



Timeless Wisdom: An Exploration on the Role of Metadiscourse in Motivational Proverbs

John Junmar DC. Soriano; Meryll Pacate; Chloe Franchesca S. Angulo;
Symon Paul Santos; Alleona A. Dionisio; Cynic Tenedero; Marie Jo Tess Ragos
Technological University of the Philippines – Manila, Philippines

Corresponding author: s.justjun@gmail.com

Abstract

This study qualitatively explored the use of metadiscourse in motivational proverbs using a descriptive research approach. This examined how proverbs engage the audience with metadiscourse elements as well as the function of motivational proverbs that served as assets in various fields like language education, guiding interpretation, literature, among others. This study focused only on the three themes of proverbs namely, life, love, and education. Further, using the advanced text analysis tool Text Inspector, 15 motivational proverbs were analyzed, 5 for each theme to identify and interpret various metadiscourse elements. The results indicated that the most common metadiscourse marker in the analysis of proverbs was relational markers, with the usage of words like “you” and “your” showing direct engagement with the audience. These terms establish emotional connection between the reader and the proverb, strengthening its relatability and persuasiveness. These markers help the reader feel the strong intention behind the proverbs, making them more impactful and addressed directly to the readers. Furthermore, the use of these relational markers deliberates a clear intention, emphasizing the speaker’s desire to deliver significant life lessons. Future researchers are encouraged to explore more themes of proverbs and expand the scope of analysis to a broader range of proverbs, which may lead to discovery of new patterns in the use of metadiscourse.

Keywords: metadiscourse, motivational proverbs, text inspector, relational markers



Introduction

Motivational proverbs have long been used as powerful tools for guiding thought and behavior; indeed, they offer wisdom in a concise and memorable form. Proverbs are an element of folk art that allows folk wisdom to concisely and figuratively reflect the history and beliefs of people, as well as their traditions, habits, and values (Sandikovna, 2021). Moreover, proverbs also serve as a medium for wisdom and guidance that symbolizes the cultural values of a particular society. Consequently, people interpret proverbs differently since various proverbs discuss life, social experiences, love, and education. This, in turn, reveals the attitude, taste, mental, ethical, aesthetic values, and social ideals cultivated generation after generation (Syzdykov, 2013). Furthermore, proverbs are multifunctional for teaching the English language; not only do they enhance grammar and vocabulary, but they can also develop language skills. Nevertheless, despite their significance, these proverbs illustrate essential metadiscourse components that facilitate audience engagement.

Metadiscourse refers to linguistic components in speech or writing that do not contribute directly to the propositional content of a sentence; rather, they help the audience organize, interpret, and assess the presented information (Herminingsih & Isro'iyah, 2023). According to Hyland (2017), the categories of metadiscourse are, on one hand, textual and, on the other hand, interpersonal.

Features such as logical connectives, which express the meaning and relations between ideas, are included in the definition and, consequently, formulate the order of the conversation in the case of textual metadiscourse. Additionally, interpersonal metadiscourse is, in essence, about connecting the author and the audience by improving the ideas while, at the same time, proving the claims of the writer. Hence, metadiscourse is not simply a stylistic component but, rather, an essential part of creating various contexts. Furthermore, this employs different standards and styles, thereby guiding writers in formulating ideas that fit the taste of their audience. For instance, recent studies have, in fact, concentrated on the importance of metadiscourse in fostering persuasion and involvement in a unique situation. Specifically, Xia (2020) analyzed some advertising slogans and identified that, notably, some interactional metadiscourse markers, such as engagement and attitude markers, were the most used elements in creating advertising slogans; consequently, the said technique improved the quality of the text's persuasive function, effectively engaging the audience. Additionally, Trajkova & Pucakovska (2019) have also shown that metadiscourse markers, in turn, effectively connect with the audience, thereby enhancing the text's clarity and persuasiveness. Ultimately, metadiscourse was examined to achieve persuasion in literary criticism texts and, furthermore, clarify how authors employ metadiscursive markers to engage readers and articulate their positions persuasively.

Furthermore, the significance of metadiscourse was emphasized in the study; indeed, it enables efficient interaction and understanding by aligning with the social and cultural contexts of the audience. Additionally, metadiscourse reflects linguistic and cultural traditions influencing comprehension, structuring discourse, and engaging readers (Uba, 2019). As stated by Hyland (2017), there are two purposes for the growing interest in metadiscourse, which has grown over the years. Specifically, the first reason was a desire to understand the relationship between language and its contexts of use, and the second reason was to employ knowledge in the service of language and literary education. While metadiscourse has been widely explored in academic writing, as it is considered a valuable tool in learning language, its presence in proverbs, however, has not been thoroughly studied. In studying figurative language, particularly in the Bible, it is



worth noting that the Book of Proverbs has only received minimal attention (Macaraeg et al., 2024). This, therefore, highlights the lack of a foundation of knowledge in proverbs through metadiscourse markers, both in academic and everyday language contexts.

Metadiscourse improves clarity and coherence, which consequently fosters connection by coordinating messages with the standards of specific discourse communities. However, to understand proverbs utilized in specific discourse settings, the audience and speaker must, therefore, have shared knowledge and assumptions that allow for facile comprehension of utterance and coupling of proverbs to the utterance premise (Uyenne & Ejiaso, 2023). Moreover, understanding its functions in various disciplines and cultural contexts underscores its adaptability and importance in effective communication. Thus, this research aims to integrate metadiscourse markers in analyzing proverbs to understand their function in language and communication better. Particularly, it focuses on proverbs with the themes of life, love, and education. In addition, proverbs about life inspire people to think positively and to move forward, resulting in being empowered and content among people with mental health conditions. Conversely, proverbs about love do not only focus on romance but also on healing one's self, learning self-love, and acceptance. Lastly, regarding proverbs about education, they give validation to students, serve as comfort, and establish one's self as a confident and esteemed learner (Sun, 2024).

Several studies, therefore, revealed the importance of teaching metadiscourse markers to improve students' communication abilities (Amiryousefi & Rasekh, 2010; Pearson & Abdollahzadeh, 2023). Specifically, metadiscourse, in fact, enhances individuals' communication skills by fostering clarity and engagement in all written or spoken material. Moreover, it enables one to communicate effectively since the messages become more logically organized and comprehensible. Consequently, teaching the function of metadiscourse in various contexts promotes awareness, allowing the speakers to adjust its style accordingly. Furthermore, by incorporating metadiscourse elements, individuals will demonstrate greater confidence in their communication abilities as they become more adept at managing discourse in different areas. In addition, Belkhir (2021) highlighted the significance of proverbs, where it was stated that it provides significant cognitive benefits, including improved critical thinking, abstract reasoning, and memory retention. Thus, understanding the role of metadiscourse is, therefore, crucial in grasping how a specific language is used in various discourse settings. Moreover, metadiscourse in proverbs can, in fact, guide learners on how meaning is shaped and communicated in everyday language, and can effectively bridge the gap in understanding the underlying principles and contexts of proverbs.

Even though there are existing studies about the use of metadiscourse in various applications (Trajkova & Pucakovska, 2019; Xia, 2019), its use with analyzing proverbs is still limited. Specifically, it focuses on how proverbs engage the audience with metadiscourse elements such as hedges, relational markers, and person markers. Furthermore, there is still a lack of information regarding how metadiscourse markers are employed in proverbs, particularly within the themes of life, love, and education. Moreover, Babazade (2024) stated that the importance of proverbs is to instill knowledge in students, develop their communication skills, and enhance critical thinking, as they may deepen their understanding of one's culture. Consequently, this makes it a pertinent topic to further our understanding of the use of metadiscourse in motivational proverbs. Hence, this research aims to enhance the understanding of the function of proverbs in communication by utilizing metadiscourse. Through examining how metadiscourse markers operate in motivational proverbs, this study highlights its roles in



shaping meaning and interpretation while fostering reader engagement. Specifically, the research aims to; (1) to identify metadiscourse markers present in selected proverbs about life, love, and education; (2) to analyze how metadiscourse markers, such as emphatic, logical connectivity, sequencing, function as a communicative tool in the selected motivational proverbs; (3) to evaluate how the utilization metadiscourse markers contributes to the motivational and communicative performance of the proverbs; and (4) to determine and compare the arrangement and function of the metadiscourse markers across the selected category of the motivational proverbs. Ultimately, this approach seeks to make proverbs powerful assets in language education, improving speaking skills, guiding interpretation, and navigating intercultural interactions.

Methods

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach to analyze metadiscourse markers in selected motivational proverbs about love, life, and education. This technique was essential for analyzing the profoundness of the text while employing metadiscursive markers within proverbs. A total of 15 proverbs—five per theme—were purposively selected based on the following inclusion criteria: (1) the proverb clearly expressed motivational message; (2) its central theme were aligned with love, life, and education; (3) displays complete and interpretable sentence structure suitable for metadiscourse analysis—to explore the impact of metadiscursive markers on improving text engagement and comprehension. Further, these proverbs were obtained online, ensuring that various cultures and subject matters were represented.

The chosen proverbs were analyzed through a web-based language analysis tool called “Text Inspector” created by Stephen Bax who was a renowned professor in applied linguistics. According to the website of Text Inspector, the Text Inspector provides detailed information on the readability, complexity, lexical diversity, estimated Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) level and other essential features, including metadiscourse markers which was vital for this study. Only the metadiscourse markers identified by the Text Inspector—such as relational marker, emphatic marker—were included in the analysis. These markers served as the coding scheme for identifying and categorizing metadiscourse elements within the proverbs about love, life, and education. Furthermore, the data collected was organized in separate tables by given proverbs in each category. The table is composed of sample words and were divided into 2 columns: Word List and Tokens. The Text Inspector website differentiated the two terms. “Word List” is composed of the complete list of words that appear in the given text, including repeating words. On the other hand, “Token” is the total number of words in the text, including all repetitions. Lastly, the total can be found on the last row of the table showing the number of words per column and its equivalent percentage inside the parentheses. These visualizations thoroughly provided a comprehensive understanding of metadiscourse markers used in motivational proverbs, particularly on how it was employed in each theme.

The selection of proverbs is limited and is set for only 3 types of proverbs with 5 examples each, namely education, love, and life with a totality of 15 proverbs to be analyzed on text analysis. Which limits the exploration of other metadiscourse markers and may affect the general findings of the study.



Results and Discussion

This section outlines the results obtained from analyzing the three themes of motivational proverbs namely: life, love, and education. The data were presented, analyzed, and interpreted using tables to provide a clear and comprehensive understanding of the findings.

1. Proverbs about Life

Table 1.1

Metadiscourse Analysis of the proverb “A teacher is better than two books.”

Word List	Word Examples	Tokens
Sequencing	Two	1 (14.29%)
Unlisted	Better	6 (85.71%)
Total		1 (14.29%)

In table 1.1, the proverb "A teacher is better than two books" contains a sequencing marker, "two," which accounts for 14.29% of the total tokens. Merriam-Webster (n.d.) states that "two" is a number that is one more than one. However, in this proverb, it has a deeper meaning and is used as a rhetorical device rather than just functioning as a numerical value.

The term "two" is employed for the comparison between the teacher and the books. In the context of the proverb, it means that one teacher is worth more than two books, which signifies that one is more valuable than two. The book represents written or impersonal knowledge, while the teacher symbolizes personal direction. Therefore, the term "two" is employed as a linguistic device for the conveyance of the deeper meaning of the proverb.

Table 1.2

Metadiscourse Analysis of the proverb “Some men go through a forest see no firewood.”

Word List	Word Examples	Tokens
Endophoric	See	1 (10.00%)
Logical connectivity	And	1 (10.00%)
Unlisted	A	8 (80.00%)
Total		2 (20.00%)

The proverb "Some men go through a forest and see no firewood" consists of two metadiscourses, which are endophoric markers and logical connective markers, contributing 10.00% each to the total tokens for a total of 20.00%. In the metadiscourse, "see" is the endophoric marker, and "and" is the logical connective marker. As provided by Cambridge Dictionary (n.d.), "see" is defined as "to be conscious of what is around you by using your eyes." In this particular proverb, "see" conveys a deeper meaning more than just "physically perceived by the eyes." It



suggests an understanding and awareness of one's surroundings. The phrase "see no firewood" implies being unable to recognize opportunities. The Cambridge Dictionary (n.d.) defined the word "and" as a conjunction used to "join two words, phrases, parts of sentences, or related statements together. The term "and" serves to link the clauses "some men go through a forest" and "see no firewood" to emphasize the interrelationship as well as the contrast between them. Thus, this conjunction conveys the message of the proverb that even when the opportunity is present, some individuals disregard and fail to grab it due to lack of awareness. Therefore, the function of these two metadiscourses is to reinforce the significance of being aware and mindful in life.

Table 1.3

Metadiscourse Analysis of the proverb “Do not look where you feel. Look where you slipped.”

Word List	Word Examples	Tokens
Relational Marker	You	2 (20.0%)
Unlisted	Do	8 (80.00%)
Total		2 (20.00%)

As shown in table 1.3, The summary shows that 2 tokens in total (20.00%), Relation Marker is the only word listed (20.00 %) with 2 tokens. The only word in Relation Maker is the word “You” which is a pronoun word used by the person to refer person or people being spoken or written (Audience, Reader, or the person you’re talking with). (Collins 2025). According to Merriam-Webster Dictionary (n.d.), the word “you” would be used in the past as a second-person plural pronoun in dative or accusive case, serving as a direct or indirect object of a verb or as an object of a preposition. Hence, the word “you” is used in this proverb to address anyone who hears or reads the statement, the use of a relational marker in this proverb suggests a deeper significance that relates to individuals.

Table 1.4

Metadiscourse Analysis of the proverb “If you can’t live longer, live deeper.”

Word List	Word Examples	Tokens
Relational Marker	You	1 (14.29%)
Unlisted	Can’t	6 (85.71%)
Total		1 (14.29%)

Based on table 1.4, there is only one token with (14.29%) in total. The only word listed in this table is the Relation Marker with 1 token (14.29%). “You” appears as the only word in the Relation Marker. According to Niu et al. (2025), The term "you" is widely acknowledged as a



second-person pronoun denoting particular individuals, but it also serves another purpose: it can refer to people in general. The author uses the word “You” To reach out to the audience and convey the message. In advising the reader or audience to connect with them, the author seeks to suggest a stronger significance. As per Inspector (2024), Relation markers are words or phrases that helps to connect and organize text, express attitude, provide evidence, and associate the reader with the author.

Table 1.5

Metadiscourse Analysis of the proverb “Turn your face toward the sun and the shadows fall behind you.”

Word List	Word Examples	Tokens
Logical connectivity	And	1 (8.33%)
Relational Marker	You	2 (16.67%)
Unlisted	Behind	9 (75.00%)
Total		3 (25.00%)

For the table 1.5, The highest token count is the Relation Marker, which has 2 tokens making 16.67% of the tokens used in the proverb “Turn your face toward the sun and shadows fall behind you.” The words “You” appeared 1 time and “Your” also appeared 1 time making 2 tokens in total. This indicates that Relation Marker are represented in the word list to a significant extent. Conversely, the Logical connectivity has the lesser token count, with only 1 token (8.33 %). This implies that Logical connectivity words appear in the word list far less often. Relation Marker word: “Your” is a word concerning you or yourself or yourselves particularly as owner or owners (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). Logical connectivity word: “and” serves as a connector for words, phrases, clauses, or complete sentences. (Oxford Learner’s Dictionaries, n.d.) In this proverb the “You”, “Your, and the connector “and” are used to connect to people and covey the thoughts. It enables the author to communicate directly the meaning of the message.

Overall, the analysis of the five proverbs reveals the use of metadiscourse markers to show the implicit message of each proverb. In Table 1.1, the result showed the usage of the sequencing marker "two," and it creates a clear comparison between teachers and books, as it emphasizes that the quality of personal guidance could surpass the quantity of sources of information. Meanwhile, the logical connectivity marker "and" is present in both proverbs in Table 1.2 and Table 1.5. The word "and" serves a role by connecting two related ideas in order to convey a message. Other metadiscourse markers such as the relational marker "you" appeared in Table 1.3, Table 1.4, and Table 1.5, while "your" was shown in Table 1.5. The words “you” and “your” involve the individual to create a self-reflective message that could be relatable and meaningful to the audience. Lastly, the endophoric marker "see" is present in Table 1.2, which symbolizes awareness or understanding. The word "see" helps to deliver the implicit meaning of the proverb, which is that a lack of awareness and mindfulness could result in missed chances. These words that were analyzed in the theme of life are crucial, particularly, in comparison with other themes. This shows that there are different metadiscourse markers that appeared that vary to each motivational proverb about life.

2.Proverbs about Love



Table 2.1

Metadiscourse Analysis of the Proverb “Lover's hearts are linked together and always beat as one”

Word List	Word Examples	Tokens
Emphatic	Always	1 (10.00%)
Logical connective	And	1 (10.00%)
Unlisted	As	8 (80.00%)
Total		2 (20.00%)

The metadiscourse of the proverb "Lover's hearts are linked together and always beat as one" exhibits two markers, accounting for twenty percent of its total tokens. In addition to this, utilizing the emphatic and logical connective categories plays a vital role in the proverb's overall coherence and emotional resonance.

The emphatic term "always" is a fundamental element in highlighting the consistent and continuous bond between two people. This word has its origins in the mid-14th century and is from a contraction of an Old English phrase, "ealne weg," which translates to "all the time" and "all the way" (Etymology of “Always” by Etymonline, n.d.). In contemporary applications, the word "always" functions as a modifying word or an adverb with several meanings, such as "at all times; invariably" (Merriam-Webster, n.d.), "forever" (Oxford English Dictionary, n.d.), and "at any rate; in any event" (Merriam-Webster, n.d.).

Furthermore, the logical connective word "and" serves as a conjunction. Logical connectives, such as "and", are fundamental in connecting ideas and establishing relationships between statements (Crismore et al., 1993). This word effectively links two independent ideas, thus creating an additive relationship between them. The proverb symbolizes unity, suggesting that emotional connection and physical harmony are not separate occurrences but simultaneous experiences in a loving relationship. The following markers exhibit the poetic and cohesive portrayal of love as eternal and harmonious.

Table 2.2

Metadiscourse Analysis of the Proverb “Love and faithfulness never leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart”

Word List	Word Examples	Tokens
Emphatic	Never	1 (5.26%)
Logical connective	And	1 (5.26%)
Relational marker	Your	3 (15.79%)
Unlisted	Love	14 (73.68%)
Total		5 (26.32%)



In table 2.2, the proverb "Love and faithfulness will never leave you; bind them around your neck and write them on the tablet of your heart" contains significant metadiscourse markers, comprising a notable percentage of tokens (26.32%). The words "bind" and "write" are relational markers that play a role in the metaphorical framing of the proverb.

The verb "bind" means "to tie something tightly or to fasten something." (Oxford University Press, n.d.) symbolizes a sense of commitment and perpetuity that implies love and faithfulness should be embraced closely in love. The verb "write" is "to make words, letters, or numbers on a surface using a pen or pencil" (Cambridge University Press, n.d.), which creates a lasting impression, as the proverb demonstrates. These verbs contribute to the proverb’s metaphorical tone, promoting the deep internalization of virtuous values.

The emphatic adverb "never", which means “not ever” or “at no time” (Merriam-Webster, n.d.) strengthens the feeling of loyalty, thus highlighting how love and faithfulness may persist. Moreover, the logical connector “and” links the two abstract virtues, emphasizing their interdependence and equal importance. As a conjunction, it facilitates the cohesion of the message, structurally unifying the proverb’s central ideas.

Table 2.3

Metadiscourse Analysis of the Proverb “Love is like rice; it must be cultivated.”

Word List	Word Examples	Tokens
Attitude marker	Must	1 (12.50%)
Unlisted	Be	7 (87.50%)
Total		1 (12.50%)

In Table 2.3, the proverb "Love is like rice; it must be cultivated" displays a single metadiscourse, which accounts for 12.60% of the total tokens. The attitude marker "like" is a linguistic tool and a metaphorical comparison that draws a relation between love and rice.

The utilization word "like" is defined as “to say that something is similar to something else” (Collins Dictionary, n.d.). This proverb highlights the effective use of metaphorical comparison in conveying that love is a process that is like the cultivation of rice. Furthermore, the absence of other metadiscourse markers, such as hedging or engagement further suggests that the proverb relies solely on this comparison to deliver its message.

Table 2.4

Metadiscourse Analysis of the Proverb “A heart in love with beauty never grows old.”

Word List	Word Examples	Tokens
Emphatic	Never	1 (11.11%)
Unlisted	A	8 (88.89%)
Total		1 (11.11%)

The proverb "A heart in love with beauty never grows old." presents a single metadiscourse. The emphatic word "never" constitutes 11.11% of total tokens. "never" intensifies the proverb's assertion that love, when paired with beauty, is ageless and timeless. According to Merriam-Webster (n.d), "never" means "not ever" or "at no time". In the proverb's context, the use of the empathetic word enhances the metaphorical tone of the text.

Table 2.5

Metadiscourse Analysis of the Proverb "It is love that makes the impossible possible."

Word List	Word Examples	Tokens
Hedge	Possible	1 (12.50%)
Unlisted	Makes	7 (87.50%)
Total		1 (12.50%)

In Table 2.5, the proverb "Love makes the impossible possible" highlights the use of a hedge in the metadiscourse. Hedge or hedging is the utilization of linguistic tools to express uncertainty or indirectness (Enago Academy, 2016), it is also used to soften or weaken a statement. In the proverb, the phrase "It is love that..." acts as the hedge through presenting a transformative feeling and leaving room for interpretations.

The use of "hedge" in the proverb introduces a reflective quality that resonates differently with various individuals. By incorporating this hedge, the message gains depth, suggesting that while love can be transformative, its effects are not universally guaranteed. The metadiscourse marker enhances the proverb's philosophical and emotional tone.

Overall, the metadiscourse analysis on selected proverbs about love exhibits various linguistic markers, such as emphatic, logical connectives, relational markers, attitude markers, and hedges. These markers play a pivotal role in shaping the meaning of the texts. The emphatic word "always" (Table 2.1) emphasizes perpetuity and loyalty in romantic bonds which resonate timeless deep bonds. Logical connectives, such as "and" (Table 2.1, Table 2.2), create an additive relationship between the sentences that fosters cohesion and unity of the text (Crismore et al., 1993). Furthermore, relational markers, such as "bind" and "write" (Table 2.2), contribute to the metaphorical tone of the statement as it symbolizes commitment. On the other hand, the attitude marker "like" (Table 2.3) exhibits a comparison between the two subjects of the proverb. Moreover, the presence marker in the proverb of Table 2.5, as seen in the phrase "It is love that..." reveals how tentative language produces a different understanding of the text. Employing different linguistic tools and metadiscourse markers improves the proverbs' and the reader's comprehension.

3. Proverbs about Education

Table 3.1

Metadiscourse Analysis of the proverb “Never stop learning, because life never stops teaching”

Word List	Word Examples	Token
Emphatic	Never	2 (25.00%)
Logical Connective	Because	1 (12.50%)
Unlisted	Stop	5 (62.50%)
Total		3 (37.50%)

Based on the overall result from the text inspector metadiscourse analysis of the proverb “Never stop learning, because life never stops teaching”, Table 3.1 presents the frequent use of “never” in the proverb, accounting to 2 (25.00%) total tokens. Similarly, logical connective also had 1 (12.50%) total token, which is the word “because”. The usage of the emphatic language “never” shows a strong conviction towards learning. As Gabriele (2013) suggests, emphatic expressions are used to emphasize and stress that indicates importance. The author tends to evoke the emotional responses of its audience to strive learning. Supporting this, Fiveable (n.d.) states that empathic language is used to appeal emotionally to the audience and serve as a persuasive strategy by connecting to their emotion and connecting on a deeper level. Thus, this proverb motivates the audience to keep on learning as it tells that life continuously gives valuable experiences.

Table 3.2

Metadiscourse Analysis of the proverb “Teachers open the door, but you must enter by yourself”

Word List	Word Examples	Token
Attitude Marker	Must	1 (10.00%)
Logical Connective	But	1 (10.00%)
Relational Marker	You	1 (10.00%)
Unlisted	By	7 (70.00%)
Total		3 (30.00%)

Table 3.2 presents the result of the text inspector metadiscourse analysis of the proverb “Teachers open the door, but you must enter by yourself”. The proverbs total metadiscourse marker accounts 3 (30.00%), consisting of 1 (10.00%) in each category of Attitude Marker, which is “must”, “Logical Connective”, which is “but”, and “Relational Marker”, which is “you”. The

usage of the verb “must” tells the audience to oblige, as the word means “be urged to” or “ought by all means to” (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). Supporting this, Sharma (2024) states that the word “must” expresses obligation, giving order, or giving advice. The Logical Connective word “but” is a conjunction that connects two ideas that contrast (Cambridge Dictionary, 2025). In this proverb, the usage of the word helps to coordinate the two ideas in the sentence from one to one another as Merriam Webster (n.d) defines “but” as “on the contrary” or “on the other hand”. The usage of “you” helps the author to connect and open the sense of involvement of the audience. As McLeod (2023) suggests, second-person personal pronouns like “you” tend to create assumptions about where the author directs the message. It indicates that this proverb emphasizes obligation, like oblige and indulge, to push the willingness of the audience to act.

Table 3.3

Metadiscourse Analysis of the proverb “What we learn from pleasure we never forget”

Word List	Word Examples	Token
Emphatic	Never	1 (12.50%)
Person Marker	We	2 (25.00%)
Unlisted	Forget	5 (62.50%)
Total		3 (37.50%)

The gathered data from the text inspector metadiscourse analysis of the proverb “What we learn from pleasure we never forget”. Table 3.3 highlights the frequent usage of “we” that appeared twice, which accounts to 2 (25.00%) for the total metadiscourse markers. The usage underscores the proverb’s message fostering shared goals. As Froland (2024) suggests, the use of this first-person plural subject pronoun is essential for clarity in communication and developing belongingness with the audience. And with the use of empathic word “never” that means “not ever” or “at no time in past or future”, helps to strengthen the stance of the author about knowledge. This indicates that this proverb emphasizes leaning in curiosity to build a lasting impression, to fully engage in every moment and enjoy the process while letting the experience to stick with us.

Table 3.4

Metadiscourse Analysis of the proverb “An investment in knowledge pays the best interest”

Word List	Word Examples	Token
Attitude Marker	Interest	1 (12.50%)
Unlisted	An	7 (87.50%)
Total		1 (12.50%)

Table 3.4 shows the result of text inspector metadiscourse analysis of the proverb “An investment in knowledge pays the best interest”. It highlights the usage of Attitude Marker, which is “interest”, with 1 (12.50%) in total metadiscourse markers tokens while on the other hand there

are 7 (87.50%) for tokens of unlisted words. According to Merriam Webster, the word “interest” as a noun means “an excess amount above what is due or expected”. This indicates that the proverb’s author wants to inform the audience that investing in knowledge helps you more than you expected.

Table 3.5

Metadiscourse Analysis of the proverb “Develop a passion for learning. If you do, you will never cease to grow”.

Word List	Word Examples	Token
Emphatic	Never	1 (7.14%)
Relational Marker	You	2 (14.29%)
Unlisted	A	11 (78.57%)
Total		3 (21.43%)

The result based on the text inspector metadiscourse analysis of the proverb “Develop a passion for learning. If you do, you will never cease to grow”, Table 3.5 presents the total metadiscourse tokens where Relational Marker accounts 2 (14.29%) and Emphatic accounts 1 (7.14%). The usage of “you” in the proverb let the assumption that the message is towards the audience. As Froland (2024) suggested, “you” can indicate the individual being addressed or collectively represent any number of listeners or readers. This makes the audience involve in a dialogue or action. The adverb “never” used to indicate the result of not developing passion for learning. Supporting this, Collins Dictionary define “never” as “at no time in the past” or “at no time in the future”. This proverb indicates to the audience the importance or developing passion, that pumps their emotion to pursue.

Overall, the results of the text inspector metadiscourse analysis on selected proverbs shows various markers including emphatic, attitude marker, and logical connective. These markers help shape the meaning of the proverbs and solely connect with the readers or audience. The usage of attitude marker “must” in Table 3.2, express the obligation or urging to action of the audience. This emphasizes personal accountability in learning as the proverbs also use Logical Connective “but” that shows contrast in the role of teachers and responsibility of the students where the proverbs tell “Teachers open the door, but you must...”. In Table 3.4, it emphasizes the idea of Attitude Marker “interest” that implies return beyond expectations, by reinforcing it to the idea of gaining knowledge gives lasting benefits or value. Lastly, in Table 3.1, Table 3.3, and Table 3.5, it highlights the empathic tone by using the word “never”. Hence, this stresses the strong emotional appeal that motivates and develop lasting passion of learning that drives the audience to keep growing.



Table 4
Results Summary of the Motivational Proverbs

Category	Frequently Used Word List	Word Examples	Total Tokens Percentage
Life	Relational Marker	You Your	5 (11.11%)
Love	Relational Marker	You Your	3 (5.45%)
	Emphatic	Always Never	3 (5.45%)
Education	Emphatic	Never	4 (8.33%)
	Relational Marker	You	3 (6.25%)
Total			18 (36.59%)

The analysis of motivational proverbs categorized under life, love, and education exhibits the utilization of meta-discourse markers, such as relational and emphatic markers. In the life category, relational markers such as "you" and "your" have a total token percentage of 11.11%. Thus, this suggests that life-related proverbs are evident on numerous occasions, fostering a direct connection to the audience. The findings emphasize the significance of personal engagement in enhancing the impact of proverbs. Additionally, the theme of love emphasizes relational markers, such as "you" and "your," along with emphatic markers like "never" and "always." The findings reveal that the utilization of these markers relies on strategies used in communication that aim to persuade or influence an audience through emotive responses, thus conveying advice about deep bonds and emotions. In the education category, the emphatic marker "never" accounts for 8.33%, while the relational marker "you" accounts for 6.25% of the total token percentage. These markers draw attention to direct and encouraging advice, highlighting the significance of perseverance and self-reliance.

Overall, the study exhibits usage of metadiscourse markers with a total token percentage of 35.59% through Text Inspector. Relational Markers are consistently evident in all categories, underscoring the significance of fostering direct engagement with the audience. Furthermore, the use of emphatic markers enhances the persuasiveness of proverbs in categories such as love and education. The study reveals that meta-discourse markers strengthen the communicative effectiveness and engagement of proverbs and readers.



Conclusions

The study shows relational markers as the most occurring metadiscourse marker in motivational proverbs analysis. Words like "you" and "your" were commonly used in proverbs, helping readers to feel the strong intention to address it to them. Metadiscourse markers such as logical connectives, attitude markers, relational markers, and emphatics not only help in text organization but also help in making each proverb intensely emotionally and mentally appealing to the audience.

While education proverbs do favor expressions of personal responsibility and continuous learning through attitude markers such as "must" and emphatics such as "never," and favor values such as diligence, inquiry, and self-betterment for motivational emphasis, love proverbs favor a broader range of metadiscourse markers, such as logical connectives such as "and," emphatics such as "always," and hedging (e.g., "It is love that...") to express emotional depth, confidence, and love. Meanwhile, life proverbs rely on logical and sequencing markers to organize ideas, using metaphorical language (like "see") alongside relational and attitude markers to provoke deeper reflection.

Overall, the study shows that metadiscourse markers are more than just extra words; they are essential for increasing the impact, persuasiveness, and significance of each proverb. Study also shows that metadiscourse markers play a significant role in motivational proverbs particularly in conveying meaning and engaging the audience—enhancing the message's motivational and self-reflective potential in addition to guiding the reader through it.

Future researchers are encouraged to investigate other topics of proverbs such as success, family, and resilience in order to find new patterns in which metadiscourse are employed in proverbs. It is also helpful to examine a broader range of proverbs. As the study is limited to five (5) proverbs per theme, testing with a wider group may provide more accurate results and even find separate markers or trends that were not observed in this study.

Future studies may also focus on specific markers like hedges and person markers. These can affect the tone of a proverb and may show how the proverbs are expressed. Comparing proverbs from different cultures or languages could also clarify how metadiscourse use changes depending on cultural values and communication styles.

Lastly, with the rise of digital media and diverse communication settings, the researchers recommend exploring how proverbs are used across different platforms such as political speeches, religious texts, social media posts, digital storytelling, or educational content. These contexts may influence how metadiscourse markers are used, depending on the audience and purpose. Studying these modern uses could show how traditional wisdom continues to evolve while keeping its original message, helping people interpret ideas, and connect across different cultures and generations.

Acknowledgment

The researchers acknowledged the support provided by the Technological University of the Philippines-Manila in facilitating this research endeavor. The researchers would like to thank all of the individuals who directly and indirectly supported this research effort. All of these were invaluable throughout the study, which made it successful.



Disclosure: Use of AI Tools

In compliance with The Threshold journal’s guidelines for ethical use of artificial intelligence (AI) in research writing, we disclose that we utilized OpenAI’s ChatGPT to assist in refining the language and clarity of this manuscript. The AI tool was employed primarily for editing purposes: to improve the coherence of paragraphs, correct grammatical errors, and format the document according to academic standards. All content, data interpretations, and conclusions are the original work of the authors. The use of AI did not influence the research design, data analysis, or the scientific findings of the study; it was strictly confined to helping articulate the authors’ intended meaning more effectively. The authors have reviewed and approved all AI-generated suggestions to ensure alignment with the study’s results and scholarly integrity. This disclosure is made to maintain transparency in the writing process, upholding the ethical standards set by the publication.

References

- always adverb - Definition, pictures, pronunciation and usage notes | Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary at OxfordLearnersDictionaries.com. (n.d.). <https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/always>
- always. (2025). In the Merriam-Webster Dictionary. <http://merriam-webster.com/dictionary/always>
- Amiryousefi, M., & Rasekh, A. E. (2010). Metadiscourse: Definitions, Issues and Its Implications for English Teachers. *English Language Teaching*, 3(4), 159-167. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1081977>
- Analysing Metadiscourse Markers in your Text* | Text Inspector. (n.d.). Text Inspector. <https://textinspector.com/help/metadiscourse/>
- AND | definition in the Cambridge English Dictionary. (n.d.). Cambridge Dictionary. <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/and>
- Babazade, Yasin. (2024). Proverbs in Pedagogy: Their Role in Language Teaching and Cultural Transmission. *Global Spectrum of Research and Humanities*. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/383073318_Proverbs_in_Pedagogy_Their_Role_in_Language_Teaching_and_Cultural_Transmission
- Belkhir, S. (2021). Cognitive linguistics and proverbs. *The Routledge handbook of cognitive linguistics*, 599–611. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351034708>
- bind verb - Definition, pictures, pronunciation and usage notes | Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary at OxfordLearnersDictionaries.com. (n.d.). https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/us/definition/english/bind_1
- but. (2025). <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/but>
- but. (n.d.). In *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/but>
- Collins Dictionary. (n.d.). You. In Collins Dictionary. Retrieved from <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/you>
- Crismore, A., Markkanen, R., & Steffensen, M. (1993). Metadiscourse in persuasive writing: A study of texts written by American and Finnish university students. *Written Communication*, 10(1), 39–71. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0741088393010001004>
- Definition of never*. (n.d.). Collins. <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/never>



- Emphatic language - (Speech and Debate) - Vocab, Definition, Explanations* | Fiveable. (n.d.). Fiveable. <https://library.fiveable.me/key-terms/hs-speech-debate/emphatic-language>
- Etymology of “always” by etymonline. (n.d.-b). Etymonline. <https://www.etymonline.com/word/always>
- Froland, M. (2024, March 28). *Understanding the pronouns ‘Us’ and ‘We’: clarifying usage and differences*. Two Minute English. <https://twominenglish.com/us-or-we/>
- Froland, M., (2024, March 28). *Mastering the pronouns: when to use you or yourself?* Two Minute English. <https://twominenglish.com/you-or-yourself/>
- Gabriele, & Gabriele. (2015, December 26). *Emphatic expression you really need to know!* | *English Language Blog*. English Language Blog | Language and Culture of the English-Speaking World. <https://blogs.transparent.com/english/emphatic-expression-you-really-need-to-know/>
- Herminingsih, D. I., & Isro'iyah, L. (2023). The Metadiscourse Analysis in Abstracts of Multidisciplinary Sciences Journal Articles: Hedges vs Boosters. *International Linguistics Research*, 6(1), p24. <https://doi.org/10.30560/ilr.v6n1p24>
- Hyland, K. (2017). *Metadiscourse: What is it and where is it going?* *Journal of Pragmatics*, 113, 16–29. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2017.03.007>
- Inspector, T. (2024, October 22). *What Are Discourse & Metadiscourse Markers?* | *Text Inspector*. *Text Inspector*. <https://textinspector.com/what-are-discourse-metadiscourse-markers/>
- like. (2025). <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/like>
- Macaraeg, J. M., Pelila, J. R. O., & Gutierrez, J. C. (2024). Mirroring academic journeys through figurative language in the Book of Proverbs. *Cambodian Journal of Educational Research*, 4(1), 84-109. <https://doi.org/10.62037/cjer.2024.04.01.05>
- McLeod, D. (2023, May 5). *You - formal writing in English*. GRAMMARIST. <https://grammarist.com/style/you-in-formal-writing/must>. (n.d.). In *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/must>
- Merriam-Webster. (n.d.). In Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/you>
- Merriam-Webster. (n.d.). Your. In Merriam-Webster.com dictionary. Retrieved April 11, 2025, from <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/your>
- never. (2025). In Merriam-Webster Dictionary. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/never#:~:text=1,degree%20%3A%20not%20under%20any%20condition>
- Niu, M., Provost, E. M., Jurgens, D., Gelman, S. A., Kross, E., & Orvell, A. (2025). The persuasive role of generic-you in online interactions. *Scientific Reports*, 15(1). <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-024-83440-1>
- Nordquist, R., (2020). Verbal Hedge: Definition and Examples. ThoughtCo. <https://www.thoughtco.com/verbal-hedge-communication-1692585>
- Oxford University Press. (n.d.). And. In Oxford Learner's Dictionaries. Retrieved from <https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/and>
- Pearson, W. S., & Abdollahzadeh, E. (2023). Metadiscourse in academic writing: A systematic review. *Lingua*, 293, 103561. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lingua.2023.103561>
- Sadikovna, Mirxanova M. "The Origin of Proverbs and Sayings." *Academicia Globe*, vol. 2, no. 6, 2021, pp. 106-110, <https://agir.academiascience.org/index.php/agir/article/view/260>



- See* -- *Definition in the Cambridge Dictionary.* (n.d.). <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/see>
- Sharma, A., (2024, June 1). Complete use of MUST in English || A free detailed guide. *English With Ashish*. <https://www.englishwithashish.com/complete-use-of-must-in-english/>
- Sun, Y., (2024). A Qualitative Study of the Psychological Effects of Motivational Quotes. Communications in Humanities Research. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/380849906_A_Qualitative_Study_of_the_Psychological_Effects_of_Motivational_Quotes
- Syzdykov, K., (2014). Contrastive Studies on Proverbs. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*. 136. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2014.05.336>
- The Text Inspector story*|*Text Inspector*. (2023), Text Inspector. <https://textinspector.com/who-are-we/>
- Trajkova, Z., & Pucakovska, M. (2019). *Putting Theory in Practice: The Role of Metadiscourse in Attaining Persuasion in Advertising Slogans*. Repository of UKIM. <http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12188/25928>
- TWO Definition & Meaning.* (n.d.). Merriam-Webster. Retrieved April 13, 2025, from <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/two>
- Uba, S. Y. (2020). Metadiscourse in Research Article Genre: A Cross-Linguistic Study of English and Hausa. *English Language Teaching*, 13(2), 57. <https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v13n2p57>
- Uyenne, M., & Ejiaso, V. (2023). Proverbs in Igbo Discourse. *Covenant Journal of Language Studies*. <https://journals.covenantuniversity.edu.ng/index.php/cjls/article/view/4581/1709>
- Vande Kopple, W. J., (2012). The importance of studying metadiscourse. *Applied Research on English Language*, 1(2), 37-44. https://are.ui.ac.ir/article_15453.html
- Vocabulary.com. (n.d.). Never. In *Vocabulary.com Dictionary*. Retrieved April 12, 2025, from <https://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/never>
- What is hedging in academic writing?* (2016). Enago Academy. <https://www.enago.com/academy/hedging-in-academic-writing/#:~:text=Hedging%20is%20the%20use%20of,distinguish%20between%20facts%20and%20claims.>
- Write. (2025). <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/write>