission in sustaining Meranaw idiomatic competence among youth.

Keywords: Idioms; Indigenous Language; Meranaw Language; Native Speakers; Sociolinguistic Analysis

Introduction

Idiomatic and figurative expressions, or the use of words and expressions that convey meanings beyond their literal interpretations, are integral components of a living language. Idioms and idiomatic expressions allow speakers to communicate meanings that are shaped by shared experiences, cultural practices, and ways of understanding the world. Because their meanings may extend beyond the meanings of individual words, understanding idiomatic expressions requires familiarity with the linguistic and cultural knowledge shared by members of a community. A native speaker's ability to recognize and interpret idioms in the mother tongue may therefore reflect an important aspect of linguistic and communicative competence.

Apart from the cultural context associated with idioms and idiomatic expressions, several linguistic and sociolinguistic variables may be related to the acquisition and interpretation of idiomatic knowledge. These include age, educational experience, linguistic proficiency, familiarity with expressions, contextual exposure, and cognitive-linguistic abilities. Espinal and Mateu (2019) explain that idioms are conventionalized expressions whose interpretations cannot always be fully predicted from the ordinary meanings of their individual components. Hattouti et al. (2016) further emphasize the roles of familiarity, transparency, and context in the development of idiom comprehension, while Cacciari et al. (2018) demonstrate that verbal and cognitive abilities may contribute to the processing of idiomatic expressions. More recent studies likewise show that individual differences in linguistic knowledge and cognitive-linguistic skills affect idiom recognition in context (Tilmatine et al., 2021), while age, semantic transparency, context, and task type may influence the

comprehension of idiomatic expressions among younger speakers (Hamdan & Smadi, 2021). Contextual information and familiarity have also been shown to influence the interpretation of unfamiliar idioms (Markovic, 2022), and contextual information and linguistic transfer may contribute to successful idiom interpretation (van Dijk et al., 2022). These findings indicate that idiomatic knowledge cannot be understood solely in relation to formal schooling rather, it may emerge from the interaction of educational experience, linguistic exposure, familiarity, contextual knowledge, and broader participation in a language community.

Previous research has extensively examined idiom comprehension in relation to age, familiarity, context, linguistic knowledge, and processing. Tilmatine et al. (2021) examined individual differences in recognizing idiomatic expressions in context, while Hamdan and Smadi (2021) investigated idiom comprehension among Jordanian Arabic-speaking children and considered age, semantic transparency, context, and task type. Markovic (2022) examined the relevance of context in unfamiliar idiom comprehension, and van Dijk et al. (2022) investigated the roles of context and linguistic transfer in interpreting idioms. More recent work has further examined the semantic and cognitive dimensions of idiom processing, including the effects of stimulus and task characteristics (Lada et al., 2023) and the contribution of predictability, decomposability, and individual cognitive differences to idiom processing (Carrol & Segart, 2023). Hubbard (2023) likewise examined how predictability and decomposability contribute to the processing of idiomatic language. Although these studies establish that idiom comprehension is influenced by multiple linguistic and cognitive factors, most of them examine languages and populations outside the Philippine and Meranaw contexts. While Jalani (2026) examined idiom comprehension and processing among college students, providing evidence from a Filipino educational context. In the Meranaw context, Alon (2022) examined Meranaw euphemisms and their social functions, while Obinay (2026) analyzed the syntactic structures of Meranaw idioms. Aragon (2023) also documented the grammatical characteristics of the Meranaw language. These studies demonstrate the richness of Meranaw linguistic resources and the continuing scholarly attention given to the language; however, they do not specifically examine the idiomatic knowledge of Meranaw youth aged 15–17 according to educational status and across distinct semantic categories of idioms.

The importance of examining Meranaw linguistic knowledge among younger speakers within changing educational and social environments. Research on Meranaw teenagers has examined contemporary colloquial expressions and their linguistic characteristics (Cadalay, 2025), while research on Meranaw proverbs has shown that figurative expressions transmit cultural values, meanings, and forms of community knowledge (Ampuan et al., 2025). More recently, Pandapatan et al. (2026) examined Meranaw language vitality across selected municipalities in Lanao and identified education, language use at home, media and technology, younger generations, and changing language attitudes as factors associated with language maintenance and language change. These studies provide important evidence concerning Meranaw language use, cultural expression, and contemporary linguistic practices. However, they differ from the present study in population, linguistic phenomenon, and analytical focus. Existing studies have examined Meranaw grammar, euphemisms, idioms as syntactic structures, colloquial expressions, proverbs, and broader language vitality, but limited attention has been given to how Meranaw youth recognize and interpret selected idiomatic expressions and whether patterns of idiomatic knowledge vary according to educational status. This study addresses this gap by examining 45 validated Meranaw idioms across five specific categories, human body, animals, plants, common objects, and human actions, movements, and activities and by describing the responses of Meranaw youth who are attending school and those who are not attending school.

This study does not assume that formal education is the sole determinant of idiomatic knowledge. Instead, it examines educational status together with the respondents' demographic profile and their demonstrated knowledge across different categories of Meranaw idioms. This approach allows the study to describe the level and distribution of idiomatic knowledge among the respondents, compare the observed response patterns of the two educational-status groups, and consider what these patterns may suggest about formal education, community-based linguistic exposure, and cultural transmission. This study therefore contributes to the sociolinguistic documentation of Meranaw idiomatic expressions while providing a more focused account of how culturally embedded linguistic knowledge is recognized, interpreted, maintained, and potentially transformed among younger Meranaw speakers.

Research Questions

This study examines the idiomatic knowledge of Meranaw youth and explores the possible association between educational status and their ability to recognize and interpret selected Meranaw idioms.

Specifically, it seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What is the level of idiomatic knowledge of Meranaw youth in recognizing and interpreting selected Meranaw idioms across the following categories;
 - 1.1 Human body

- 1.2 Animals
- 1.3 Plants
- 1.4 Common objects
- 1.5 Human actions, movements, and activities?
2. How does the idiomatic knowledge of Meranaw youth who are attending school compare with that of youth who are not attending school across the identified idiom categories?
3. What do the similarities and differences in the idiomatic knowledge of the two groups suggest about the possible role of formal education and community-based linguistic and cultural exposure in the maintenance of Meranaw idiomatic knowledge?

Scope and Delimitation of the Study

This study focuses on the idiomatic knowledge of Meranaw youth, particularly their ability to recognize and interpret selected Meranaw idioms. It specifically examines education as a sociolinguistic factor by comparing Meranaw youth who are currently studying and those who are not attending school. The study is limited to the selected respondents and idiomatic expressions included in the research. Other sociolinguistic factors, such as age, gender, and social environment, are not the primary focus of the study. Therefore, the findings may not be generalized to all Meranaw speakers.

Literature Review

This study is anchored primarily in the view of idioms as conventionalized linguistic expressions whose meanings are not fully predictable from the individual lexical meanings of their components. Espinal and Mateu (2019) describe idioms as formulaic constructions whose interpretation extends beyond ordinary compositional meaning. This perspective provides the basis for examining the ability of Meranaw youths to recognize and interpret idiomatic expressions beyond their literal meanings. In the present study, responses that demonstrate recognition of the conventional or culturally established meaning of an idiom are therefore treated as evidence of idiomatic knowledge, while literal or contextually related responses are examined as possible indications of incomplete or alternative interpretation.

The study also draws on the perspective of Vulchanova et al., (2011), who discussed the development and comprehension of figurative language among young speakers. Their work highlights the role of linguistic experience, contextual information, and the ability to move beyond literal interpretation in understanding idiomatic expressions. This perspective is relevant to this study because the respondents are Meranaw youths whose idiomatic knowledge may be shaped by both formal education and continued exposure to the Meranaw-speaking community.

These perspectives are applied to the analysis of the respondents' interpretations across five categories of Meranaw idioms: human body, animals, plants, common objects, and human actions, movements, and activities. The framework guides the interpretation of correct, close-to-correct, and incorrect responses by considering whether the respondents demonstrate knowledge of the conventional meaning of an expression or rely primarily on its literal or surface meaning. The comparison between youth attending school and those not attending school further allows the study to examine whether differences in formal educational status correspond with differences in idiomatic knowledge, while also considering the possible contribution of community-based linguistic and cultural exposure.

Rather than treating formal education as the sole source of linguistic competence, the theoretical lens recognizes idiomatic knowledge as potentially connected to accumulated linguistic experience and participation in a speech community. Thus, the framework supports a sociolinguistic interpretation of the findings in which similarities and differences between the two groups are considered in relation to both educational experience and everyday exposure to Meranaw language and culture.

Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a descriptive-comparative research design to examine the idiomatic knowledge of young native speakers of the Meranaw language and to describe and compare their ability to recognize and interpret selected Meranaw idioms according to educational status. The study focused on two groups of Meranaw youth: those who were attending school and those who were not attending school. Their responses to the selected idioms were documented, categorized, and compared with the validated meanings established by elderly native speakers. The descriptive component was used to present the respondents' idiomatic knowledge across the identified categories of Meranaw idioms. The comparative component was used to

describe similarities and differences in the responses of the two educational-status groups. Frequency counts and percentages were used to summarize the respondents' responses and their degree of correspondence with the validated meanings. These descriptive measures were considered appropriate because the study aimed to document patterns of idiomatic knowledge and compare the two groups rather than establish causal relationships. No inferential statistical test or causal claim regarding the effect of education on idiomatic knowledge was made.

Research Locale

The study was conducted in the Municipality of Baloi, Lanao del Norte, Philippines. The youth respondents were native speakers of Meranaw residing in different barangays within the municipality. Baloi was selected as the research locale because it provides a community setting in which the Meranaw language is used by native speakers, making it an appropriate context for examining the idiomatic knowledge of Meranaw youth.

Research Participants

The study involved twenty (20) youth respondents and three (3) elderly key informants. The term *respondents* is used for the youth group because the study employed a quantitative descriptive-comparative approach. The youth respondents consisted of Meranaw native speakers aged 15–17 years. They were equally divided into two groups: ten (10) respondents who were attending school and ten (10) respondents who were not attending school. All respondents were residents of different barangays in Baloi, Lanao del Norte. The three elderly key informants were native speakers of Meranaw aged 50 years and above. They were identified in the original study as an Imam, a Sultan, and an Onor. For accessibility to readers unfamiliar with these culturally specific terms, an *Imam* refers to a Muslim religious leader, while a *Sultan* refers to a traditional or community leader in the Meranaw sociocultural context. *Onor* is a skilled professional who combines vocal chanting, poetry, traditional dance, and instrumental mastery. These key informants were selected for their familiarity with the Meranaw language and their knowledge of culturally embedded idiomatic expressions.

Research Instrument

The primary research instrument was a researcher-developed interview guide consisting of forty-five (45) documented Meranaw idioms and idiomatic expressions. The instrument was developed from an initial documentation of Meranaw idioms conducted by two researchers who are native speakers of the language. Thus, the instrument was not adopted from a previously published standardized survey but was developed specifically for the present study based on the documented idiomatic expressions. The initial list of idioms underwent content and cultural validation by three elderly native speakers of Meranaw aged 50 years and above. The key informants were asked to explain and confirm the meanings and appropriate interpretations of the documented expressions. Their explanations served as the reference meanings against which the responses of the youth respondents were examined. Following the validation process, forty-five (45) idioms were retained for administration to the youth respondents. The validated idioms were presented to the two groups of youth respondents, who were asked to provide or explain the meaning of each expression. Their responses were recorded, transcribed, and categorized according to their degree of correspondence with the meanings established by the key informants.

Data Gathering Procedure

The data-gathering process followed a series of systematic steps. First, the two researchers, who are native speakers of Meranaw, documented an initial set of Meranaw idioms and idiomatic expressions. Second, the preliminary list was submitted to three purposively selected elderly native speakers for validation. The key informants were asked to explain, confirm, and contextualize the meanings of the documented expressions. With their consent, the validation interviews were audio-recorded and subsequently transcribed. Third, the researchers reviewed the transcribed validation responses and established the reference meanings of the idioms based on the explanations provided by the key informants. Forty-five (45) idioms were retained as the validated set used in the youth data collection. Fourth, the validated idioms were presented individually to the twenty (20) youth respondents. Each respondent was asked to recognize and explain the meaning of each idiomatic expression. The responses were documented and, with the respondents' consent, audio-recorded and transcribed for accurate analysis. Fifth, the transcribed responses were organized in a data matrix according to respondent, educational status, and idiom category. The idioms were grouped according to the identified categories, including human body, animals, plants, common objects, and human actions, movements, and activities. The responses were then examined based on the validated meanings provided by the key informants and categorized according to their degree of correspondence with the reference meaning. Lastly, the responses were tabulated using frequency counts and percentages. The results were presented

descriptively by idiom category and educational-status group. The two groups were then compared descriptively to identify similarities and differences in their patterns of idiomatic knowledge. The interpretation of the findings was based on the observed response patterns and was not extended to causal conclusions about the influence of education.

Results and Discussions

Research Question 1: What is the level of idiomatic knowledge of Meranaw youth in recognizing and interpreting selected Meranaw idioms across different categories, including human body, animals, plants, common objects, and human actions, movements, and activities?

Table 1. Total Number of Collected Meranaw Idioms According to Category

Idiom Category	Number
1. Parts of the Human Body	13
2. Animals	7
3. Plants	5
4. Common Objects	14
5. Human Actions, Movements, and Activities	6
Total	45

A total of forty-five (45) Meranaw idioms were documented and validated through consultation with elderly native speakers. The expressions were classified into five categories based on the linguistic and experiential domains represented in the idioms: human body, animals, plants, common objects, and human actions, movements, and activities. Common objects accounted for the largest group with fourteen (14) idioms, followed by human-body-related idioms with thirteen (13), animal-related idioms with seven (7), idioms involving human actions, movements, and activities with six (6), and plant-related idioms with five (5).

This distribution demonstrates that Meranaw idiomatic expressions draw extensively from concrete experiences and culturally familiar domains. Expressions involving body parts, animals, plants, objects, and everyday activities provide speakers with culturally meaningful ways of describing human behavior, character, social relationships, and life experiences. This pattern is consistent with the theoretical perspective of Espinal and Mateu (2019), in which idiomatic meaning is not necessarily recoverable from the literal meanings of the individual words. The findings also relate to the categorization discussed by Vulchanova, Vulchanov, and Stankova (2011), particularly their recognition of biologically based and culturally based idiomatic expressions.

The presence of these categories suggests that Meranaw idioms are not merely lexical combinations, but forms of linguistic knowledge associated with the experiences and cultural practices of the speech community. Consequently, knowledge of these expressions may reflect familiarity with both the language and the contexts in which the expressions are conventionally used.

Sociolinguistic Analysis of Meranaw Youth's Knowledge of Idioms

The forty-five (45) collected idioms were documented and presented to two groups of Meranaw youth for interpretation: ten (10) participants who were attending school and ten (10) participants who were not attending school, for a total of twenty (20) Meranaw youth aged fifteen (15) to seventeen (17). The study aimed to determine whether educational attainment, as a sociolinguistic factor, influences their knowledge of idioms in their native language. Table 2 presents the total number of young informants according to their age:

Table 2. The Two Groups of Young Meranaw Informants According to Age

Age	Attending School	Not Attending School
1. 17	6	8
2. 16	2	1
3. 15	2	1
Total	10	10

The following tables present the scores of the two groups of Meranaw informants based on the number of correct answers they obtained in providing the meanings of the idioms.

Table 3. Scores of the Meranaw Informants Based on Their Correct Responses

Score	Attending School	Not Attending School
1. 44-45		
2. 41-43		
3. 38-40		
4. 35-37	1	
5. 32-34	4	
6. 29-31	4	5
7. 26-28		2
8. 23-25	1	1
9. 20-22		2
Score	10	10

In table 3, presents the distribution of the twenty (20) Meranaw youth respondents according to the number of idioms they correctly interpreted out of the forty-five (45) validated idioms. The respondents were divided equally between those attending school and those not attending school. Among the respondents attending school, the scores were concentrated between 29 and 37 correct responses, with one respondent obtaining 35–37, four obtaining 32–34, four obtaining 29–31, and one obtaining 23–25. Among those not attending school, five respondents obtained scores within the 29–31 range, while the remaining respondents were distributed across the 20–28 and 23–25 ranges.

The distribution indicates that both groups demonstrated knowledge of a substantial number of the selected Meranaw idioms, although the extent of correct interpretation varied among individual respondents. The variation is also evident within each educational-status group, suggesting that idiomatic knowledge is not uniform even among youth who share the same educational status. This finding is important to the first objective of the study because it shows that the respondents' idiomatic knowledge is better understood through the patterns of their responses across the selected idioms rather than through educational status alone.

The difference in score distribution between the two groups should likewise be interpreted descriptively. Respondents attending school were more concentrated in the higher score ranges, while those not attending school were more widely distributed across the score ranges. However, the descriptive data do not establish that school attendance directly caused the differences in idiomatic knowledge. Instead, the variation may reflect differences in linguistic experience, frequency of exposure to idioms, and familiarity with the contexts in which these expressions are used.

This pattern is consistent with the theoretical lens of the study, particularly the view that idiom comprehension involves going beyond the literal meanings of individual words and drawing on linguistic knowledge and contextual experience (Espinal & Mateu, 2019; Vulchanova et al., 2011). A respondent may therefore understand an idiom not only because of formal education but also because the expression has been encountered repeatedly in family, community, or other communicative settings.

The distribution in Table 3 consequently provides an initial indication that Meranaw idiomatic knowledge among youth reflects both continuity and variation. While many respondents demonstrated familiarity with a considerable number of idioms, the differences in individual scores suggest that knowledge of these expressions is influenced by the respondents' broader linguistic environment. The succeeding tables provide a more detailed examination of this pattern by showing how the respondents performed across specific categories of Meranaw idioms.

Research Question 2: How does the idiomatic knowledge of Meranaw youth who are attending school compare with that of youth who are not attending school across the identified idiom categories?

Table 4. Interpretation of the Informants Regarding Idioms Involving Parts of the Human Body

Idioms	Literal Meaning	Response of Attending School			Response of not Attending School		
		Correct Answer	Close to the Correct Answer	Incorrect Answer	Correct Answer	Close to the Correct Answer	Incorrect Answer
1. Maloag i irek.	Mapiya i adat.	10	0	0	7	3	0
2. Ikatat a leb	Karoma	10	0	0	10	0	0
3. Dowa i bontal.	Bokhag	9	1	0	8	2	0
4. Maitem i poso.	Marata i adat.	1	0	9	1	0	9
5. Gelat i mata	Masarangit i kailay	4	4	2	2	1	7
6. Matas/tarem i modol.	Di niyan dii tharoon so langon a pkaneg iyan patot ago di patot/ soroyan	9	0	0	9	0	1
7. Miyakala a olo niyan	Rabo/Ambog	9	0	1	10	0	0
8. Daa otek yan.	Di phamimikiran	5	0	5	4		6
9. Mategas i poso.	Daa a kapdi iyan.	8	0	1	8	2	0
10. Mayaw i olo	Mala i gani	3	0	7	9	0	1
11. Bosaw i mata.	Langon a pekailay niyan na kabaya iyan na makowa niyan.	1	1	8	3	0	7
12. Miyakapoti a mata niyan.	Kyalekan	3	4	3	3	2	5
13. Da karorowi sa posed.	Daa a lalag yan.	3	0	7	5	0	5

In table 4, presents the responses of Meranaw youth to thirteen idioms involving parts of the human body. The results show varying levels of familiarity across the expressions, with several idioms receiving predominantly correct interpretations in both groups. For example, *ikapat a leb* was correctly interpreted by all respondents, while *maloag i irek*, *dowa i bontal*, and *matas/tarem i modol* were also generally well understood. These results suggest that idioms that remain familiar within everyday linguistic use are more readily recognized by young speakers. In contrast, *maitem i poso*, whose validated meaning is *marata i adat* or "bad character" generated substantial difficulty. Most respondents interpreted it as *maliget* or *ligeto*, meaning "Stingy". Although this does not exactly match the validated meaning, the responses reflect a related understanding of negative character. Similar variation was observed in expressions such as *gelat i mata*, *daa otek yan*, *mayaw i olo*, and *bosaw i mata*, where some respondents provided close or related interpretations. These responses indicate that idiomatic knowledge may occur at different levels, from precise recognition of the conventional meaning to partial semantic understanding.

The findings also show that the two groups share considerable knowledge of several idioms despite differences in educational status. This suggests that formal schooling alone does not sufficiently explain the observed patterns. Exposure through family interaction, community communication, and everyday use of Meranaw may also contribute to the retention and understanding of idiomatic expressions. The descriptive nature of the data does not allow the study to establish a causal relationship between educational status, community exposure, and idiomatic knowledge. The presence of correct, close, and incorrect interpretations further indicates that idiomatic knowledge is not uniform and may reflect differences in exposure, familiarity, and semantic interpretation within the Meranaw speech community.

Table 5. Interpretation of the Informants Regarding Idioms Using Animals or Related to Animals

Idioms	Literal Meaning	Response of Attending School			Response of not Attending School		
		Correct Answer	Close to the Correct Answer	Incorrect Answer	Correct Answer	Close to the Correct Answer	Incorrect Answer
1. Botiti	Mala i tiyan	10	0	0	8	0	2
2. Otek a bolinaw	Korang i pamikiran	3	1	6	6	0	4
3. Alongan a amo	Di matao maginot.	6	0	4	3	0	7
4. Olawla a di khen a aso.	Marata i Ongar/Olawla	8	0	2	3	1	6
5. Ikog bo a daon.	Marata e bontal.	5	0	5	3	0	7
6. Myasikep iyan so aroan.	Minidebak	8	0	2	4	2	4
7. Mariga i toka	Maloto i kapagatar.	8	0	2	6	1	3

In table 5, presents the responses of Meranaw youth to seven idioms involving animals or animal-related references. The results show varying levels of familiarity across the expressions. The idiom *botiti*, meaning "having a large belly," was highly familiar to both groups, with most respondents providing the correct interpretation. In contrast, *otek a bolinaw*, meaning "having a deficiency in thinking," and *alongan a amo*, meaning "someone who does not know how to save," generated more varied responses. These differences indicate that familiarity with animal-related imagery does not necessarily correspond to familiarity with its conventional idiomatic meaning.

The responses to *miyasikep iyan so aroan*, meaning "fell down," also show lexical variation. Some respondents provided *minirepang*, *minisosong*, and *minidolas*, which were treated in the original analysis as synonymous or closely related Meranaw expressions. Although these responses differed from the validated answer, they indicate recognition of the underlying meaning.

The variation across the idioms suggests that knowledge may be influenced by familiarity and exposure to expressions within everyday communication. Both groups demonstrated knowledge of several idioms, while difficulty with other expressions shows that educational status alone does not account for the observed variation. Continued interaction within the family and community may provide important contexts for maintaining these expressions.

Table 6. Interpretation of the Informants Regarding Idioms Using Plants

Idioms	Literal Meaning	Response of Attending School			Response of not Attending School		
		Correct Answer	Close to the Correct Answer	Incorrect Answer	Correct Answer	Close to the Correct Answer	Incorrect Answer
1. Pimbada	Pithabo/Piraneg	7	2	1	6	3	1
2. Wata sa kalasan	Wata sa bokid	7	1	2	5	0	5
3. Pesaan sa kamantis	Petaroon ron so benar.	10	0	0	9	0	1
4. Inethoan a kerep.	Tanto ko miyathay a dii niyan dii kapenayaw.	10	0	0	8	0	2
5. Datar ka o aroy.	Maito a tao.	8	0	2	8	0	2

In table 6, presents the responses of Meranaw youth to five idioms involving plants. The results show a generally high level of correct interpretation across both groups, although some expressions generated close or incorrect responses. This suggests that familiarity with plant-related images does not always correspond to complete knowledge of their conventional idiomatic meanings.

The expressions *pesaan sa kamantis*, meaning "tell the truth directly," and *inethoan a kerep*, meaning "waited for so long," were among the most consistently understood. In contrast, *pimbada*, meaning "physical discipline," and *wata sa kalasan*, meaning "grew up in the province," showed greater variation in responses. The idiom *datar ka o aroy*, meaning "small-looking," received the same number of correct responses from both groups, although some respondents provided interpretations influenced by the literal image of the expression.

The generally high number of correct responses suggests that several plant-related idioms remain familiar among the respondents. However, the presence of close and incorrect interpretations indicates that familiarity with the literal or cultural image of a plant does not necessarily ensure knowledge of its conventional idiomatic meaning. Variation across the two groups also suggests that educational status alone does not sufficiently explain the differences in idiomatic knowledge.

Table 7. Interpretation of the Informants Regarding Idioms Involving Common Objects

Idiom	Literal Meaning	Attending School			Not Attending School		
		Correct Answer	Close to Correct Answer	Incorrect Answer	Correct Answer	Close to Correct Answer	Incorrect Answer
1. Myapotel so kaloda.	Kyadaan sa riseki	3	5	2	2	6	2
2. Bontal a pirak.	Bosaw sa pirak.	6	0	3	6	0	4
3. Kaporotan sa ragom.	Malingaw so ig.	7	0	3	7	0	3
4. Madakel so pirak.	Daa pirak.	7	0	3	5	1	4
5. Mala i kobar.	Aden a rek iyan na pamangni pen.	8	0	2	5	0	5
6. Lagid ka o rinti.	Lagid o wata i pamikiran.	2	5	3	1	6	3
7. Phaka biyag ka sa apoy.	Soroyan/Phaka aden sa rido	7	1	2	9	0	1
8. Lebo e bolsan	Gastador	8	0	2	7	0	3
9. Pegator ka wata	Piyapiya ka wata	9	0	1	5	1	4
10. Khawaan ka a langit.	Mala i ambisyon/pangarap	8	0	2	7	1	2
11. Miniliyo sa alad/ minibowang.	Initolak	5	0	5	5	1	4
12. Korang sa tenga.	Pekha betha-bethang	5	3	2	6	1	3
13. Ba oman na koning.	Ba oman na mapiya	8	2	0	5	1	4
14. Pandi a lalan	Laagan	6	1	3	6	2	2

In table 7, presents the responses of Meranaw youth to fourteen idioms involving common objects. The results show greater variation in interpretation compared with some of the other categories. Several idioms received relatively high correct responses, such as *lebo e bolsan*, *pegator ka wata*, and *khawaan ka a langit*. However, expressions such as *myapotel so kaloda* and *lagid ka o rinti* generated a substantial number of close and incorrect interpretations. This variation suggests that familiarity with the literal images of common objects does not always result in recognition of their conventional idiomatic meanings.

The responses to *pandi a lalan* further illustrate how literal interpretation may interact with idiomatic knowledge. Some respondents provided *laog* or *laagan*, referring to a person who frequently goes from one place to another, while others interpreted the expression as something that can be seen everywhere. The latter response may have been influenced by the literal meaning of *pandi a lalan*, meaning "a flag on the road," which can be associated with something visible in different places. This demonstrates how speakers may construct an interpretation from the literal components of an idiom when its conventional meaning is less familiar.

A particularly significant finding is the response to *phaka biyag ka sa apoy*. Its traditional meaning is *soroyan*, equivalent to "a person who spreads rumors." However, most respondents used "Marites," a contemporary expression also associated with a person who spreads rumors. This does not necessarily indicate a loss of the underlying concept, rather, it demonstrates lexical substitution in which a newer and widely recognized expression is used to convey a meaning traditionally expressed through *soroyan*. The finding therefore illustrates how younger speakers may retain a cultural concept while expressing it through contemporary vocabulary.

Table 8. Interpretation of Informants Regarding Idioms Involving Human Actions, Movements, or Activities

Idioms	Literal Meaning	Response of not Attending School			Response of not Attending School		
		Correct Answer	Close to the Correct Answer	Incorrect Answer	Correct Answer	Close to the Correct Answer	Incorrect Answer
1. Boka	Igira a miyapasad so powasa.	10	0	0	10	0	0
2. Paigo	Pagpoonan so powasa.	9	0	1	8	0	2
3. Domiyalong	Miyawafat/miyatay	10	0	0	9	1	0
4. Kiyarorowan sa marewang.	Daa kaya iyan.	10	0	0	7	3	0
5. Tangimporoan	Katao niyanon na sekanyan bo i mapasang	9	0	1	7	0	3
6. Madakel e katharo	Bokag	8	0	2	7	2	1

In table 8, presents the responses of Meranaw youth to six idioms involving human actions, movements, and activities. The results show a high level of correct interpretation across both groups. The idiom *boka*, meaning “when Ramadan ends,” was correctly interpreted by all respondents, while *domiyalong*, meaning “passed away,” was also understood by nearly all respondents. These results suggest that idioms that remain familiar in everyday or culturally meaningful contexts are more readily retained by younger speakers. The idiom *kiyarorowan sa marewang*, meaning “shameless,” also received a high number of correct responses. However, three respondents from the non-attending-school group provided close interpretations, including “*di kaya*,” “*daa ikhaya iyan*,” and “*makapal i bontal ka daa kaya iyan*.” These responses remain semantically related to the validated meaning and may indicate partial recognition rather than complete unfamiliarity with the expression. Similarly, the response to *domiyalong* illustrates how respondents may express an idiomatic meaning through a culturally associated expression. One respondent from the non-attending-school group answered “*mindod ko limo o Allah*,” which conveys an idea closely related to death. Although this differs from the validated response, it demonstrates recognition of the semantic context of the idiom. The generally high scores across this category indicate that human-action and activity-related idioms remain relatively familiar among the respondents. At the same time, the occurrence of close and alternative interpretations shows that idiomatic knowledge may involve different degrees of recognition. The similarities between the two groups also indicate that educational status alone does not sufficiently explain the observed patterns; continued exposure through family, community interaction, and culturally meaningful communication may also support the retention of these expressions.

Research Question 3: What do the similarities and differences in the idiomatic knowledge of the two groups suggest about the possible role of formal education and community-based linguistic and cultural exposure in the maintenance of Meranaw idiomatic knowledge?

The similarities and differences between the two groups indicate that Meranaw idiomatic knowledge is present among the youth regardless of educational status, although familiarity varies across expressions. Both groups demonstrated substantial knowledge of several idioms, while some expressions generated close, literal, or incorrect interpretations. This pattern suggests that formal education may provide opportunities for language exposure, but it does not solely account for the maintenance of idiomatic knowledge. Community-based linguistic and cultural exposure, including everyday interaction, family communication, and continued use of Meranaw, may also contribute to the retention and understanding of idiomatic expressions. However, the findings are descriptive and do not establish a causal relationship between educational status or community exposure and idiomatic knowledge.

Ethical Considerations

The study received approval from the Faculty of the Department of Filipino and Other Languages prior to its conduct. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from participants, with parental or legal guardian consent and the respondents’ assent secured for those aged 15–17. Participants were informed of their right to decline or withdraw at any time without penalty. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained using codes, and all personal information, responses, recordings, and transcripts were securely stored and used solely for research purposes in accordance with the Data Privacy Act of 2012 (Republic Act No. 10173). The study also ensured that participants were not exposed to harm or coercion and observed cultural sensitivity by accurately presenting the validated meanings of Meranaw idiomatic expressions.

Conclusion

The findings show that Meranaw youth demonstrated knowledge of the selected Meranaw idioms, although their interpretations varied across expressions. Educational status alone did not adequately account for these patterns, suggesting that idiomatic competence may also be sustained through family interaction, community communication, and continued exposure to Meranaw language and culture. The use of “Marites” in place of the traditional *soroyan* further illustrates the dynamic nature of Meranaw youth’s linguistic repertoire, where traditional knowledge coexists with contemporary lexical change. Overall, the study highlights the role of community-based linguistic experience and cultural transmission in sustaining Meranaw idiomatic knowledge while also showing how contemporary language practices may reshape traditional expressions.

Recommendations

The study recommends strengthening the use and transmission of Meranaw idioms among younger speakers through everyday communication, storytelling, cultural activities, and intergenerational interaction.

Teachers and educational institutions may also integrate Meranaw idioms into language, literature, and culture-related lessons to enhance learners' understanding of their meanings and cultural contexts. Future researchers may further examine the influence of social media, popular culture, and contemporary expressions such as "Marites" on the retention and transformation of traditional Meranaw idioms. Further documentation of these expressions, including their meanings, English translations, and cultural contexts, is also recommended to support the preservation and continued transmission of Meranaw linguistic and cultural knowledge.

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