

Metaphor Analysis in Teing Hang Wuat Wa'i Ritual Speech, Timung Manggarai

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ABSTRACT

Metaphors play a crucial role in shaping cultural identity and worldview, yet studies on their use in Manggarai ritual discourse remain limited. Guided by Lakoff and Johnson's Conceptual Metaphor Theory, this study analyzes metaphors in the Teing Hang Wuat Wa'i ritual discourse in Timung Village, Manggarai, using a descriptive qualitative approach. Data were collected through observation, audio recordings, and interviews with three traditional leaders. The analysis involved transcription, identification of metaphors, determination of source and target domains, and interpretation of cultural meanings. Findings reveal 19 ritual discourses categorized into structural, orientational, and ontological metaphors. Structural metaphors frame education, success, and courage through journeys and valuable objects; orientational metaphors employ spatial orientations to express dignity, unity, and health; ontological metaphors conceptualize speech and relationships as concrete entities. These results confirm that metaphors function as linguistic phenomena and cultural education tools, reinforcing identity and preserving Manggarai social values.

Keywords: *Structural Metaphors, Orientational Metaphors, Ontological Metaphors, Ritual Discourse, Teing Hang Wuat Wa'i.*

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INTRODUCTION

Research on the Teing Hang Wuat Wa'i ritual discourse in Manggarai confirms that ritual language is not merely a means of communication, but also a medium for conveying cultural and spiritual values. Hibur (2022) explains that the Teing Hang traditional ceremony is a ritual of feeding the ancestors, performed as an expression of gratitude and respect toward them. Furthermore, the Teing Hang traditional ceremony also serves as an expression of gratitude to the Creator for the life journey that has been traversed, as well as an expression of hope that all obstacles may be avoided (Resmini & Saina, 2021; Selatang, 2021)

Drawing on Lakoff & Johnson (1980) Conceptual Metaphor Theory, metaphors are understood as cognitive mechanisms that enable people to comprehend abstract concepts through concrete experiences. This aligns with Kövecses (2005) perspective, which emphasizes the universal nature of metaphors, while also acknowledging their cultural variations. In the Manggarai context, metaphors serve as a bridge between humans, ancestors, and nature, thereby strengthening local cultural identity. Kridalaksana (1993) illustrates this with examples such as "foot of a mountain" or "leg of a table," which show how figurative comparison structures everyday language. Recent research on Manggarai traditional rituals also demonstrates that spatial expressions can function as orientational metaphors that reflect the cultural imagery and worldview of the Manggarai community (Erfiani, 2026).

Previous studies on ritual language highlight its symbolic and pedagogical functions. Habur (2025) emphasizes the role of proverbs as carriers of ancestral wisdom in the Teing Hang ritual, though his analysis is limited to proverbial expressions and does not fully explore metaphors as broader cognitive structures. Palmer (1996) views metaphors as verbal symbols rooted in the imagination of the speech community, reinforcing the idea that ritual discourse

is a creative act of meaning-making. [Raru \(2022\)](#) further demonstrates that Manggarai ritual discourse is rich in metaphors that reinforce community bonds and continuity of life, showing how ritual speech functions as cultural education. Similarly, recent research on Manggarai ritual discourse has found that figurative expressions convey cultural values and contribute to the transmission of cultural knowledge within the community ([Erfiani et al., 2026](#)).

In the broader field of indigenous discourse, scholars such as [Finnegan \(1992\)](#) and [Duranti \(1997\)](#) argue that oral traditions and ritual speech are central to maintaining cultural identity and transmitting values across generations. Indigenous metaphors often encode ecological knowledge, kinship relations, and spiritual beliefs, making them vital for cultural resilience. Studies in other Indonesian contexts [Fox \(1988\)](#); [Geertz \(1973\)](#) reveal that ritual language is deeply intertwined with cosmology and social organization, suggesting that Manggarai metaphors similarly embody collective worldviews. This is also supported by recent research on the Teing Hang Woja ritual, which shows that ritual lexicons encode collective values, ecological knowledge, and relationships between humans and nature ([Daar & Gunas, 2026](#)).

There are three main types of metaphors identified in Manggarai ritual discourse. First, structural metaphors dominate ritual speech, such as “fertile soil” symbolizing well-being and continuity of life. Second, orientational metaphors use spatial orientations (up-down, near-far) to express dignity, unity, and togetherness. Third, ontological metaphors conceptualize abstract ideas as objects, such as “nourished roots,” symbolizing community strength. These findings resonate with both linguistic theory and anthropological perspectives, confirming that metaphors are not only linguistic phenomena but also cultural and spiritual tools. The identification of orientational metaphors in Manggarai traditional rituals further supports the relevance of this classification in understanding how spatial concepts are connected with cultural meanings ([Erfiani, 2026](#)).

Thus, the literature shows that metaphors in ritual discourse function as cognitive frameworks, cultural identity markers, and pedagogical instruments. This study builds on previous research by systematically analyzing metaphors in Manggarai ritual speech, thereby contributing to both linguistic scholarship and the preservation of indigenous traditions.

METHOD

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach with the aim of analyzing metaphors in the Teing Hang Wuat Wa'i ritual discourse in Timung Village, Manggarai. [Creswell \(2014\)](#) emphasizes that qualitative research aims to understand the meanings that individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human issue. In this approach, the researcher serves as the primary instrument for collecting data through observation, interviews, and documentation. [Silverman \(2013\)](#) views qualitative methods as a way to understand social practices through language, interaction, and symbols. He emphasizes that qualitative research must focus on empirical details such as discourses, conversations, or texts – to uncover hidden patterns of meaning. In the context of metaphor research, Silverman's perspective is relevant because Manggarai ritual discourse is a form of symbolic communication rich in cultural meaning. Qualitative analysis allows researchers to interpret how metaphors are used to build solidarity, identity, and social values. [Spradley \(1980\)](#) introduced the concept of participant observation as a primary method in qualitative research. According to him, researchers must be directly involved in the lives of the community being studied to understand meaning from within (emic perspective). He emphasized the importance of systematically observing, recording, and interpreting cultural symbols and practices. In the study of Manggarai ritual metaphors, Spradley's approach is highly relevant because the researcher not only analyzes utterances but also seeks to understand the social, spiritual, and cultural contexts in which those utterances are made.

Data were collected through direct observation, audio recordings, and interviews with three traditional leaders considered to be the guardians of tradition. These individuals were chosen because of their recognized authority and expertise in reciting ritual utterances during

the Teing Hang Wuat Wa'i ceremony. Their role as guardians of tradition ensured that the data collected were authentic, culturally valid, and provided deep insights into the metaphorical structures embedded in Manggarai ritual discourse. The analysis process involved transcribing the utterances, identifying metaphors, determining the source and target domains, and interpreting the cultural meanings they contained.

This study began with direct observation of the Teing Hang Wuat Wa'i ritual in Timung Village, Manggarai. The observation was conducted to understand the social and cultural context of the ritual utterances that were the subject of the study. Next, the researcher made audio recordings of the ritual utterances (torok) spoken by the traditional leaders. These recordings served as the primary source of linguistic data, which was then analyzed further.

The next stage consisted of semi-structured interviews with three traditional leaders regarded as guardians of tradition. These interviews aimed to explore in-depth knowledge regarding the meanings of metaphors contained in ritual discourse. After the data was collected, the researcher transcribed the words, phrases, clauses, and sentences containing metaphors. These transcriptions served as the basis for the classification process.

The transcribed data were then classified into three main categories: structural, orientational, and ontological metaphors. Each metaphor was analyzed by identifying the source domain and the target domain, thereby enabling a systematic understanding of the relationship between concrete experiences and abstract concepts. The final stage involved the interpretation of cultural meaning, in which the researcher interpreted how these metaphors reflect the social, spiritual, and cognitive values of the Manggarai community.

Thus, the sequence of this research demonstrates a systematic process, ranging from data collection through observation, recording, and interviews, to linguistic analysis and cultural interpretation. This coherent research structure ensures that the study's findings are academically sound while also making a tangible contribution to the preservation of the Manggarai language and traditions.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the study on metaphors in the Teing Hang Wuat Wa'i ritual discourse in Timung Village, Manggarai, show that there are 19 expressions frequently used in the Teing Hang Wuat Wa'i ritual. This ritual language is rich in symbols and meanings that can be categorized into three main types: structural metaphors, orientational metaphors, and ontological metaphors. Each category includes examples of analyzed data, complete with source domains and target domains, allowing for a clearer understanding of the cultural meanings they convey. The data on frequently used utterances in the Teing Hang Wuat Wa'i ritual obtained from this study are as follows:

Table 1. List of Metaphors

1.	Nai ca anggit, tuka ca leleng
2.	Limbang ola ngo sekolah, limbang wae kawae bae
3.	Wancing salang nggaring, weang salang gerak
4.	Neka mu'u pulu, neka pacu ratus
5.	Titong salang nggirong, palong salang lakon
6.	Ca sor monggok, nggelak nata
7.	Mburuk eta wuwung sama pinu luju, jarot eta ngando sama pinu lando
8.	Tebang nintu belang, dental one leman
9.	Tebang nintu gurung, luju one muun
10.	Langkas majan kamping hae atan
11.	Ciri lalong cama hae lakon
12.	Neka manga rusak surakn cebal pena
13.	Pula toe ndua, laler toe mame, sila toe dila
14.	Suwit lime tulis, susak one surak, cilar sa'i dilan
15.	Porong boleh loke, bacang taran
16.	Kimpur neho kiwung, imang neho rimang rana
17.	Tadang one mai buru daat, sembeng one mai buru mese
18.	Dod tosong de moso, mencuk de muu
19.	Pajung iling mbau, ukup one mut, ceha one senang

The data above are classified according to metaphor categories:

Structural Metaphors

In the Manggarai tradition, structural metaphors serve as the primary means of understanding abstract concepts through concrete experiences. Values such as education, success, courage, intelligence, and excellence are projected through the structure of a journey, body movements, light, and valuable objects. This demonstrates that the Manggarai people interpret social, moral, and intellectual life by linking everyday experiences to broader meanings.

Data (2): The expression “Limbang ola ngo sekolah, limbang wae kawae bae” depicts education as a journey against a strong current. The current and the river symbolize challenges, while school symbolizes the goal of knowledge. This metaphor emphasizes that courage, hard work, and perseverance are essential requirements for achieving educational success, while also reflecting the geographical and social conditions of the Manggarai people, which are fraught with limitations.

Data (3): The expression “Wancing salang nggaring, weang salang gerak” interprets success as an open and luminous path. The path symbolizes the direction of life, while light symbolizes hope and knowledge. This metaphor affirms that success depends not only on individual effort but also on community support, opportunities, and guidance from others.

Data (5): The expression “Titong salang nggiring, palong salang lakon” emphasizes the importance of guidance on life's journey. The path to be taken symbolizes the process and challenges, while the act of “guiding” highlights the role of advice and direction. This metaphor underscores that success is achieved through a combination of personal effort and guidance from those with more experience.

Data (7): The expression “Mburuk eta wuwung sama pinu luju, jarot eta ngando sama pinu lando” depicts extraordinary ability through the imagery of swift movement in difficult terrain and a valuable object (a golden talisman). Speed and agility symbolize intelligence, precision, and highly valued excellence. This metaphor reflects the culture's appreciation for skill, dexterity, and productivity.

Data (8): The expression “Tebang nintu belang, dental one leman” depicts beautiful and polite speech through the sound of striped bamboo. The melodious and soothing sound symbolizes speech that is orderly, logical, and brings peace. This metaphor emphasizes the importance of speech ethics in maintaining social harmony.

Data (9): The expression “Tebang nintu gurung, luju one mu'un” conveys the high value of speech through the symbols of the sound of the gurung bamboo and gold. The words spoken are described as “a mouth full of gold” that is, speech that is honest, wise, and beneficial. This metaphor affirms that good speech is a moral wealth more valuable than material possessions.

Data (11): The expression “Ciri lalong cama hae lakon” describes the kind of courage that emerges only when one is with a group. Masculinity is presented as a symbol of situational courage, which arises from social support rather than personal integrity. This metaphor critiques courage that depends on the number of supporters rather than on a belief in the truth.

Data (12): The expression “Neka manga rusak surakn, cebal pena” emphasizes the importance of preserving documents and pens as symbols of knowledge and intellectual productivity. Documents symbolize works that must be preserved, while pens symbolize the ability to think and write. This metaphor affirms that the loss of documents or the damage to pens signifies a halt to creativity and knowledge.

Data (13): The expression “Pula toe ndua, laler toe mame, sila toe dila” depicts human development through the processes of cooking and kindling a fire. Undercooked food or a fire that will not catch symbolizes a person who is not yet emotionally or intellectually mature. This metaphor criticizes stagnation in personal development despite having gone through life experiences.

Data (14): The expression “Suwit lime tulis, susak one surak, cilar sa'i dilan” interprets intelligence and creativity through the hand that writes, letters, and a burning flame. Writing is viewed as a tangible manifestation of an active and creative mind. This metaphor emphasizes that true intelligence must be realized in written works that benefit others.

Data (18): The expression “Dod tosong de moso, mencuk de muu” depicts the experience of social rejection through the symbols of pointing and mockery. Being the target of the crowd's pointing fingers and taunts symbolizes the condition of someone who is rejected, humiliated, or made the object of hostility. This metaphor serves as a social critique of society's tendency to be quick to judge.

Data (19): The expression “Pajung iling mbau, ukup one mut, ceha one senang” conveys the meaning of protection and well-being through the symbols of an umbrella, a warm place, and a pleasant place. The umbrella symbolizes protection, the warm place symbolizes comfort, and the pleasant place symbolizes happiness. This metaphor emphasizes the importance of a sense of security, love, and well-being in social life.

Orientational Metaphors

Orientational metaphors in the Manggarai tradition utilize bodily and spatial orientations (up-down, inside-outside, far-near) to understand abstract concepts. Values such as family unity, dignity, health, strength, and safety are projected through symbols of body parts, elevated positions, physical beauty, the sturdiness of trees, and natural phenomena. This demonstrates that the Manggarai people interpret social, moral, and cultural life by linking concrete orientations to abstract meanings.

Data (1): The expression “Nai ca anggit, tuka ca leleng” depicts family unity through the bonds of the heart and the stomach. The heart symbolizes love and emotion, while the stomach symbolizes origin from the mother's womb. This metaphor emphasizes that the family is an organic unity that must live in harmony.

Data (10): The expression “Ngong langkas majan kamping hae atan” conveys dignity and honor through the concept of “height.” “Height” is not interpreted physically but rather as a symbol of social status and moral character. This metaphor affirms that honor is derived from integrity, honesty, and good conduct, not merely from wealth or position.

Data (15): The expression “Porong boleh loke, bacang taran” describes health through smooth skin and a fresh complexion. Physical beauty is viewed as a reflection of health and life balance. This metaphor emphasizes that good health is evident in a clean, fresh, and well-maintained body.

Data (16): The expression “Kimpur neho kiwung lopo, imang neho rimang rana” conveys physical strength and endurance through the trunk of an old sugar palm and the fronds of a productive palm tree. The sturdiness and flexibility of plants serve as symbols of human health, resilience, and productivity. This metaphor affirms that a healthy body is one that is strong, enduring, and beneficial to others.

Data (17): The expression “Tadang one mai buru daat, sembung one mai buru mese” depicts safety and peace through the symbols of the evil wind and the storm. The evil wind symbolizes negative influences, while the storm symbolizes life's trials. This metaphor emphasizes the hope that a person will be spared from conflict, illness, and hardship, and will live in protection and harmony.

Ontological Metaphor

Ontological metaphors in the Manggarai tradition view abstract experiences as concrete entities. Aspects such as speech, attitudes, and social relationships are embodied in the form of body parts or hand gestures, making them easier to understand and teach in social life.

Data (4): The expression “Neka mu'u pulu, Neka pacu ratus” depicts speech and attitudes as physical entities. “Tens of mouths” symbolizes excessive complaining, while “hundreds of cheeks” symbolizes frequently changing facial expressions that indicate dissatisfaction. This metaphor emphasizes the importance of controlling one's speech and

behavior so as not to damage social relationships. The cultural values it embodies are politeness, self-control, and maintaining harmony within the family and society.

Data (6): The expression “Ca sor monggok, nggelak nata” interprets social relationships through hand gestures. A clenched fist symbolizes need or limitation, while an open hand symbolizes generosity and a willingness to give. This metaphor affirms that social life is built on the basis of mutual giving and receiving, grounded in the values of humility, solidarity, and mutual respect. Social relationships are viewed as a symbolic exchange between those in need and those who provide assistance or blessings.

Discussion

This study identified three main types of metaphors in the Teing Hang Wuat Wa'i ritual discourse: structural, orientational, and ontological metaphors. Structural metaphors dominate the ritual discourse by framing education, success, courage, intelligence, and excellence through concrete experiences such as journeys, light, and valuable objects. Orientational metaphors use bodily and spatial orientations (up-down, inside-outside, far-near) to express family unity, dignity, health, strength, and safety. Meanwhile, ontological metaphors conceptualize speech, attitudes, and social relationships as concrete entities in the form of body parts or hand gestures.

These findings align with the theory of [Lakoff & Johnson \(1980\)](#), which asserts that metaphors are universal cognitive mechanisms that shape how humans understand abstract concepts. Furthermore, this study also supports [Kövecses \(2005\)](#) view that metaphorical variations depend on culture. In the Manggarai context, metaphors for education as a river current or success as a luminous path demonstrate how the community's geographical and social conditions shape their way of thinking.

In terms of the source and target domains, the metaphors in this ritual speech have source domains consisting of concrete everyday experiences (travel, rivers, light, body parts, trees, wind, and valuable objects) and target domains consisting of abstract concepts (education, success, dignity, health, solidarity, and social relationships). For example, in Data (2) “Limbang ola ngo sekolah, limbang wae kawae bae,” the river and its swift current as the source domain are projected onto education as the target domain. Similarly, Data (10) “Langkas majan kamping hae atan” uses the orientation of “height” as the source domain to convey dignity and honor as the target domain.

This supports [Palmer \(1996\)](#) view that metaphors are verbal symbolic games rooted in the imagination of the speaking community. The source domains chosen by the Manggarai people reflect their physical and social environments, while the target domains represent the abstract values they hold in high regard. Furthermore, this study expands upon [Habur \(2025\)](#) findings, which emphasize the role of proverbs as carriers of ancestral wisdom, by demonstrating that metaphors in ritual discourse extend beyond mere proverbs to include symbols that are alive within cultural practices.

In addition, the meanings of metaphors in Manggarai ritual speech reflect cultural, social, and spiritual values. Education as a journey against the river's current emphasizes hard work and perseverance; success as a luminous path underscores the importance of community support; speech described as a “mouth full of gold” highlights that moral values are more valuable than material possessions; the bond between heart and stomach emphasizes the importance of family solidarity; the “uplifted” orientation emphasizes the dignity derived from integrity; and open hands symbolize generosity and social solidarity.

These meanings align with [Raru's \(2022\)](#) research, which shows that Manggarai ritual discourse is rich in metaphors that reinforce togetherness and the continuity of life. Furthermore, these findings support [Hibur's \(2022\)](#) view that the Teing Hang ceremony is both a form of reverence for ancestors and an expression of gratitude to the Creator. Thus, metaphors in ritual discourse serve not only as a means of communication but also as a spiritual bridge connecting humans with their ancestors and nature.

CONCLUSIONS

This study shows that the Teing Hang Wuat Wa'i ritual discourse in Manggarai is rich in metaphors that function as cognitive, social, and cultural tools. Of the 19 discourses analyzed, three main types were identified. Structural metaphors represent education, success, courage, intelligence, and excellence as challenging journeys. River flows symbolize difficulties, light represents hope, and valuable objects symbolize excellence, reflecting the importance of hard work, perseverance, and social support. Orientational metaphors use bodily and spatial orientations to express abstract values. The heart and stomach symbolize family unity, high positions represent dignity, fresh skin and faces symbolize health, palm trunks signify strength, and storms represent life's trials. Ontological metaphors conceptualize speech, attitudes, and relationships as concrete entities, emphasizing politeness, self-control, solidarity, and mutual respect. Overall, these metaphors reflect Manggarai cultural identity, transmit ancestral values, strengthen community bonds, and preserve cultural heritage. Documenting ritual metaphors can also support formal and informal education and help younger generations appreciate and sustain Manggarai language, traditions, and cultural identity amid globalization.

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