

An ethnostylistics analysis of *Dondi'* utterances: Symbolic meaning in the *Rambu Solo'* funeral ceremony

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Article Info	Abstract
Keywords: ethnostylistics; <i>Dondi'</i>; <i>Rambu Solo'</i>; style of language; symbolic meaning Article History Received: 2026-06-08 Reviewed: 2026-06-14 Accepted: 2026-08-17  License: CC BY-SA 4.0	This study aims to examine the language styles and symbolic meanings embedded in <i>dondi'</i> speech performed during the <i>Rambu Solo'</i> traditional ceremonies of the Toraja people through an ethnostylistics approach. As a form of oral expression within death rituals, <i>dondi'</i> speech conveys complex cultural, emotional, and cosmological values. This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach. The data consist of <i>dondi'</i> speech analyzed based on three dimensions: language style, symbolic meaning, and ethnostylistics interpretation. The findings identify four dominant language styles: repetition, metaphor, simile, and personification. Repetition functions to establish rhythm, reinforce meaning, and represent recurring patterns in ritual practices and collective experiences. Metaphor expresses abstract concepts, particularly life and death, through concrete symbols drawn from the natural environment. Simile clarifies cultural meanings through explicit comparisons with familiar phenomena, while personification attributes human emotions and characteristics to elements of nature. From an ethnostylistics perspective, these linguistic forms reflect the Toraja worldview, which is contextual, symbolic, and closely integrated with language, culture, and cosmology. Thus, <i>dondi'</i> speech serves not only as a communicative medium but also as a means of representing, preserving, and transmitting cultural values within the <i>Rambu Solo'</i> ceremony.
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INTRODUCTION

The *Rambu Solo'* traditional ceremony is a death ritual in Toraja culture characterized by complex structures, stages, and symbolic practices (Dewi et al., 2024). Beyond serving as a funeral ceremony, *Rambu Solo'* represents the belief system, social stratification, kinship relations, and cultural identity of the Toraja people (Baan et al., 2022). Each stage of the ceremony is governed by customary norms and involves various forms of cultural expression, including ritual language (Baan & Dewi, 2023). In this context, language functions not merely as a means of communication but also as a symbolic medium for expressing respect for ancestors, reinforcing social relationships, legitimizing social status, and representing the community's cosmological worldview (Dewi & La'biran, 2024). Ritual language, therefore, constitutes an integral component of the cultural system transmitted across generations.

One distinctive form of ritual language in *Rambu Solo'* is *dondi'* speech (Saputra, 2023). It is performed in particular ritual contexts by individuals who possess customary or familial authority. Linguistically, *dondi'* speech is characterized by distinctive diction, figurative expressions, repetition, and patterned structures that contribute to its aesthetic and rhetorical qualities (Dewi, 2020). These linguistic features also convey symbolic meanings associated with respect, prayer, kinship, social relations, and the Toraja conception of life and death. Consequently, *dondi'* speech represents not only a verbal form of ritual expression but also a linguistic manifestation of Toraja cultural values and identity (Dewi, 2021).

Understanding *dondi'* speech requires an analytical framework that connects linguistic forms with the cultural knowledge underlying their use (Alshamiri, 2025). Ethnostylistics provides such a framework because it examines stylistic choices in relation to the worldview, cultural values, and social practices of a particular speech community. Unlike stylistic analysis that primarily focuses on formal linguistic features, an ethnostylistic approach considers how stylistic forms acquire meaning and function within a specific cultural context (Nurgiyantoro, 2014; Rejo & Rohmah, 2021). This approach is particularly relevant to *dondi'* speech because its figurative and rhetorical expressions are closely associated with Toraja cultural concepts and cosmological beliefs (Parapat et al., 2020).

Previous studies have established that ritual language generally contains symbolic meanings and reflects the belief systems and social structures of the communities that use it (Munawarah & Datang, 2019). Research on *Rambu Solo'* has also predominantly examined anthropological, religious, and socio-cultural dimensions, including ritual processes, social relations, and cultural values. Linguistic studies have tended to emphasize lexical forms, language structure, or general patterns of traditional speech. In broader stylistic research, linguistic-stylistic interpretation has increasingly considered the relationship between textual features and socio-cultural contexts (Pichtownikowa, 2024). Studies of literary texts have also demonstrated that stylistic analysis can reveal how linguistic choices construct thematic, ideological, and cultural meanings (Sallomi & Obied, 2024; Sarfraz, 2022). Similarly, the relationship between stylistic features and cultural themes has been examined as an important dimension of textual interpretation (Sihui & Xiaoxi, 2024). These studies indicate that stylistic analysis is not limited to identifying linguistic forms but can also provide a framework for interpreting the cultural meanings constructed through those forms.

However, limited attention has been given to the stylistic forms of *dondi'* speech, the symbolic meanings constructed through these stylistic forms, and the relationship between linguistic style and Toraja cultural values. More specifically, an integrated ethnostylistics analysis of *dondi'* speech remains underexplored. The gap concerns not only the identification of stylistic features but also the interpretation of how repetition, metaphor, simile, and personification construct symbolic meanings within the cultural context represented in the ritual texts. This distinction is important because stylistic features cannot be adequately interpreted solely at the linguistic level. Their meanings need to be examined in relation to the cultural knowledge, experiences, and worldview represented through the text (Pichtownikowa, 2024). Therefore, a focused ethnostylistics analysis of *dondi'* speech can extend previous research by connecting stylistic forms, symbolic meanings, and cultural representation within a specific Toraja ritual discourse.

The urgency of this research is further strengthened by the changing sociocultural conditions of Toraja society. Modernization, globalization, and changes in patterns of cultural transmission have affected the younger generation's familiarity with traditional ritual language. As a result, knowledge of the structure, stylistic features, functions, and symbolic meanings of *dondi'* speech may gradually decline. Systematic documentation and textual analysis are therefore necessary not only to contribute to linguistic and cultural scholarship but also to support the preservation and transmission of Toraja intangible cultural heritage. In methodological terms, a clearly defined research design is also important to ensure that the research questions, data, and analytical procedures remain aligned (Tobi & Kampen, 2018). Accordingly, this study focuses specifically on the analysis of 12 documented *dondi'* speech texts through an ethnostylistics approach.

Based on this research gap, the study addresses four research questions: (1) What stylistic forms are found in *dondi'* speech? (2) What symbolic meanings are expressed through these stylistic forms? (3) How do the stylistic forms and symbolic meanings reflect Toraja cultural values and worldview? and (4) What cultural functions does *dondi'* speech perform within the *Rambu Solo'* ceremony?

Accordingly, this study aims to identify and describe the stylistic forms of *dondi'* speech, analyze their symbolic meanings, interpret the relationship between stylistic choices and Toraja cultural values and worldview, and explain the cultural functions of *dondi'* speech in the *Rambu Solo'* ceremony. Through an ethnostylistics perspective, this study seeks to demonstrate how

linguistic style operates as a medium for expressing, representing, and transmitting Toraja cultural knowledge and identity.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative descriptive research design with an ethnostylistics approach. The approach is used to examine the stylistic features and symbolic meanings of *dondi'* speech in the context of the *Rambu Solo'* traditional ceremony. The qualitative design (Tobi & Kampean, 2018) enables the study to interpret linguistic expressions based on their textual characteristics and the cultural meanings represented in the documented speech corpus.

The research data consist of 12 documented *dondi'* speech texts performed in the context of *Rambu Solo'* ceremonies. The corpus includes words, phrases, clauses, and sentences that contain distinctive stylistic features and symbolic expressions. The texts were selected purposively based on their relevance to the research objectives, particularly their representation of figurative language, repetition, and other stylistic forms associated with *dondi'* speech. The primary data source is the documented corpus of the 12 speeches. Contextual information accompanying the texts is used only to support the interpretation of their cultural and ritual meanings.

Data collection was conducted through documentation. The documented *dondi'* speeches were collected, organized, and prepared as a textual corpus for analysis. Where available, information concerning the ritual setting and function of each speech was considered as contextual information rather than as a separate ethnographic data source. This distinction is important because the present study focuses on textual analysis and does not employ interviews or direct ethnographic observation as primary analytical data.

Data analysis followed the qualitative analytical procedures proposed by Miles and Huberman (in Harahap, 2021), consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. First, the 12 *dondi'* texts were examined and organized into analyzable linguistic units. Second, relevant expressions were identified and classified according to their stylistic forms, particularly repetition, metaphor, simile, and personification. Third, the symbolic meanings represented by these stylistic forms were analyzed based on their textual context and the cultural concepts explicitly represented in the documented corpus. Fourth, the findings were interpreted through an ethnostylistics perspective to explain how linguistic choices reflect cultural values, worldview, and ritual functions. The analysis was conducted systematically by comparing stylistic patterns across the corpus to identify recurring forms, meanings, and cultural functions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The analysis of 12 documented *dondi'* speech texts from the *Rambu Solo'* traditional ceremony identified four dominant stylistic forms: repetition, metaphor (Ilyos, 2024), simile, and personification (Fairuz, 2025). The analysis adopts an ethnostylistics approach to examine how linguistic forms construct meanings within the cultural context represented in the texts (Farel et al., 2023; Dewi, 2020). Rather than treating stylistic features as isolated linguistic devices, the analysis considers their relationship with the themes of grief, death, separation, ritual continuity, and the representation of nature (Jun, 2025; Peer, 2021).

The data analyzed was in the form of *dondi'* speech obtained from the ritual practice of *Rambu Solo'*. Each speech was analyzed based on three main aspects, namely the form of language style, symbolic meaning, and ethnostylistic interpretation. Through this analysis, it is hoped that it can be revealed how language is used as a medium to represent the experience of grief, belief systems, and the relationship between humans, nature, and the cosmos in Toraja culture. This section of results and discussion not only presents research findings, but also provides a more comprehensive understanding of how *dondi' speech* plays a role in shaping and representing the cultural identity of the Toraja people in the context of the *Rambu Solo'* ceremony.

Data 1

Podo dondi-dondi mammo (Only dondi'-dondi alone)
Dirammasan oinaya (A comfort for the grieving heart)
Sala' tindokmo te dondi' (This dondi' begins in error)

Sala' palame-lame (A fault that drowns)
La ditindok pole'omo (It will be started again)
La diala penduan (It will be done a second time)

Data 2

Ondori saekande (We only come here)
Makatulen-tulenmo (Over and over again)
Karorrongan kiratondo (Only silence we encounter)
Angki tulen-tulenni (So we repeat it again)
Ondori saekande (We only come here)
Angki tulen-tulenni (So we repeat it again)
Ondori saekande (Only because we come for food)
Angki tulen-tulenni (So we repeat it again)

Data 3

Kayu toyang tondon rante (A tree far from the lowland)
Kayu lembuyan mata (A tree unseen by the eyes)
Umbai pentionangan (Perhaps a shelter)
Kedenni makarorrong (If there is silence)

Data 4

Da'mu tundan-tundan bangngi (Do not wake him up)
Basseanna mamali' (A covenant of love)
Mario-rio natampe (He leaves sorrow and suffering)
Makarorrong naboko'i (He turns away from silence)
Buya' rika dipatumba (What can be done?)
Tendika la diapa (What else can be done?)
Umbai diongmo pala' (Perhaps it is already in hand)
Anna tibollo sala (So the fault is poured out)

Data 5

Diong tete lummi'-lummi' (A swaying bridge down there)
Sambali' pengkondongan (Across, a place to leap)
Salondon lenten lemo (A flowing slide like rolling oranges)
Susi uran to sambali' (Like rain across the other side)
Susi langkan tumia' (Like an eagle that cries)
Salondon lenten lemo (A flowing slide like rolling oranges)

Data 6

Sattu-sattu' mora rendeng (Soon, my dear)
Anta sipembokoran (We will be left behind)
Ondori saekan de (We only come here)
Ta sitambokoran (We are left behind)
Masuli' ambunmo rendeng (Difficult like the dew, my dear)
Unsomboan kalena (Revealing itself)
Malemo naturu' gaun (Gone along with the clouds)
Nabaenan salebu' (Swinging in the mist)
Ondori sae kandina (We only come here)
Nabeenan salebu' (Swinging in the mist)

Data 7

Lusu sannang te lan tondok (A smooth passage of joy in this land)
Apa to rasa-rasa (What is being felt?)
Benna' bolu benna' gatta (Give me betel leaves, give me gambier)
Sambako lusu sannang (A prosperous smooth passage)
Oia tandille lusu sannang (Oh, he glides with ease)
Mario-rio natampe (Sorrow and suffering are left behind)
Marundindin naboko'i (Peace is turned away)

Data 8

Tumangngi'mo langkan salu (The river eagle is crying)

Si'dan bu'ku' randanan (A dove sobs by the riverbank)

Ba'tu apa napotangngi' (What is it that it mourns?)

Napounnande-ade (Making it so deeply)

Data 9

La diapapi dilambi' (What can be done with what is achieved?)

To tumengka bulaan (One who walks in gold)

Data 10

Putti-putti' tondon lalan (A small banana tree by the roadside)

Pakulando talledo (A long fern, drooping weakly)

La telledorika duka (Will it sway as well?)

Ke tang nairi angin (If it is not blown by the wind)

Data 11

Buya'rika dipatumba (What should be done?)

Ten dika la diapa (Do not know what to do)

Data 12

Lillingala'ra to lendu' (To accompany the one who passes)

Lendu ma'pakilala (Passing by as a reminder)

Based on the *dondi' speech* in the Rambu Solo' traditional ceremony, it was found that the language used was not ordinary, but loaded with aesthetic and cultural values. These speeches show a distinctive pattern of using language styles, which function not only as a means of communication, but also as a medium of conveying symbolic meaning in the context of the death ritual of the Toraja people. In particular, the results of the analysis show that there are several dominant forms of language styles, namely repetition, metaphor, simile, parallelism, and personification. Repetition is used to affirm meaning while building ritual rhythms that are collective and repetitive. Metaphors arise through the use of natural elements and concrete objects as symbols to represent abstract concepts such as death, journey, and the value of life. Simile is used to clarify meaning through direct comparisons with familiar phenomena in people's lives. Parallelism is seen in parallel speech structures, which reflect the systematic and aesthetic thinking patterns in Toraja culture. Meanwhile, personification shows how natural elements are given human nature to expand emotional expression, especially in describing grief. Thus, the language style in *dondi' speech* cannot be separated from the cultural context of Rambu Solo', because each form of linguistic expression contains a symbolic meaning that reflects the Toraja people's value system, beliefs, and perspective on life and death.

Discussion

Before discussing in detail each *dondi' speech* data, it is necessary to first explain that the analysis in this study uses an ethnostylistic approach that places language as part of the cultural system (Kazmi et al., 2025). In the context of the *Rambu Solo'* traditional ceremony, *dondi' speech* not only functions as a verbal expression, but also as a symbolic medium that reflects the values, beliefs, and collective experiences of the Toraja people (Jun & Sirivesmas, 2025). Based on the results of the initial identification of the *dondi' speech* data, four main dominant forms of language styles were found, namely repetition, metaphor, simile, and personification. These four language styles appear consistently in various speeches and form distinctive patterns in the structure of ritual language.

Repetition

Repetition is one of the main features in *dondi' speech* that shows the peculiarities of the ritual language of the Toraja people. In the context of the Rambu Solo' ceremony, repetition not only serves as a repetition of the form of language, but also as a strategy to build meaning, strengthen emotions, and maintain rhythm and continuity in oral traditions (Hamawand, 2023; Simpson,

2025). This repetition is closely related to the way the Toraja people understand and express the experience of grief collectively, so that language does not stand alone, but is integrated with cultural practices and value systems that live in the community.

In Data 1, repetition appears in the form of lexical and thematic repetition. The use of the phrase "*Podo dondi-dondi mammo*" indicates the repetition of the word "*dondi-dondi*" which affirms the position of the speech as the core of the ritual practice. In addition, the repetition of the word "*sala*" in "*Sala' tindokmo te dondi*" and "*Sala' palame-lame*" shows an emphasis on the concept of error. This repetition occurs not only at the word level, but also at the level of meaning, as the idea of imperfection is presented repeatedly in different forms. Stylistically, this pattern creates strong emphasis and rhythm, which is important in the oral tradition because it helps to maintain the continuity of speech delivery. Symbolically, the repetition of "*dondi-dondi*" symbolizes that *the dondi* is the center of the expression of grief and comfort, while the repetition of "*sala*" reflects the cultural awareness of the limitations of humans in carrying out customs and dealing with death. Repetition also deepens the emotional atmosphere, so that grief is not only conveyed, but also felt collectively. In an ethnostylistic perspective, this suggests that ritual language is structured, repetitive, and full of meaning, where repetition serves as a cultural mechanism to reinforce messages and build shared awareness.

Meanwhile, in Data 2, repetition appears in a more complex and dominant form, including lexical repetition, reduplication, and structural repetition. The repeated repetition of the phrase "*Ondori saekande*" confirms the idea of a collective presence in ritual, while the "*pure*" and "*pure*" forms of reduplication indicate the repetition of actions. In addition, the repetition of sentence structures such as "*Angki tulen-tulenni*" shows a systematic pattern in speech composing. Stylistically, this pattern creates a layered structure that not only reinforces meaning, but also establishes order in ritual speech. Symbolically, the repetition of "*Ondori saekande*" symbolizes collective social participation, while the "*pure*" reduplication represents sustainability and repetition in traditional practices. The repetition of the structure also reflects the steadfastness of carrying out traditions, while also reinforcing emotional experiences, especially the loneliness and grief felt together. In an ethnostylistic perspective, the repetition in Data 2 shows that language serves as a means to build and maintain cultural continuity, where repetition becomes a way to internalize indigenous values and strengthen social attachment within the community.

Overall, the repetition in *dondi* speech in Data 1 and Data 2 shows a complex and interrelated function. Stylistically, repetition builds the rhythm and emphasis of meaning that is typical of oral tradition. From a symbolic perspective, repetition marks the experience of suffering, human limitations, and repetition in ritual practices (Candria, 2019; Dyah Puspita Sari, 2025). Meanwhile, from an ethnostylistic perspective, repetition plays a role in building collectivity, maintaining cultural continuity, and strengthening shared emotional experiences. Thus, repetition in *dondi* cannot be understood only as a repetition of language, but as an integral part of the cultural system that connects language, emotions, and ritual practices in the Rambu Solo' ceremony.

Metaphor

Metaphors in *dondi* speech are a form of linguistic expression that cannot be separated from the knowledge and cultural experience system of the Toraja people. In the ethnostylistic approach, metaphors are not understood simply as a language style, but as a representation of cultural ways of thinking that connect the concrete world with abstract concepts (Atmawijaya, 2025). In the context of Rambu Solo', metaphors serve to bridge the understanding of death, suffering, and the journey of life through symbols derived from the natural environment and social experiences of the community. Thus, metaphors in *dondi* are contextual, cultural, and collective (Janah et al., 2022).

In Data 3, metaphors are constructed through simple but meaningful images of nature, such as in the words "*Kayu toyang tondon rante*" and "*Kayu lembuyan mata*". Stylistically, the use of the word "*wood*" does not refer to trees literally, but serves as a symbol of life. The parallel structure of these two lines reinforces the metaphorical impression and confirms the repetitive relationship of meaning. Symbolically, "a tree far from a flat land" and "a tree invisible to the eye" represent a condition of separation and absence, which in the context of Rambu Solo' refers to a deceased

individual. The life that was previously present has now become distant and unreachable. From an ethnostylistic perspective, the choice of tree symbols shows the closeness of the Toraja people to nature as a source of meaning. Nature is not only the setting for life, but also a conceptual medium to understand death as a form of separation from the real world.

In Data 5, metaphors develop through the use of dynamic natural phenomena, such as "*Susi uran to sambali*" and "*Susi llangkan tumia*". Stylistically, this form contains comparisons, but it still serves metaphorically because it moves emotional meaning into the image of nature. Rain in this speech is not just a weather phenomenon, but a symbol of widespread and continuous sadness. Meanwhile, the weeping eagle presents a powerful image because it combines symbols of strength with expressions of sadness. Symbolically, this shows that grief in Rambu Solo' is understood as something big, deep, and transcends the individual. In an ethnostylistic perspective, this metaphor affirms that nature acts as an emotional representation, in which human experience is projected into the surrounding environment, so that suffering becomes a collective and cosmic experience.

In Data 8, metaphors become more complex through integration with personification, as in the speeches "*Tumangngi'mo llangkan salu*" and "*Si'dan bu'ku randanan*". Stylistically, this metaphor is expanded by giving human nature to animals, namely crying and sobbing. However, in the ethnostylist framework, this is not just a personification, but also a cultural metaphor that shows the relationship between humans and nature. Symbolically, the eagle and the shaved bird represent two dimensions of grief, namely extensive grief and intimate grief. The eagle symbolizes a high and spacious space, while the shaved one symbolizes closeness and silence. In this context, metaphors not only describe emotions, but also construct a landscape of meaning in which grief is present in multiple layers. This shows that in Toraja culture, death is not understood as an individual event, but as an experience that involves the entire order of life, including nature.

In Data 9, metaphors are present in a more abstract and reflective form, such as in the speech "*To tumengka bulaan*". Stylistically, this expression is a symbolic metaphor that connects the act of "stepping" with "gold" as a value. Gold in this context does not refer to physical objects, but to the quality of life that is of high value. Symbolically, "walks in gold" represents a dignified, honorable, and memorable life. In the context of Rambu Solo', this metaphor functions as a form of social evaluation of a person's life. In an ethnostylistic perspective, the use of gold symbols shows that the Toraja people have certain standards of value in interpreting life, and metaphors are a means to convey these values implicitly but powerfully.

Overall, metaphors in *dondi' speech* show a consistent pattern, namely the use of natural elements and cultural symbols to convey complex meanings. Stylistically, metaphors enrich language expressions and create depth of meaning through the shift of meaning from concrete to abstract (Janah et al., 2022; Zhiqin, 2025). From a symbolic perspective, metaphors connect human experience with the environment and cultural values, so that concepts such as death, suffering, and life can be understood more concretely. Meanwhile, from an ethnostylistic perspective, metaphors reflect the holistic way of thinking of Toraja society, where language, culture, nature, and emotional experiences are integrated with each other.

Thus, the metaphor in *dondi'* is not just a language ornament, but a structure of meaning that shapes the way the Toraja people understand the reality of life and death. Through metaphors, *the dondi'* speech not only conveys a message, but also reproduces and maintains the cultural value system in the Rambu Solo' ceremony.

Simile

Simile is a direct comparative language style characterized by the use of markers such as *susi* (like) or *like* (Vu, 2024). In *dondi'* speech, simile has an important function as a means to concretize abstract experiences, especially emotions of grief and reflection on death. In an ethnostylistic perspective, simile not only serves as a stylistic device, but also as a cultural strategy to bridge human experience with natural phenomena that are familiar in the life of the Toraja people (Atmawijaya, 2025; Janah et al., 2022). Through similes, meanings that are difficult to explain directly become easier to understand because they are associated with collective empirical experiences.

In Data 5, the simile is evident in the utterances "*Susi uran to sambali*" and "*Susi llangkan tumia*". Stylistically, these two expressions use *the symbolic comparison of sui* that connects the two domains of meaning, namely natural phenomena and emotional experiences. "Like rain on the other side" presents a powerful visual and auditory imagery, where the rain symbolizes something that is continuous and diffuse. Symbolically, the rain represents tears or grief that is widespread in the community. Meanwhile, "like a crying eagle" presents a more intense image, as the eagle as a symbol of strength and height is actually depicted in an emotional state. This reinforces the meaning of grief as something deep and beyond ordinary boundaries. In an ethnostylistic perspective, the simile in Data 5 shows that the Toraja people use nature as a medium to project emotions, so that the experience of grief is not only individual, but also connected to the environment and understood collectively.

In Data 6, simile appears in a more subtle and reflective form, namely in the speech "*Masuli' ambunmo rendeng*" (difficult like the dew). Stylistically, the use of the word "*like the dew*" shows a direct comparison between emotional conditions and natural phenomena that are temporary and fragile. Dew is known as something that appears in a short time and disappears easily, so it symbolically symbolizes mortality and uncertainty. In the context of Rambu Solo', this simile can be interpreted as a representation of a short life or a condition that is difficult to maintain. In addition, the word "difficult" in the speech indicates difficulties in understanding or accepting the situation, so this simile also functions as a reflective expression of the event of death. In an ethnostylistic perspective, the use of dew as a comparator shows that Toraja people understood abstract concepts such as mortality through natural experiences that are close to everyday life.

When viewed as a whole, similes in *dondi'* speech have several main characteristics. First, similes always involve natural elements as a comparison, such as rain, eagles, and dew. This shows that nature is the main source of cultural meaning. Second, similes are used to strengthen emotional expression, especially in depicting grief, sadness, and reflection on death. Third, similes serve as a bridge between concrete experiences and abstract concepts, making meaning easier to understand in a collective context.

From an ethnostylist perspective, simile reflects the way of thinking of the Toraja people that is contextual and experience-based. Language is not only used to convey messages, but also to build relationships between humans, nature, and cultural value systems. Thus, simile in *dondi'* speech not only beautifies language, but also becomes a means to construct and transmit cultural meaning in the Rambu Solo' ceremony.

Personification

Personification is a language style that gives human nature, behavior, or feelings to objects, animals, or natural elements (Fairuz & Mala Sari, 2025). In *dondi' speech*, personification has a very important role because it is a means to expand the expression of grief from the human realm to the natural realm. In an ethnostylistic perspective, personification is not only understood as a stylistic technique, but as a representation of the cultural perspective of the Toraja people who see the close relationship between humans, nature, and the cosmos. Thus, nature is not positioned as a passive object, but as an active part that also feels and represents human emotional experience, especially in the context of Rambu Solo'.

In Data 5, the element of personification is seen in the speech "*Susi llangkan tumia*" which translates as "like an eagle that cries". Stylistically, this expression gives the eagle a human nature, namely crying. The eagle as an animal that is usually associated with strength and height is actually depicted in an emotional state. This creates a strong contrast and deepens the effect of meaning. Symbolically, the crying eagle symbolizes great sadness and transcends individual boundaries, as if nature also feels loss. In addition, in the same series of speeches there are other imagery such as "*rain over there*" which implicitly reinforces the emotional atmosphere. In an ethnostylistic perspective, this personification shows that the Toraja people projected the feeling of grief into nature, so that grief does not only belong to humans, but becomes a collective and cosmic experience.

In Data 8, the personification appears more explicitly and intensely through several utterances, such as "*Tumangngi'mo llangkan salu*" (the river eagle is crying) and "*Si'dan bu'ku randanan*" (sobbing on the riverbank). Stylistically, these two expressions clearly give the animal

the human attributes of crying and sobbing. The use of two different types of birds creates a variety of imagery while reinforcing the parallel structure in speech. Symbolically, the eagle symbolizes broad and high sadness, while the shaved symbolizes near and personal sadness. This combination shows that grief comes in various dimensions, both public and intimate. In addition, the expressions "*Ba'tu apa napotangngi*" (What is it that it mourns?) and "*Napounnande-ade*" (Making it so deeply) reinforce the intensity of emotions projected into nature. In an ethnostylistic perspective, this personification reflects the view that nature and man are in a single experiential unit, where the event of death affects not only man, but also the entire symbolic environment that surrounds him (Abdulgugni, 2019; Zhiqin, 2025).

When viewed as a whole, personification in *dondi'* speech has several main functions. From the stylistic side, personification enriches language expression and creates a strong and emotional image. From the symbolic side, personification expands the meaning of grief by involving natural elements as a representation of human feelings. Meanwhile, in an ethnostylistic perspective, personification shows that the Toraja people have a holistic perspective, where the boundaries between humans and nature become fluid. Nature is not only the background of life, but also part of a system of meaning that lives and participates in cultural experiences.

Thus, the personification in *dondi'* speech is not just a language style, but a manifestation of the way the Toraja people understand death as an event that touches the entire order of life. Through personification, *dondi'* speech is able to present a broader, deeper, and collective experience of grief, while strengthening the relationship between language, culture, and cosmology in the Rambu Solo' ceremony.

CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis of *the dondi' speech* in the Rambu Solo' ceremony, it can be emphasized that the use of language style does not stand as a mere aesthetic element, but is an integral part of the cultural meaning system of the Toraja people. Through an ethnostylistic approach, it can be seen that the language in *dondi'* functions as a cultural medium that represents the way of thinking, feeling, and interpreting the reality of life and death collectively.

The four dominant language styles, namely repetition, metaphor, simile, and personification, form a unified interconnected system of expression. *Repetition* not only creates rhythm, but represents the principle of repetition in ritual practices and social life, as well as being a cultural mechanism to strengthen collective memory and internalize traditional values. *Metaphors* show that Toraja people construct an understanding of death and life through concrete symbols, especially those that come from nature, so that abstract concepts can be understood contextually and culturally. *Simile* serves as a cognitive and emotional bridge that connects human experience with familiar phenomena in the environment, so that meaning becomes more accessible and communicative within the cultural framework. Meanwhile, *personification* reflects the cosmological view of the Toraja people who see the connection between humans and nature, where the natural element is positioned as a part that also feels and represents the experience of suffering.

From an ethnostylistic perspective, the four language styles cannot be separated from the cultural context of Rambu Solo', because each form of linguistic expression contains a symbolic meaning rooted in the community's system of values, beliefs, and collective experiences. Language in *dondi'* functions as a space of cultural representation that integrates aesthetic, emotional, social, and cosmological dimensions. Thus, *dondi'* speech is not only a means of ritual communication, but also a form of cultural praxis that reproduces and maintains the identity and local knowledge of the Toraja people.

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Author contributions

R.D. contributed to the conceptualization of the study, formulation of the research problem, research design, data collection, data analysis, interpretation of the findings, and manuscript preparation. E.M. contributed to the development of the theoretical framework, methodological review, data verification, and analysis review. R.L. contributed to the review of the cultural interpretation, manuscript revision, critical editing, and final quality assessment. All authors participated in reviewing the manuscript and approved the final version for publication.

Competing interests

The authors declare that there are no financial, institutional, professional, or personal conflicts of interest that could have influenced the conduct of the research, data analysis, interpretation of the findings, or publication of this article.

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