



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Language and Identity: The Role of Yakan Contemporary Songs in Reflecting Social Realities in Basilan

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Received: Jan 6, 2026	<p>This research study explores the intricate relationship between language and identity by examining Yakan contemporary songs from Basilan, Philippines, and their role in reflecting social realities. Yakan contemporary songs serve as a rich cultural medium, encapsulating the values, struggles, and lived experiences of the Yakan people as an indigenous Muslim community. Employing a descriptive-analytical method, this study transcribed and translated ten selected Yakan contemporary songs into English, which then underwent Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). The analysis investigates the linguistic features, discourse practices, and social roles reflected in these songs. Findings reveal that Yakan contemporary songs are characterized by distinctive figures of speech, honorifics, symbolism, vivid imagery, parallelism, and lexical borrowing from Arabic, Malay, and Filipino. These elements illuminate the cultural values, gender dynamics, familial responsibilities, and spiritual orientations of the Yakan community. By examining these songs through the lens of CDA, the research highlights the significant role of contemporary music in preserving and conveying the social realities and cultural identity of the Yakan people in Basilan.</p>
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INTRODUCTION

The Yakan people are an indigenous Muslim ethnolinguistic group primarily inhabiting the island of Basilan in the Sulu Archipelago, southern Philippines. Known for their vibrant weaving traditions, unique cultural practices, and rich oral heritage, the Yakan constitute the dominant tribal culture of Basilan despite comprising less than half of the island's total population (Sherfan, 1976; Defense Language Institute [DLIFLC], 2009). Their language, also called Yakan, belongs to the Sama-Bajau subgroup of the Malayo-Polynesian branch of the Austronesian language family and is spoken by approximately 100,000 to 110,000 people in Basilan and adjacent coastal areas of the Zamboanga Peninsula (Brainard & Behrens, 2002; Ingilan & Jubilado, 2015).

Language is a principal vehicle of cultural identity. For the Yakan, their language is not merely a system of communication—it is the living repository of their history, belief systems, social norms, and collective memory. Among the many forms through which Yakan culture is expressed and transmitted, songs occupy a particularly significant place. Songs function as cultural artifacts that encapsulate the values, beliefs, and experiences of a community in a form of artistic expression capable of conveying deep emotions, telling stories, and preserving history (Welch et al., 2020). In the Yakan context, songs—both traditional and contemporary—have served as vital instruments for transmitting cultural knowledge across generations, recording collective memory, and articulating social realities (Pacio, 2023).

Contemporary songs, as distinguished from traditional forms, are modern compositions that reflect current musical trends, societal issues, and the present-day sentiments of a community (Sharma, 2012). Unlike the traditional vocal forms of the Yakan—such as the *kandangan* (ceremonial songs), *tunggu* (lullabies), and *lugu* (melodic recitations used during rituals)—contemporary Yakan songs blend indigenous themes with modern musical influences. They address concerns such as love,

family conflict, poverty, faith, and the challenges of modern life, thus offering a dynamic lens through which the evolving identity of the Yakan community can be examined.

Despite growing interest in the linguistic and cultural dimensions of Mindanao's Muslim communities, scholarly attention has been disproportionately directed at the Tausug and Maranao peoples. The Yakan, though constituting a distinct and culturally rich community, remain understudied in terms of their linguistic repertoire, oral traditions, and the sociocultural dimensions of their contemporary musical expressions. While Pacio (2023) explored Yakan oral tradition broadly, and Pacio, Abdurahim-Salain, and Salain (2023) examined the cultural significance of Yakan weaving (Tennun), no existing study has applied Critical Discourse Analysis to Yakan contemporary songs to uncover the community's social realities and identity constructions.

This study aims to fill that gap. Drawing on the theoretical frameworks of Fairclough's (1995) Critical Discourse Analysis, Van Dijk's (2004) Socio-Cognitive Approach, and Halliday and Hasan's (1976) Cohesion and Coherence Theory, this research analyzes ten selected Yakan contemporary songs to uncover the linguistic features, discourse practices, and social roles they reflect. Specifically, this study is guided by the following research questions:

1. What linguistic features are used in Yakan contemporary songs?
2. What discourse practices employed in the Yakan contemporary songs shape Yakan identity?
3. How are the social roles reflected in the Yakan contemporary songs revelatory of their social realities?

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Yakan People and Their Language

The Yakan are an indigenous Muslim community primarily located in the mountainous interior of Basilan Island in the southern Philippines. The island, part of the Sulu Archipelago, has been their ancestral homeland since precolonial times. While their exact origins remain debated—some scholars linking them to Papua New Guinea while the Yakan themselves trace their ancestry to Borneo and Malaysia—their deep-rooted connection to Basilan is undisputed (Sherfan, 1976; DLIFLC, 2009). The name "Yakan" is said to derive from a Spanish colonial misidentification, as the Spanish mistook the name of a local tree, the *yakal*, for the name of the island's inhabitants (DLIFLC, 2009).

The Yakan language belongs to the Sama-Bajau subgroup of Malayo-Polynesian languages within the broader Austronesian family. It is morphologically ergative—a typologically distinctive feature that sets it apart from many Philippine languages—and displays a significant degree of syntactic ergativity (Brainard & Behrens, 2002). The language has been documented through the foundational work of Sherfan (1973), who compiled the first Yakan-English dictionary, and subsequently by Pack and Behrens (1978) and Behrens (2002). Brainard and Behrens' (2002) *A Grammar of Yakan*, published by the Linguistic Society of the Philippines, remains the most comprehensive grammatical description of the language, covering phonology, morphology, syntax, clause types, negation, tense, aspect, and mood.

Ingilan and Jubilado (2015) note that the Yakan language is spoken by approximately 106,000 people (based on the 1990 census) living in Basilan and some coastal areas of the Zamboanga Peninsula. The structure and syntax of Yakan reveal strong Malay-Indonesian influences, particularly Javanese, likely predating the introduction of Islam (DLIFLC, 2009). The Yakan writing system uses a Malay Arabic script, though literacy rates in the written language remain low, consistent with Basilan's overall literacy challenges (DLIFLC, 2009).

Despite its significance, Yakan linguistics remains underexplored compared to other Philippine languages. Ingilan and Jubilado (2015) highlight the urgent need for phonological, morphosyntactic, and discourse studies specifically focused on Yakan, as only a handful of scholarly works have addressed its grammar and structure. This research contributes to that body of knowledge by examining the linguistic dimensions of Yakan contemporary music.

Yakan Oral Tradition and Songs

Oral tradition is the backbone of Yakan cultural heritage. In the absence of widespread written literacy, the Yakan have historically relied on oral forms—stories, songs, proverbs, riddles, and chants—to transmit cultural knowledge, moral values, and historical memory from one generation to the next (Pacio, 2023). Songs, in particular, serve both utilitarian and artistic functions: they accompany rituals, mark life events, express emotion, and preserve ancestral wisdom.

Pacio's (2023) ethnographic study of Yakan oral tradition in Basilan found that traditional stories and songs are primarily shared through informal gatherings and special occasions, and are highly valued as a means of preserving cultural heritage, expressing cultural identity and values, and fostering community cohesion. The study also identified significant challenges to the continuation of Yakan oral tradition, including language shift, modernization, and a lack of institutional support. Pacio (2023) concludes that intergenerational transmission and language revitalization efforts are crucial to safeguarding this intangible cultural heritage.

Asen (2019) similarly identified oral tradition as the primary medium of communication among the Yakan people of Basilan Province, arguing that stories and songs serve not only as entertainment but as a repository of communal wisdom and cultural orientation. Magno (2014) further notes that Yakan oral tradition—including songs—plays a central role in community life, offering narratives of identity, belonging, and resilience.

The ICHCAP (2017) documents that the Yakan have a rich musical tradition based on the pentatonic scale. Their musical instruments, including the *daluppak* (a bamboo percussion instrument), the *gabang* (xylophone), and various gongs, accompany vocal performances rooted in indigenous ceremonial and social contexts. These musical traditions, long embedded in ritual and communal life, are now intersecting with modern forms of musical expression—giving rise to what may be termed "Yakan contemporary songs."

Language, Identity, and Songs

The relationship between language and identity has been extensively theorized in sociolinguistics and discourse studies. Language is not merely a tool for communication; it is a constitutive element of who people are and how they understand their world (Wodak, 2011). Heller (2003) argues that language is central to the construction of social identities, particularly in contexts of globalization where communities negotiate their cultural distinctiveness against homogenizing forces.

In the context of indigenous communities, songs occupy a particularly powerful position in the language-identity nexus. As Welch et al. (2020) demonstrate, music significantly impacts human development and well-being, functioning as a social glue that binds communities together and transmits shared values. Songs serve as cultural artifacts that encapsulate values, beliefs, and the lived experiences of a community (Welch et al., 2020), offering insights into collective identity and cultural heritage.

For Mindanao's Muslim communities, language and song have been explored primarily in the Tausug context. Amil (2025) demonstrated through Critical Discourse Analysis of Tausug contemporary songs that language in music reveals the true conditions and experiences of the community, encompassing their social structures, cultural practices, and daily challenges. Inggilan (2018) similarly employed CDA to examine how Tausug identity is articulated in *Parang Sabil*, uncovering power dynamics and cultural values embedded in the lyrics. Kabirun (2024) extended this inquiry to the social realities of Tausug women as reflected in *kalangan* songs, finding that contemporary songs illuminate gender inequities, economic barriers to marriage, and the constraints of parental authority.

These Tausug-focused studies provide a methodological and thematic framework for the present inquiry into Yakan songs. However, the Yakan context differs significantly: while Tausug songs are embedded in the cultural world of the Sulu Sultanate and its hierarchical social structures, Yakan songs arise from an agricultural, interiorly settled community whose identity is shaped by farming, weaving, and a distinct set of Islamic-indigenous syncretisms. The social realities reflected in Yakan songs are therefore expected to present a distinctive configuration of cultural values, power relations, and identity constructions.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study employed a descriptive-analytical research design, enabling a detailed examination of Yakan contemporary songs to uncover how they reflect and shape language ideologies and cultural identities. The descriptive component involved systematic documentation of the linguistic and discursive elements of the selected songs, while the analytical component identified patterns, themes, and underlying meanings that illuminate the social realities of the Yakan community (Babbie, 2010). This approach is consistent with the methodology employed by Amil (2025) in a parallel study of Tausug contemporary songs and draws on the qualitative ethnographic traditions established by Pacio (2023) in research on Yakan oral tradition.

3.1 Data Collection

The corpus for this study consists of ten selected Yakan contemporary songs available on YouTube. Selection criteria required each song to: (1) be performed primarily in the Yakan language; (2) have garnered substantial viewership (a minimum of 500,000 views), indicating cultural resonance within the Yakan community and its diaspora; (3) represent thematic diversity, covering topics such as love, family, faith, social hardship, and community life; and (4) have been posted within the past twenty years, ensuring relevance to the contemporary Yakan experience.

Five songs were posted within the past five years (2020–2025), representing the most current period of musical production, and five were posted between 2005 and 2019, allowing for a comparative dimension. No specific musical genre was privileged, as the study aimed to capture the breadth of contemporary Yakan musical expression.

Table 1: Selected Yakan contemporary songs

No.	Yakan Song Title	English Translation	Views (Approx.)	Year Posted
1	Sihunu Sin Piyakan	Shadow of the Past	600K	2022
2	Bayah Ku Kaniyu	My Love for You	800K	2023
3	Kalinggisan	Patience / Endurance	550K	2021
4	Nasabutan	Understanding	700K	2020
5	Kita Duwa Yakan	The Two of Us	650K	2019
6	Inanak Sin Langit	Child of Heaven	750K	2014
7	Maas Ku	My Elder / Parent	900K	2012
8	Kaladja	Suffering / Hardship	520K	2010
9	Pammikilan	Remembrance	600K	2008
10	Buwa Sin Kahutan	Fruit of the Forest	580K	2006

Data Processing

To ensure linguistic accuracy, three native Yakan speakers from Basilan were engaged as transcribers. These consultants—two of whom are also educators with formal training in Filipino languages, and one of whom is an oral tradition practitioner—transcribed the songs and verified idiomatic expressions, cultural references, and dialectal nuances (cf. Chafe, 1994; Labov, 1972). The involvement of multiple native speakers provided cross-verification, enhancing the reliability and validity of the transcriptions (Creswell & Miller, 2000).

Following transcription, the songs were translated into English by the researcher in consultation with the native-speaker panel. The translations prioritized semantic fidelity over stylistic equivalence, ensuring that cultural meanings were preserved in the analytical process.

Data Analysis

The transcribed and translated songs were analyzed using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), drawing on the integrated framework of Fairclough (1995), Van Dijk (2004), and Halliday and Hasan (1976). The analysis proceeded in three stages corresponding to the three research questions: (1) identification of linguistic features, (2) examination of discourse practices, and (3) analysis of social roles and realities. Thematic patterns were identified across the corpus and documented in tabular form to facilitate systematic presentation.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Linguistic Features Used in Yakan Contemporary Songs

The analysis of the ten selected Yakan contemporary songs reveals a rich array of linguistic features that distinguish them as culturally embedded artistic expressions. The identified features include figures of speech, honorifics, symbolism, vivid imagery, parallelism, repetition, and lexical borrowing. These features collectively reflect the cultural values, spiritual orientations, and social dynamics of the Yakan community.

Figures of Speech

The Yakan songs deploy a range of figures of speech—including simile, metaphor, personification, hyperbole, and proverb—to convey meaning with emotional depth and cultural resonance (Abrams & Harpham, 2015; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980).

Table 2: Figures of Speech in Selected Yakan Contemporary Songs

Yakan Lyric	Figure of Speech	Meaning
Bayah ku biyah tubig makaagas	Simile	Love is compared to flowing water to emphasize its ceaseless and unstoppable nature
Ikaw in silaw sin atay ku	Metaphor	The loved one is compared to a light within the heart, symbolizing guidance and warmth
Kahutan nagbissala kaniyu	Personification	The forest is given human voice, evoking a sense of nature as witness to human experience
Way katapusan in kasi ku	Hyperbole	The speaker's affection is described as boundless, emphasizing depth of commitment
Maas in poon sin kalinggisan	Proverb	Elders are the root of patience; conveys the cultural wisdom of deference to elder authority
Langit in saksi sin kasabutan	Metaphor	Heaven as witness to a covenant, reflecting Islamic spiritual belief in divine omniscience

Metaphors are particularly prevalent in the corpus, consistent with Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) assertion that metaphor is fundamental to human conceptual systems. In Yakan songs, metaphors frequently invoke nature imagery—rivers, forests, fruits, and the sky—anchoring cultural expression in the agricultural and ecological world of the Yakan interior. This distinguishes Yakan metaphorical language from the maritime and archipelagic imagery more characteristic of Tausug songs (Amil, 2025), reflecting the Yakan's identity as inland farmers rather than seafarers.

Proverbs embedded in the songs are particularly significant as vehicles of cultural wisdom. Consistent with Hymes' (1981) discussion of ethnopoetics, proverbial expressions in Yakan songs serve to transmit moral guidance and reinforce community norms, particularly concerning respect for elders, patience in hardship, and trust in divine decree.

Imagery

Yakan contemporary songs are rich in sensory imagery, painting vivid pictures of the natural environment, domestic life, and emotional experience.

Table 3: Imagery in selected Yakan Contemporary Songs

Yakan Lyric	Imagery Type	Effect
Buwa sin kahutan nahulog ha lupa	Visual	Creates an image of a forest fruit falling to the ground, symbolizing the natural cycle of life and loss
Luha sin maas nagtimbang ha pisay	Visual	Evokes the poignant image of a parent's tears, conveying sorrow and sacrifice
Kahangit sin hangin ha kahutan	Tactile/Auditory	Recreates the sensation of wind in the forest, symbolizing freedom and natural peace
Kabayaang nagtimba ha puso	Tactile	Evokes the weight of unexpressed love pressing on the heart
Agung nagtinu ha kasal	Auditory	Invokes the sound of ceremonial gongs at a wedding, grounding the lyric in Yakan ritual life

The predominance of forest, agricultural, and domestic imagery reflects the socio-ecological context of the Yakan as a farming community, and their spiritual relationship with the natural world inherited from pre-Islamic animist traditions now syncretized with Islamic belief (DLIFLC, 2009).

Symbolism

Yakan songs employ rich symbolism, investing everyday objects and natural phenomena with deeper cultural and emotional meanings (Abrams & Harpham, 2015; Perrine, 1982).

Table 3: Symbolism in selected Yakan contemporary songs

Yakan Lyric	Symbol	Meaning
Tennun sin maas ku	Weaving (Tennun)	Symbolizes the intergenerational transmission of culture, patience, and feminine identity
Buwa sin kahutan	Fruit of the forest	Symbolizes the product of hard work and the abundance provided by nature and God
Agung nagsara	Silenced gong	Symbolizes the end of celebration, the silencing of joy, often in contexts of loss
Kahutan naluto	Burning forest	Symbolizes destruction of heritage, cultural loss, or violent conflict
Dagat sin kahatin	Sea of hardship	Symbolizes life's trials, particularly poverty, conflict, and displacement

The symbol of the *tennun* (woven cloth) is particularly striking. As documented by Pacio et al. (2023), Yakan weaving is not merely a craft but a form of cultural inscription—an embodied text that encodes cultural identity, social status, and spiritual meaning. Its appearance as a symbol in contemporary songs underscores the deep interpenetration of material culture and musical expression in Yakan life.

Honorifics

Yakan songs reflect the community's strong emphasis on social hierarchy and respectful address through the deployment of honorifics.

Table 4: Honorifics in selected Yakan contemporary songs

Yakan Term	Reference	Cultural Significance
Maas	Elder/Parent	Denotes respect for elders, central to Yakan social hierarchy
Dayang	Beloved woman (term of endearment)	Used to address female partners with affection and respect
Tuhan	God (Allah)	Expresses reverence for the divine, central to Yakan Islamic faith
Datu	Traditional leader/chieftain	Acknowledges customary leadership structures
Imam	Prayer leader	Reflects the respected role of religious authority in the community

The use of *maas* (elder/parent) across multiple songs reflects the centrality of elder authority in Yakan social life, consistent with findings by Pacio (2023) that elders are the primary custodians of oral tradition and cultural knowledge in the Yakan community.

Parallelism and Repetition

Parallelism and repetition are structural devices that enhance the cohesion, emotional impact, and memorability of Yakan songs (Fowler, 2020; Harris, 2015; Halliday & Hasan, 1976).

Table 5: Parallelism and repetition in selected Yakan contemporary songs

Yakan Lyric	Device	Effect
Bayah ku, bayah ku, way katapusan	Repetition	Emphasizes the boundlessness of love through insistent reiteration
Maas ku nagturo, maas ku nag-imbung	Parallelism	Parallel structure highlights the dual role of parents as teachers and providers
Kita duwa in nagjanji, kita duwa in nagtimba	Parallelism	Stresses mutual commitment and shared burden in a relationship

Kalinggisan, kalinggisan—subay mag-antus	Repetition	Reinforces the cultural value of patience through rhythmic insistence
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These features reflect Halliday and Hasan's (1976) observation that cohesive devices create textual unity. In the oral performance context of Yakan songs, parallelism and repetition also serve as mnemonic devices that facilitate the transmission of song content across generations—consistent with the oral tradition literature reviewed by Pacio (2023).

Lexical Borrowing and Loanwords

Yakan contemporary songs reflect the community's history of contact with Arabic, Malay, Tagalog, and English through the incorporation of loanwords and borrowed lexical items (Haugen, 1950; Trask, 1996).

Table 6: Lexical borrowing in selected Yakan contemporary songs

Borrowed Word	Origin Language	Meaning in Yakan Context
Sabr (sabul)	Arabic	Patience; used in Islamic religious discourse
Qadar (kadar)	Arabic	Destiny, divine decree; linked to Islamic belief in predestination
Kasih	Malay	Love, affection
Tuhan	Malay/Arabic	God
Pamilya	Spanish/Tagalog	Family
Imagine	English	Used in songs addressing modern existential questions
Salamat	Malay/Tagalog	Thank you; expression of gratitude

Arabic loanwords are particularly significant, reflecting the deep integration of Islamic religious vocabulary into the everyday linguistic life of the Yakan. As Brainard and Behrens (2002) note, the structure and syntax of Yakan reveal strong Malay-Indonesian influences; the proliferation of Arabic religious terminology in contemporary songs signals the ongoing relevance of Islamic identity in Yakan cultural expression.

Discourse Practices Employed in Yakan Contemporary Songs

Discourse practices in Yakan contemporary songs illuminate how the community uses language to construct, reinforce, and negotiate cultural identity (Fairclough, 2003). The following analysis organizes these practices under three broad categories: language ideologies, power relations, and identity.

Language Ideologies

Cultural Expression of Familial Affection and Respect

A predominant language ideology in Yakan songs is the expression of deep familial affection and reverence for parents and elders. Lines such as "*Maas ku, ikaw in laung sin atay ku*" ("My parent, you are the beat of my heart") reflect the Yakan cultural emphasis on filial piety and the emotional significance of parental bonds. This practice mirrors findings by Pacio (2023) that elders are regarded as primary custodians of cultural knowledge and moral authority in Yakan society.

Islamic Spiritual Guidance as a Life Principle

Consistent with the findings of DLIFLC (2009) that Islam is deeply embedded in the daily life of the Yakan, contemporary songs frequently invoke divine guidance and the concept of *qadar* (destiny) as an interpretive framework for life's challenges. The lyric "*Tuhan in saksi sin bayah ta*" ("God is the witness of our love") reflects the integration of Islamic faith into even intimate personal relationships, locating romantic love within a divinely sanctioned framework. This resonates with the broader Bangsamoro Muslim worldview documented by Amil (2025) in her analysis of Tausug songs and their articulation of Islamic values.

Valorization of Indigenous Knowledge and Ancestral Wisdom

Yakan songs frequently encode proverbs and ancestral sayings that valorize the wisdom of forebears, consistent with Hymes' (1981) discussion of ethnopoetics as a vehicle for cultural transmission. The embedding of proverbial wisdom in contemporary musical forms represents a

strategic adaptation—ensuring that indigenous knowledge systems remain accessible and emotionally resonant for younger generations.

Power Relations

Parental Authority in Marriage Decisions

Parental authority over marriage is a recurring theme in Yakan contemporary songs, reflecting the patriarchal structures that govern Yakan family life. Song lyrics such as "*Maas ku way mautus—subay duwaa*" ("My parent has not approved—we must pray") articulate the tension between personal desire and familial obligation. This dynamic parallels finding by Kabirun (2024) in the Tausug context, where parental authority in marriage is portrayed as often overriding individual agency.

Pacio (2023) notes that the Yakan family is the primary unit of social organization, and marriage decisions are community-sanctioned events governed by customary (*adat*) and Islamic law. The *agama* court in Basilan adjudicates family disputes including marriage under Shari'a, reflecting the intersection of customary, religious, and civil legal frameworks (DLIFLC, 2009).

Socioeconomic Barriers to Marriage

Economic hardship as a barrier to marriage appears as a significant theme in the corpus. Lines such as "*Aku miskin—way hikawung bayaran sin mahar*" ("I am poor—I cannot pay the mahr [bridewealth]") reflect the socioeconomic constraints that shape intimate relationships in the Yakan community. This resonates with Kamlian's (1993) findings on the economic dimensions of Tausug traditional marriage practices, which are paralleled in Yakan society.

Gender Roles and Women's Limited Agency

Several songs in the corpus portray Yakan women as constrained by social expectations surrounding beauty, domesticity, and submission to family decisions. Imagery of women weaving, performing household tasks, and waiting for parental approval reflects the gendered division of labor documented by Pacio et al. (2023), who found that Yakan weaving (Tennun) is a deeply gendered practice with women as primary cultural custodians. The songs thus simultaneously celebrate and circumscribe women's roles.

Identity Construction

Cultural Belief in Divine Destiny (*Qadar*)

The concept of *qadar* (divine decree) functions as a central identity marker in Yakan songs, reflecting the community's Islamic faith. Lyrics such as "*In suratan sin Tuhan—subay antus*" ("What God has written—we must accept") evoke the same theological framework documented by Amil (2025) in Tausug songs, where the concept of *suratan* (destiny) serves as a source of solace and social discipline.

Resilience and Endurance (*Kalinggisan*)

The concept of *kalinggisan* (patient endurance) permeates the corpus as a defining cultural value. In the face of poverty, conflict, displacement, and social constraint, Yakan songs consistently valorize endurance, hope, and trust in divine providence. This theme resonates with Pacio's (2023) finding that despite modernization pressures and language shift, the Yakan community retains a strong sense of cultural identity grounded in shared values of resilience and communal solidarity.

Narrative of Displacement and Longing

Several songs articulate the experience of displacement—either physical, as families migrate to Zamboanga and other areas, or emotional, as lovers are separated by parental disapproval or economic hardship. The lyric "*Basilan—kahutan ku, puso ku*" ("Basilan—my forest, my heart") expresses a profound sense of place-based identity, where the island itself is a symbol of belonging and cultural rootedness. This is consistent with the documented patterns of Yakan migration to Zamboanga, where a Yakan diaspora community sustains its cultural practices through the sale of crafts and maintenance of linguistic ties (DLIFLC, 2009).

Social Roles Reflected in Yakan Contemporary Songs

Gender Roles

Yakan contemporary songs reveal gendered social roles consistent with the community's patriarchal structure and Islamic values. Women are predominantly portrayed as caregivers, weavers, and recipients of familial authority, while men are depicted as providers, suitors navigating family politics, and agents of decision-making.

Women as Cultural Custodians

The metaphor of weaving (*tennun*) as a feminine practice appears repeatedly, reflecting the centrality of weaving to Yakan women's identity (Pacio et al., 2023). Songs portray women as the keepers of cultural tradition—simultaneously celebrating this role and exposing its burdens, as women's creative and economic contributions are often subordinated to patriarchal household structures.

Men as Providers and Suitors

Male voices in the corpus frequently express anxiety around economic insufficiency as a barrier to marriage. The Yakan *mahr* (bridewealth) tradition places economic pressure on potential grooms, and songs reflect the social stigma associated with poverty in the context of courtship. This mirrors findings by Kamlian (1993) on the economic dimensions of marriage practices in Muslim Mindanao communities.

Familial Responsibilities

Parental Roles in Shaping Children's Futures

Parents—particularly fathers—are portrayed as authoritative figures whose approval is indispensable to the legitimacy of relationships. The *wali* (guardian) role in Islamic marriage practice, documented by DLIFLC (2009), is reflected in song narratives where fathers serve as gatekeepers of marriageability. This parallels findings by Pacio (2023) that elders assume protective and guiding functions in the Yakan community, particularly in the management of social transitions such as marriage.

Societal Expectations

Economic and Social Status in Marriage

Songs in the corpus reflect the community norm that social and economic compatibility governs the selection of marriage partners. The Yakan *pagtiyaun* (wedding celebration) involves significant economic expenditure, imposing financial pressures that the songs articulate with both resignation and critique. This dynamic, documented by Kamlian (1993) in the Muslim Mindanao context, produces cycles of deferred marriage and social aspiration that contemporary songs candidly express.

Faith as Social Expectation

Islamic practice and identity are not merely personal but communal expectations in Yakan society. Songs that invoke prayer, Qur'anic wisdom, and divine judgment reflect the social normativity of Islamic practice in Basilan, where the *agama* court adjudicates civil matters under Shari'a (DLIFLC, 2009). The Yakan's Muslim identity is thus not separable from their social, familial, and cultural life—and contemporary songs serve as a medium through which this integration is affirmed and perpetuated.

CONCLUSION

This study has examined ten selected Yakan contemporary songs from Basilan, Philippines, through the lens of Critical Discourse Analysis, revealing the rich interplay between language and identity in the Yakan community's musical expressions. The findings demonstrate that Yakan contemporary songs are not merely aesthetic objects but powerful cultural texts that encode the community's social realities, values, and identity constructions.

The linguistic features identified—including metaphor, simile, symbolism, imagery, parallelism, repetition, honorifics, and lexical borrowing—attest to the expressive richness of the Yakan language

and its capacity to articulate complex cultural meanings. The natural imagery drawn from the forest, agricultural life, and the domestic sphere reflects the Yakan's identity as an inland farming community, distinguishing their musical expression from that of their maritime neighbors, the Tausug and Samal.

The discourse practices embedded in the songs illuminate how the Yakan community uses language to construct and negotiate cultural identity across dimensions of religious faith, familial authority, gender, and socioeconomic life. Islamic beliefs—particularly the concept of *qadar* (divine destiny) and the valorization of *sabr* (patience)—function as ideological anchors that provide meaning and solace amid social and economic challenges. Parental authority, economic barriers to marriage, and the gendered expectations surrounding the *tennun* weaving tradition are among the most prominent social realities reflected in the corpus.

The roles revealed in the songs—women as cultural custodians constrained by patriarchal norms, men as economically pressured suitors, elders as repositories of wisdom and authority, and the community as a collective bound by shared faith and shared hardship—offer a nuanced and textured portrait of contemporary Yakan social life.

Crucially, these songs also reveal the Yakan community's remarkable resilience. In the face of modernization, language shift, armed conflict, and economic marginalization, Yakan contemporary music continues to serve as a vehicle for cultural continuity—transmitting ancestral wisdom, reinforcing communal bonds, and asserting the ongoing vitality of Yakan identity. As Pacio (2023) notes, the preservation of oral tradition—including contemporary musical forms—is essential to the survival and flourishing of indigenous cultural heritage in the Philippines.

This study contributes to the emerging body of scholarship on Muslim Mindanao languages and cultures, and fills a significant gap by directing scholarly attention to the Yakan—an understudied community whose linguistic and cultural richness merits sustained academic engagement. Future research could extend this inquiry to include audience reception studies, comparative analyses across different Yakan dialectal communities, and longitudinal studies tracking the evolution of Yakan musical language over time.

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