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Research Article

An Archival Study on the Linguistic State of Obo Manobo and Kinamiging Manobo

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Abstract

The Manobo language is one of the 175 Indigenous languages in the Philippines. It belongs to the Malayo-Polynesian, Austronesian linguistic family, primarily spoken by the Manobo or Manuvu Indigenous cultural community. Currently, 15 Manobo languages are spoken in Mindanao; two are under the threatened language vitality. This archival research investigates the current status of two threatened Manobo languages, the Obo Manobo and Kinamiging Manobo, particularly on their lexicography, phonology, morphology, and syntax, and literacy materials, utilizing literature and documents available in online data repositories. The results of the study show that there is substantial information about Obo Manobo linguistics. However, Kinamiging Manobo requires extensive research because of the scarcity of lexical, phonological, morphological, and syntactic documentation, as well as the unavailability of literacy materials. This exacerbates the danger of this threatened language once left undocumented. Hence, this study initiates an urgent call for more up-to-date investigations on Obo Manobo linguistics and studies of the lexical items, phonological, and morphological aspects in Kinamiging Manobo for future studies. Moreover, the Kinamiging Manobo linguistic investigation must be prioritized to contribute to the ongoing discourse of indigenous language preservation.

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In modern times, the traditional notion of ethnic homogeneity has been debunked by people in favor of embracing diversity in ethnicity (Young, 1994). Language, more than other social elements in the community, plays a critical role in ensuring that people across the globe continue to embrace their ethnic identity and practice their ethnic qualities (Fought, 2011). One of the solutions to concretize this movement is language preservation, a proliferating idea in the discourse of language extinction (Hinton, Huss, & Roche, 2018).

The Philippines, an archipelagic nation in Southeast Asia, is home to 175 indigenous languages (Eberhard, Simons, & Fennig, 2025; Eder, 2013; Ingilan & Jubilado, 2021). Regarding language vitality count, 20 are institutional, 100 are stable, 55 are endangered, and two are extinct (Eberhard et al., 2025). Although most indigenous Filipinos still practice their language, current global phenomena and socioeconomic factors threaten their continued existence (Tupas, 2015). Early studies on Philippine languages by Reid (1971), McFarland (1971), and Constantino (2000) documented fluctuations in the number of active languages, ranging from approximately 80 to 118, and then to 110, as cited in Ingilan and Jubilado (2021) and Iglesia, Ingilan, and Al Qumairi (2024).

Numerous studies on language preservation have emerged in the Philippines, as noted by Lantaya et al. (2021). In Luzon, for example, Abiog and David (2020) conducted a documentation and morphological analysis of the Mag-Antsi language. The Ayta Mag-Antsi, an indigenous group in Central Luzon, faces a unique threat to their language; despite being considered a stable language, it is becoming unsustainable. This is because only elders in the community are practicing, as most children gaining education use Kapampangan, Filipino, and English in schools, which they subsequently use at home, displacing their first language.

In the Visayas, linguistic documentation efforts have focused on languages such as Inete and Akeanon. For instance, Katalbas (2023) conducted a study on the morphological and semantic features of the nominative in Inete in Sitio Nagpana, Iloilo. This research produced and published an Inete-to-Hiligaynon dictionary and reference grammar, based on the speech community, as an effort for future generations' utilization. Similarly, in Aklan, Biray (2023) conducted a descriptive cross-sectional study to analyze the derivational morphology features of the Akeanon dialect in terms of order, word structure, and affixation.

In Mindanao, linguists have made significant progress in studying the indigenous language. This includes studies from unveiling Tausug culture through Parang Sabil translation (Ingilan & Adburajak, 2021) and the expression of profanity in Cebuano and Bahasa Sug (Jubilado, Ingilan, & Dumanig, 2015), to exploring the directives and politeness in Tausug Parang Sabil (Ingilan, 2018), tackling the comparative ergative and accusative structures in three Philippine languages, such as Cebuano, Filipino, and Isamal (Jubilado, 2021). Other research, such as Ingilan's (2017), delves into the verb phrase structure of Sinama using a Chomskyan approach, while Ingilan (2016) explores the lexicalization of profanity in the Tausug and Kagan languages in Mindanao, Philippines. Recent archival studies focused on the development and state of languages, including the Kalagan and Isamal linguistics (Iglesia et al., 2024), the state of Tausug and Sama-Bajau linguistics (Ingilan & Jubilado, 2021), as well as the state of Blaan and Tboli Linguistics (Bantilan, Ingilan, & Asrifan, 2025).

Despite these prominent studies, scholars like Iglesia et al. (2024) have urged others to expand the focus on indigenous language studies in the Philippines to further preservation efforts and enhance the understanding of linguistic diversity in the Philippines. Literature review revealed a scarcity of archival research focusing on the Manobo language family, specifically on Obo Manobo and Kinamiging Manobo, which are classified under threatened linguistic vitality. To address this gap, this research provides consolidated data on the current condition of these two threatened Manobo languages.

The Manobo language, one of the 175 Indigenous languages spoken in the Philippines, belongs to the Malayo-Polynesian branch of the Austronesian linguistic family (Banuag & Payapaya, 2019; Eberhard et al., 2025; Palmera-Blanco, 2022). It is also part of the Greater Central Philippines languages, consisting of different minor languages spoken in central and eastern Mindanao (Liao, 2008). This language is primarily spoken by the Manobo or Manuvu Indigenous cultural community. The term “Manobo” is of Hispanic origin, derived from the word *mansuba*, meaning river people (from *man*, “man”, and *suba*, “river”) (Dapar et al., 2020; Felix, 2004; Jamera, Manting, & Dapar, 2020). It is one of the largest ethnic groups in Mindanao, widely distributed in different Mindanao areas, primarily concentrated in Surigao del Sur, Misamis Oriental, Davao, Cotabato, Bukidnon, and Agusan (Dapar & Amoroso, 2022; De Jong, 2010; Jamera et al., 2020).

The Manobo language is divided into 15 sub-groups (Banuag & Payapaya, 2019; Delmar, 2019; Eberhard, 2024; Eberhard et al., 2025). According to Eberhard et al. (2024), the Ethnologue classifies Manobo speakers into East, South, and West groups. East central speakers are Manobo Agusan, Manobo Dibabawon, and Manobo Rajah Kabunsuwan, while the southcentral speakers consist of Ata Tigwa, subdivided into Manobo Ata and Manobo Matigsalug, and another variant is in Obo Manobo. On the west-central side are Manobo Ilianen and Manobo Western Bukidnon. In the north are Binukid, Higaonon, Kawayan, and Kinamiging Manobo, while speakers in the south are Manobo Cotabato, Manobo Sarangani, and Tagabawa.

The Manobo Agusan language is spoken by about 60,000 Manobo people living in the mountain range of the province of Agusan del Sur, Mindanao, Philippines, located north of Agusan del Norte, south of Davao del Norte, west of Misamis Oriental and Bukidnon, and east of Surigao del Sur (Dapar et al., 2020). Initially, the Agusan Manobo inhabited the Agusan River; however, when migration occurred, Christian settlers from other Philippine islands dominated the flat lands of the Agusan Valley (Campos, 2014; Corvera, Manalo & Aquino, 2017; Ness, 2004; Taguchi, 2011).

Manobo Dibabawon is spoken by native people in Northern Davao Province, Philippines (Forster & Barnard, 1968). Also known as the Manobo Rajah Kabunsuwan, the Manobo language is used by people living in the Davao Region, such as northern Davao Oriental, the Caraga region in southeast Agusan del Sur, the south part of Surigao del Sur province, Lingig, Rajah, and Cabungsuan. Some speakers use Agusan Manobo, Cebuano, and Dibabawon Manobo (Eberhard et al., 2025). On the other hand, Manobo Ata reside in the Davao region, specifically northwest of Compostela Valley, Davao del Norte, Davao del Sur province, northern Mindanao regions, and southeast Bukidnon province (Agbas et al., 2017; Eberhard et al., 2024).

Manobo Matigsalug, alternatively known as Matig-Salug, Salug-Tigwa Manobo, and Tigwa Manobo, are found in various regions of the northwest area of Davao del Sur Province, the south-central area of Bukidnon Province of Northern Mindanao, and the northeast part of North Cotabato, SOCCSKSARGEN (Region XII). Obo Manobo, originally known as Tahaurogs (Ingilan, 2022), alternately called Minanuvu or Manuvu (Eberhard et al., 2025), is spoken in the regions of Davao and some parts of SOCCSKSARGEN, on the northeast slope of Mount Apo between Davao del Sur and North Cotabato provinces. In 2022, the population was 55,000, but 20,000 were monolinguals. As a sub-Indigenous cultural community of the Bagobos, their Indigenous cultural community's name emanates from the Bagobo Klata (Jangan) and Bagobo-Tagabawa, their sub-Indigenous cultural community (Ingilan, 2022).

Manobo Ilianen had around 14,600 population in 2000 and 227,000 in 2005; a few are monolinguals in the SOCCSKSARGEN, Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), and northern Mindanao regions. Manobo Western Bukidnon had around 15,000 speakers in 2008 (Summer Institute of Linguistics [SIL], 1976), fewer than the 227,000 Manobo speakers in 2005

(United Nations Statistics Division [UNSD], 2005). Speakers are located in the Northern Mindanao and SOCCSKSARGEN regions. Binukid has around 122,000 (UNSD, 2025), primarily located in the northern part of Bukidnon province, northeast of Lanao del Norte, such as Misamis Oriental and Cagayan de Oro, southwest of Ginoog Bay, and Lanao del Sur provinces in the ARMM.

In 1996, Higaonon had around 30,000 people (1996 NTM), which increased to 452,000 in the 2020 census. Primarily located in Butuan City, Agusan del Sur, Butuan River Basin, Lanao del Norte, and Iligan City, Kagayanen, Manobo had 30,000 speakers in 2007 (SIL, 2007) with few monolinguals, which increased to 64,300 in the 2010 census primarily located in Rizal and Quezon provinces, Central Visayas, MIMAROPA region (Region IV-B), the National Capital Region (NCR), and Western Visayas regions.

Kinamiging Manobo is primarily located in the Northern Mindanao region, specifically in the Camiguin province, where around 12,800 speakers existed in 2005; in the same year, this increased to 227,000 Manobo, exceeding 645,000 in the 2020 census. Manobo Cotabato speakers were around 227,000 in 2005, decreased to 30,000 in 2007 (SIL, 2007), and 24,600 in the 2010 census. Primarily located in the SOCCSKSARGEN region. Manobo Sarangani had a 58,00 population on the 2000 census, which increased to 227,000 and increased to 645,000 based on the 2020 census, living mainly in the Sarangani areas. Manobo Tagabawa, alternatively called Bagobo, Tagabawa Bagobo, has a population of 43,000 based on SIL in 1998 (SIL, 2018) and is mainly inhabited in the Davao region, at Mount Apo slopes west of Davao City, and in some parts of North Cotabato province.

In terms of language status, 12 Manobo sub-languages, such as Manobo Agusan, Manobo Dibabawon, Manobo Ata, Manobo Matigsalug, Manobo Ilianen, Manobo Western Bukidnon, Binukid, Higaonon, Manobo Sarangani, and Tagabawa, are still classified as developing. At the same time, Manobo Rajah Kabunsuwan is considered vigorous, and Obo Manobo and Manobo Kinamiging are considered threatened. Although, at present, Manobo language family has stable language vitality (Eberhard, 2024) studies in Manobo languages conducted by Alamillo & Talili (2016), Banuag & Payapaya (2019), Bonifacio et al., (2022), Nuñez (2019), Libago and Adriano (2024), and Robiego et al., (2022), show that Manobo languages including the Obo Manobo (Catoto, 2022) and Manobo Kinamiging (Alamillo & Talili, 2016) faces the threat of endangerment due to several factors like use of dominant language in the area, intermarriages, education system, globalization, the adoption of new religious practices, advancement in technology, shifting of career paths, limited efforts to develop their language within communities, and insufficient government support which result, in the same vein, is affirmed based on the report of UNESCO Ad Hoc Expert Group on Endangered Languages predicting that by the end of 21st century, around 90% of the Indigenous languages have the possibility of being replaced by dominant languages (Brenzinger et al., 2003).

As part of language preservation initiatives and efforts to mitigate identified threats to language vitality in Mindanao, this study was conducted to provide a consolidated report of the documented language records of Obo Manobo and Kinamiging Manobo, two sub-languages currently classified as threatened. This archival study focuses on key linguistic aspects from 1960 to 2024, including lexicography, phonology, morphology, syntax, and literacy materials. Moreover, this research seeks to identify key areas for future research for linguistic scholars.

Methodology

This study employed an archival research methodology, which involves examining and analyzing existing primary and secondary sources from online and physical repositories (Bantilan, Ingilan, & Asrifan, 2025). By utilizing this method, it allows for the retrieval of historical evidence collated by past scholars (Gilliland & McKemmish, 2018; Ventresca & Mohr, 2017), where, in this

case, the development of linguistic discourse concerning the two threatened Manobo languages was assessed. Additionally, this method is vital in filling in the gaps in the literature of Obo Manobo and Kinamiging Manobo. It draws the line as to where the linguistic field may immerse itself in the mission of linguistic preservation.

The researchers conducted a close reading of documents and materials retrieved from online databases. Specifically, the data were extracted from 11 documents from the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL), which consists of written documents compiled by various researchers, and one document from ResearchGate. Additional data were sourced from international journal publications. These documents, which date from the 1960s to the present, were examined to gather information necessary to understand the linguistic structures of Obo Manobo and Kinamiging Manobo.

Results and Discussion

This section discusses the state of Obo Manobo and Kinamiging Manobo in terms of lexicography, phonology, morphology, syntax, and literacy materials. These languages are on the verge of distinction; most of the textual materials found are attributed to foreign scholars, resulting in an outsider's perspective. While core areas of linguistic structure in the Manobo Obo and Kinamiging Manobo were identified, minimal documents authored by local scholars are scarce. Although several studies were retrieved, some of these are outdated. This strongly displays the need for additional linguistic research on these two threatened Manobo languages.

Linguistic State of Obo Manobo

The Obo Manobo language is a part of the larger Manobo language family. Over the years, international scholars have explored the areas where Obo Manobo is spoken and have made efforts to document the linguistic features, particularly its lexicography, phonology, morphology, syntax, and literacy materials. These efforts shed light on the current situation of the Obo Manobo language.

Lexicography

Lexicographical works on Obo Manobo span from the 1960s to the present. The Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) holds several compilations, including a Bagobo Grammar Checklist and Pronoun Sets (1960), a wordlist compilation in Obo Manobo from Roxas (1966), and a study on 19 regional dialect variations in Kidapawan (SIL, 1974). Authors whose works are in the SIL repository contributed to the development of Obo Manobo wordlists. For instance, Hettick, Kent, and Reid (1965) compiled Guiangan, Tagabawa, and Obo Manobo grammars, while Khor and Vander Molen (1992) produced a trilingual translation in Obo Manobo, English, and Filipino. The most recent contributions found were Scannell's (2018) Crubadan Language data set for Obo Manobo, and Vander Molen's (2020) Obo Manobo dictionary compilation.

Elkins (1974) provided a wordlist for Proto-Manobo wordlist, which included 135 lexical items for Obo Manobo of Mount Apo in Davao Province. Table 1 presents a selection of this vocabulary.

Table 1

Proto Obo Manobo word list compiled by Elkins (1974)

English	Manobo	English	Manobo	English	Manobo
afternoon	<i>mapun</i>	hand	<i>bellad</i>	stone	<i>batu</i>
answer	<i>tavak</i>	head	<i>?uu</i>	straight	<i>tullid</i>
banana	<i>sahing</i>	heart	<i>pusung</i>	sweat	<i>?ating</i>
belly	<i>getek</i>	heavy	<i>beggat</i>	sweet	<i>m?amis</i>
betel pepper	<i>manika</i>	heel	<i>pau?</i>	sweet potato	<i>kasila</i>
bite	<i>kahat</i>	hot	<i>manit</i>	tail	<i>?ikug</i>
black	<i>metem</i>	house	<i>baey</i>	ten	<i>sapuu?</i>
blood	<i>langasa</i>	how much/ many	<i>pila</i>	termite	<i>?aney</i>
body	<i>lawa</i>	hundred	<i>gatus</i>	thick	<i>kappal</i>
bone	<i>tullan</i>	knee	<i>bu?e</i>	thigh	<i>bubun</i>
brain	<i>?utek</i>	lake	<i>lanew</i>	thin	<i>nipis</i>
breakfast	<i>lamnag</i>	large	<i>dakel</i>	thorn	<i>duhi</i>
bury	<i>lebbeng</i>	leaf	<i>da?un</i>	three	<i>?atallu</i>
carabao	<i>kaabew</i>	lightning	<i>kilat</i>	thunder	<i>luhung</i>
climb a tree	<i>pemenek</i>	lime	<i>?apug</i>	to fly	<i>layang</i>
cold	<i>gannaw</i>	live	<i>?ubpa?</i>	to hide	<i>?alas</i>
comb	<i>suwat</i>	louse	<i>kutu</i>	to pay	<i>bayad</i>
companion	<i>duma</i>	mat	<i>?ikam</i>	to smell or kiss	<i>?arek</i>
crocodile	<i>buwaya</i>	moon	<i>buan</i>	tooth	<i>ngipen</i>
cry	<i>sinagaw</i>	morning	<i>selem</i>	tree	<i>kayu</i>
day or sun	<i>?allew</i>	mother	<i>?inay</i>	two	<i>?aruwa</i>
debt	<i>?utang</i>	mud	<i>basak</i>	vein	<i>?uhat</i>
deep	<i>daum</i>	name	<i>ngaran</i>	wait	<i>tahad</i>
deer	<i>saareng</i>	near	<i>dani</i>	walk	<i>?ipanew</i>
difficult	<i>leggen</i>	neck	<i>li?eg</i>	wash clothes	<i>pi?pi?</i>
dog	<i>tuvang</i>	nine	<i>siyew</i>	water	<i>wa?ig</i>
drink	<i>?inem</i>	nose	<i>?ilung</i>	water container	<i>sakaddu</i>
ear	<i>talinga</i>	pain	<i>sakit</i>	west	<i>saup</i>
earthquake	<i>linug</i>	palm of hand	<i>?aad</i>	wet	<i>?amas</i>

English	Manobo	English	Manobo	English	Manobo
eat	<i>kaʔan</i>	pig	<i>babuy</i>	what you may call it	<i>kuwa</i>
eel	<i>kasili</i>	pound rice	<i>bintayu</i>	white	<i>putiʔ</i>
elbow	<i>siku</i>	raft	<i>gakit</i>	widow	<i>bau</i>
eye	<i>mata</i>	rain	<i>ʔuran</i>	wind	<i>kaamag</i>
eyebrow	<i>kiley</i>	rainbow	<i>bauntu</i>	wing	<i>pakpak</i>
eyelash	<i>pilekpilek</i>	rattan	<i>baahen</i>	word or saying	<i>kahi</i>
far	<i>diyuʔ</i>	right hand	<i>kawaran</i>		
fat	<i>lambuʔ/lambu</i>	ring	<i>sising</i>		
fence	<i>ʔaad</i>	roof	<i>ʔatep</i>		
finger nail	<i>suluʔʔ</i>	skinny	<i>gasahasa</i>		
fire	<i>ʔapuy</i>	sky	<i>langit</i>		
floor	<i>saʔag</i>	slave	<i>ʔuripen</i>		
frog	<i>bakabak</i>	small	<i>disek</i>		
flower	<i>bulak</i>	smoke	<i>ʔabbe</i>		
fly (noun)	<i>langaw</i>	snake	<i>ʔuad</i>		
four	<i>ʔepat</i>	span	<i>dangeew</i>		
fragrant	<i>mammut</i>	spit	<i>ʔileb</i>		
ginger	<i>luya</i>	spouse	<i>ʔasawa</i>		
give	<i>begeey</i>	stick to	<i>dakat</i>		

In 2020, Catoto’s study on lexical variation in the Obo Manobo language in three municipalities in North Cotabato: Kidapawan, Magpet, and President Roxas. The study revealed distinct lexical variations among these areas in prepositions, conjunctions, nouns, and verbs (see Table 2).

Table 2

Lexical Diversity of Obo Manobo in Kidapawan, President Roxas, and Magpet of North Cotabato (Catoto, 2022)

Lexical Category	Sample Variations
Noun	<i>Aya: inayon; tiya (aunt)</i>
Verb	<i>Basul; sonditan; sonditan; sondit (blame)</i>
Adjective	<i>Nolipay; khaa (happy)</i>
Preposition	<i>Atag; moka-atag (about)</i>
Conjunction	<i>Otin; otik; od (If)</i>

Phonology

Two studies on Obo Manobo phonology were identified. According to Olofson (2007), the language has 17 consonant phonemes— *b* [b], *d* [d], *g* [g], *h* [h], *k* [k], *l* [l], *m* [m], *n* [n], *ng* [ng], *r* [r], *s* [s], *t* [t], *v* [v], *w* [w], *y* [j]— and five (5) vowel phonemes *a*, *e*, *i*, *o*, and *u*, with no diphthongs. Word stress is placed on penultimate syllables. The language also has a glottal stop phoneme, and six (6) consonants are borrowed from Cebuano and Spanish, especially in proper nouns.

According to Elkins (1974), the phoneme [p] is articulated as /pp/ when situated between the vowels /e/, but stays as /p/ in other positions. The phoneme [t], articulated as /tt/ in certain words, appears between the vowels *e*, but stays as *t* in other contexts. The phoneme [k] is articulated as /kk/ in words when situated between the vowels /e/ but stays as /k/ in other contexts. The phoneme [b], articulated as /bb/ in certain words, appears between the vowels *e* but stays as /b/ in other contexts. The phoneme [d] shifts to /dd/ when it comes after an /e/ and is succeeded by another vowel; it transforms to /r/ when positioned between two vowels, while it stays as /d/ in other contexts. The phoneme [g] becomes /gg/ when surrounded by /e/ and followed by another vowel; [g] turns into /h/ when positioned between a vowel and another vowel, but it stays as /g/ in other contexts. Phoneme [n] transforms into /nn/ when the preceding context is /e/, followed by another vowel, and stays as /n/ in other situations. The phoneme [l] is removed when it comes after a vowel that is neither /e/ nor /i/, at the end of a word, or preceding a vowel that is not /i/. [l] appears as a geminate /ll/ when following /e/ and preceding a vowel, while remaining /l/ in other cases. The phoneme [r] is pronounced as /l/ when it occurs between vowels. Phonemes [s] to /s/, [h] to /ʔ/, and [y] to /y/. For the vowel phoneme, [a] is articulated as /e/ before a consonant and stays the same in other contexts; [i] stays /i/, and [u] stays /u/. Conversely, [e] turns into /a/ when it resembles /l/, is followed by a nasal consonant, and [e] is omitted before the prefix *ma+*. In contrast, [e] stays the same in all other cases.

Morphology and Syntax

SIL (1966) documented six demonstratives in Obo Manobo: *ini* (here), *dian/dutun* (there), *ini* (this), and *ika/idea* (that), encoding spatial distinctions, as shown in Table 3. These demonstratives are used in the sentence structures as modifiers or pronouns.

Table 3

Demonstratives in Obo Manobo Language

Sentence Type	English Demonstrative	Demonstrative Form	Spatial Context
1.a The Stone is here	Here	<i>ini</i>	In the speaker's hand
1.b The stone is there	There	<i>dian</i>	In the hearer's hand
1.c The stone is there	There	<i>dutun</i>	Away from the speaker and hearer
2.a This is a stone	This	<i>ini</i>	In the speaker's hand
2.b That is a stone	That	<i>ika</i>	In the hearer's hand
2.c That is a stone	That	<i>idda</i>	Away from the speaker and hearer

Additionally, the same compilation identifies pronouns such as *siak* (me) as part of the emphatic/topic set and *ku* (my) as to the post-nominal possessive set (SIL, 1966), as shown in Table 4.

Table 4

Pronoun Type of Obo Manobo language

Pronoun Type	Example Sentence	Form	Description
Empathic/Topic Set	As for me (<i>siak</i>), I am going home,	<i>siak</i>	Indicates emphasis or topic of the sentence
Post-nominal possessive set	This is the dog- <i>ku</i> (my dog)	<i>ku</i>	Indicates possession following the noun

In Obo Manobo morphology, verbs are typically placed at the beginning of a sentence. Verb affixes indicate the function of a noun phrase, whether a subject or object, and carry syntactic transitivity, dynamism, and mood. Case markers (oblique, absolutive, or ergative) are used to signify noun phrases. In transitive clauses, personal names and common nouns follow an ergative structure, while first- and second-person pronouns use a tripartite case-marking system, and the third-person pronouns follow an ergative pattern (Brainard & Molen, 2025).

Based on Brainard and Molen (2005), Obo Manobo has two types of transitive clauses: Verb-Agent-Patient (VAP) and Verb-Patient-Agent (VPA). The hierarchy, topicality, and person within these clauses are highly influenced by an old inverse system. VAP and VPA clauses differ in their pronoun set, word order, and voice constructions, which also affect their grammatical relations.

Obo Manobo pronouns are arranged by number, person, and case. Genitive and nominative cases are assigned in both the short and long forms of singular and plural pronouns. The pronoun structure in Obo Manobo is composed of the first person, which comes before the second, and both are placed before the third. However, speakers can use topicality arrangement to emphasize the most relevant pronoun in the conversation (Hung & Billings, 2009). Table 5 provides a detailed overview of the pronominal inventories of Obo Manobo.

Table 5

Pronominal Inventories of Obo Manobo

Person/Number		Case			
Traditional Labels	Formal Features	NOM short	NOM long	GEN short	GEN long
1SG	+me, -you, -pl	<i>a</i>	<i>siyak</i>	<i>ku</i>	<i>nikoddi</i>
EXCL1PL	+me, -you, +pl	<i>koy</i>	<i>sikami</i>	<i>doy</i>	<i>nikami</i>
INCL1PL	+me, -you, +pl	<i>ki</i>	<i>siketa</i>	<i>ta</i>	<i>niketa</i>
2SG	-me, +you, -pl	<i>ka</i>	<i>sikkow</i>	<i>du</i>	<i>nikkow</i>
2PL	-me, +you, +pl	<i>kow</i>	<i>sikiyu</i>	<i>dow</i>	<i>nikiyu</i>
3SG	-me, -you, -pl	\emptyset	<i>sikandin</i>	<i>din</i>	<i>nikandin</i>
3PL	-me, -you, +pl	\emptyset	<i>sikandan</i>	<i>dan</i>	<i>nikandan</i>

Table 6 illustrates how nominative (NOM) and genitive (GEN) pronouns interact when used in conjunction. It details pronominal combination in various grammatical contexts, the relationship

between these cases, the state of pronoun agreement for subject possession, and the placement of singular and plural markings across the first, second, and third persons in the Obo Manobo language.

Table 6
Pronominal Combination in Obo Manobo

Gen		+me -you -pl	+me -you +pl	+me +you +pl	-me -you -pl	-me +you +pl	-me -you -pl	-me -you +pl
Nom		ku- nokiddi	doy - nikami	ta - niketa	du- nikkow	dow - nikiyu	din- nikandin	dan- nikandan
	a ~ siyak				a nikkow du siyak	a nikiyu dow siyak	a nikandin din siyak	a nikandan dan siyak
+me -you +pl	koy ~ sikami				koy nikkow du sikami	koy nikiyu dow sikami	koy nikandin din sikami	koy nikandan dan sikami
+me +you +pl	ki ~ siketa						ki nikandin din siketa	ki nikandan dan siketa
-me +you -pl	ka ~ sikkow	ku sikkow ka nikoddi	doy sikkow ka nikami				ka nikandin din sikkow	ka nikandan dan sikkow
-me +you +pl	kow ~ sikiyu	ku sikiyu kow nikoddi	doy sikiyu kow nikami				kow nikandin din sikiyu	kow nikandan dan sikiyu
-me -you -pl	sikandin	ku sikandin sikandin nikoddi	doy sikandin sikandin nikami	ta sikandin sikandin niketa	du sikandin sikandin nikkow	dow sikandin sikandin nikiyu	din sikandin sikandin nikandin	dan sikandin sikandin nikandan
-me -you +pl	sikandan	ku sikandan sikandan nikoddi	doy sikandan sikandan nikami	ta sikandan sikandan niketa	du sikandan sikandan nikkow	dow sikandan sikandan nikiyu	din sikandan sikandan nikandin	dan sikandan sikandan nikandan

Furthermore, Catoto’s (2022) study on lexical variation in the Obo Manobo community in North Cotabato shows how these differences affect morphological and syntactic structure. For instance, speakers exhibit morphological variations in names for objects and locations, such as *dimba-an* and *ponuvara* for “church”, or *baag*, *soning*, and *kavii* for “bag”. The study also observes additional morphological variation in verbs like *sondit*, *sonditan*, *basul* (to blame), *tod toppikon*, *tampod*, *toppikon*, and *toppik* (to break). Finally, it documents morphological rules for pluralization, such as using “mongo,” a prefix to indicate plurality, which is analogous to how Tagalog employs “mga.”

Literacy Materials

Lucero et al. (2008) have compiled a collection of Obo Manobo folk literature from the Mount Apo area. These literatures come in various forms, such as anecdotes, essays, songs, myths, poems, and legends, which talk about social values, getting along with others, livelihood, home, lifecycle, spirits and nature, leisure, and beauty. Additional folklore has been published in Dagmay in 2011, including *Puak* (2011) by Kyle Michael Vincent Canizares et al., and *The Blind and the Cripple* (2012) by Romeo Umpan.

A literacy-related study by Pejaner & Mistades (2020) identified 12 teaching practices used by Grade 8 physics teachers within the Obo Manobo Indigenous cultural community. Among these practices, three were able to help promote cultural awareness. However, no topics related to sociopolitical consciousness have been tackled. At the same time, 10 practices helped in promoting academic achievement. The study asserts that an education setting should be created where indigenous topics are contextualized into the science curriculum so that literacy materials are designed according to the Obo Manobo Indigenous cultural community’s needs.

As part of the initiatives to provide input for Mother Tongue instructional materials, Mendoza and Barbosa (2020) collected, analyzed, and translated six (6) short stories from the Obo Manobo Indigenous cultural community, which include: (1) *Motus No Ponguliman* (The Great Magic) by

Felipa Justino, (2) *Motus No Koyupat* (The Powerful Crab) by Loriana Maasan Pandia, (3) *Si Juan Uwoy Si Pedro* (Juan and Pedro) by Persila S. Amoloy, (4) *Ti Tilandok Umoy Dos Gungutan* (Tilandok and the Giant) by Datu Emelio Guabong Tinambon, (5) *Itulon Moka-atag Ki Juan* (The Story of Juan) by Datu Omelis P. Agod, and (6) *Dos Gungutan Uwoy si Tilandok* (The Giant and Tilandok) by Datu Umilis Panday Agod. These narratives emphasize the Obo Manobo's strong connection to the environment, respect for parents and family, and values such as *utang na loob* (debt of gratitude), *pagkalinga* (nurturing), *pag-aruga* (care), and *katatagang loob* (inner strength).

A 2022 study by Barbosa on a peace ritual demonstrates how language, actions, and items represent symbols, values, and concepts of the Obo Manobo community. This study emphasizes the contribution of multimodality in communication to understanding their philosophies.

Linguistic State of Kinamiging Manobo

Kinamiging Manobo is primarily spoken in areas of the Northern Mindanao region. Limited research on the language, pioneered by international scholars in the late 1960s to 1970s, has focused on the lexical items, phonological structure, morphology, and syntax of the Kinamiging Manobo language.

Lexicography

In 1973, Elkins and Regier compiled a Kinamiging Manobo wordlist, which provided 372 lexical items and their English equivalents. In a separate study 1974 on the Proto-Manobo word list, Elkins identified 113 lexical items specific to Kinamiging Manobo. Table 7 presents a selection of these lexical items.

Table 7

Proto Kinamiging Manobo Word List compiled by Elkins (1974)

English	Manobo	English	Manobo	English	Manobo
abaca	?abaka	full	punu?’	slave	?ulipun
hapun	hapun	ginger	luy?a	to smell or kiss	hauk
banana	saging	head	?ulu	smoke	?abul
belly	gutuk’	heavy	bugat	siyam	siyam
bite	kagat	house	baay	spit	?ilub
bitter	pa?it	how much; how many	pila	spouse	?asawa
black	?itum	hundred	gatus	stand	tindug
body	lawa	itch	katul	star	biu?un
brain	?utek	kick	sipa?	stone	batu
canoe/paddle	begsay	kill	himatay	tail	?ikug
carabao	kaabaw	lake	lanaw	termite	?anay
child	bata?	leaf	dahun	thick	kapal
choose	pili?’	leg	pa?a	thigh	bubun
companion	duma	lightning	kilat	thin	nipis
cotton	gapas	lime	?apug	thousand	libu
crocodile	bu?adza	liver	?atay	three	tatuu

English	Manobo	English	Manobo	English	Manobo
debt	<i>?utang</i>	male	<i>ma?ma</i>	thunder	<i>lugung</i>
deep	<i>daum</i>	moon	<i>buan</i>	tongue	<i>dila?</i>
dog	<i>?asu</i>	mosquito	<i>tagnuk</i>	tooth	<i>ngipun</i>
drink	<i>?inum</i>	mother	<i>?inay</i>	trousers	<i>sawal</i>
ear	<i>talinga</i>	mouth	<i>ba?ba?</i>	two	<i>daruwa</i>
earthquake	<i>linug</i>	name	<i>ngaran</i>	vein	<i>?ugat</i>
eat	<i>ka?un</i>	near	<i>dani</i>	wait	<i>tahad</i>
walu	<i>way</i>	needle	<i>dagum</i>	walk	<i>panaw</i>
elbow	<i>siku</i>	new	<i>bag?u</i>	weave cloth	<i>habul</i>
eye	<i>mata</i>	noon	<i>?udtu</i>	west	<i>saupan</i>
eyebrow	<i>kilay</i>	nose	<i>?irung</i>	wet	<i>hamus</i>
eyelash	<i>piluk</i>	pain	<i>sakit</i>	what you may call it	<i>kuwa</i>
far	<i>didzu</i>	palm of hand	<i>paad</i>	white	<i>puti?</i>
father	<i>?amay</i>	path (trail)	<i>daan</i>	wing	<i>pakpak</i>
fence	<i>?alad</i>	to pay	<i>badzad</i>	woman	<i>badzi</i>
fire	<i>hapuy</i>	pig	<i>babuy</i>	year	<i>tu?id</i>
floor	<i>sa?ag</i>	rain	<i>?uran</i>	yesterday	<i>gabi?</i>
flower	<i>buak</i>	rattan	<i>baagun</i>		
fly	<i>langew</i>	roof	<i>?atup</i>		
to fly	<i>ladzang</i>	rope	<i>pisi?</i>		
forget	<i>lipot</i>	sew	<i>tahi?</i>		
four	<i>?upat</i>	six	<i>ha?unum</i>		
fragrant	<i>humut</i>	sky	<i>langit</i>		

Phonology

Proto-Manobo phonemes consist of 16 consonants (*p, b, m, t, d, n, l, r, s, y, k, g, ng?, w, h*) and four (4) vowels (*i, e, a, u*). Regarding reflexivity, the consonants *p, t, k, b, m, n, ng, s, h*, and *w* are consistent in the Kinamiging Manobo language, indicating the stability of these consonants' reflexes in their language. On the other hand, the language exhibits *lenition*, a phonological process where certain consonants are pronounced differently when they occur between vowels. For instance, the phoneme [r] is realized as /l/ in between vowels, and [y] becomes /dz/. The phoneme [l] is deleted when it occurs between two vowels unless the second vowel is /i/; otherwise, it is realized as [l] is realized as /l/ and remains unchanged. The proto-vowels *a, i*, and *u* are consistent in the Kinamiging Manobo language, indicating the stability of these vowel reflexes. At the same time, [e] is realized as /u/ (Elkins, 1974).

Morphology and Syntax

Based on the data stored in SIL (1973), Elkins and Regier (1966) compiled six (6) demonstratives in Kinamiging Manobo: *aniya/ha'ini* (here), *hadza'* (there), *didza'* (there), *ha'i* (this), *hadza'n* (that), and *didza'n* (that), as shown in Table 8.

Table 8

Demonstratives in Kinamiging Manobo compiled by Elkins and Regier (1966)

Sentence	Form	Description
1.a The stone is here (in speaker's hand)	<i>'aniya/ha'ini</i>	Refers to proximity to the speaker
b. The stone is there (in hearer's hand)	<i>hadza'</i>	Refers to the proximity of the hearer
c. The stone is there (away from speaker and hearer)	<i>didza'</i>	Refers to the distance between the speaker and the hearer
2.a This is a stone (in speaker's hand)	<i>ha'i</i>	Refers to proximity to the speaker
b. That is a stone (in hearer's hand)	<i>hadza'n</i>	Refers to the proximity of the hearer
c. That is a stone (away from speaker and hearer)	<i>didza'n</i>	Refers to the distance between the speaker and the hearer

Additionally, in the same compilation, pronouns such as *ako*, *?imo*, *?* and *indan* (me) are placed in the emphatic set, referring to the emphasis of the topic. The pronouns *ako gadzud*, *?imo gadzud*, and *?indan gadzad* are part of the post-nominal possessive, indicating possession or ownership, as summarized in Table 9.

Table 9

Pronouns in Kinamiging Manobo Compiled by Elkins and Regier (1966)

Pronoun Set and Example Sentence	Form	Description
1. Emphatic/Topic Set Example: As for me, I am going home	<i>ako</i> <i>?imo</i> <i>?indan</i>	Refers to emphasis or topic topicalization
2. Post-Nominal Possessive Set Example: Dog-my (my dog)	<i>ako gadzud</i> <i>?imo gadzud</i> <i>?indan gadzad</i>	Indicates possession or ownership

Literacy Materials

An archival search revealed that no documents or articles related to Kinamiging Manobo literacy materials exist.

Conclusion

This archival study assessed the linguistic state of two threatened Manobo languages, Obo Manobo and Kinamiging Manobo, by examining existing linguistic materials from 1960 to 2022. The findings revealed significant documentation for Obo Manobo, particularly in lexicography. At least 10 Obo Manobo wordlists from 1960, 1965, 1966, 1974, 1992, 2018, 2020, and 2022 were identified. The study also found two phonological studies that documented 17 consonant phonemes and five (5) vowels, and an explanation of their sound conditions or phonetic characteristics. Furthermore, several studies provide an idea of the morphology and syntax of Obo Manobo. SIL (1966) found six (6) demonstratives and two pronouns placed in the emphatic and post-nominal possessive set, while

Hung and Vander Molen (2005) found transitive clauses such as VAP and VPA. Brainard (2005) explains the verb positioning and case marking of the Manobo Obo. On the other hand, Hung and Billing (2009) define the pronominal inventories and pronominal combinations of Obo Manobo. The archival search found existing literacy materials, such as folk stories and materials for teaching related to cultural practices in the Obo Manobo Indigenous cultural community.

For the state of Kinamiging Manobo, researchers have found scarcity in the available documents and articles related to lexicography, as the only available in the repositories are wordlists compiled by Elkins and Regier in 1973 and Elkin's compilation in 1974. Only one phonological study (Elkins, 1974) was identified, which documented 16 consonants and four (4) vowels. The only available documentation on morphology and syntax was Elkins and Regier's (1966) compilation on six (6) demonstratives in the Kinamiging Manobo, such as *aniya/ha'ini* (here), *hadza'* (there), *didza'* (there), *ha'i* (this), *hadza'n* (that), and *didza'n* (that), and pronouns *ako*, *?imo*, *?indan* (me) set in the emphatic set, and *ako gadzud*, *?imo gadzud*, *?indan gadzad* (my) set in the post-nominal possessive set.

Based on these findings, the research concludes that Obo Manobo is a relatively well-documented language. There are substantial numbers of wordlist documentation for Obo Manobo spanning from 1910 to 2022. Phonology, morphology, and syntax topics systematically offer to understand their phonetic and morphological structure. Moreover, efforts have been made to develop literacy materials like folk stories and other indigenous-focused teaching approaches. On the other hand, Kinamiging Manobo lacks linguistic resources as lexicography only has two types of research, phonology, morphology, and syntax, which had one study each, and literacy materials were not found.

With this result, the scarcity of documents on Kinamiging Manobo, particularly in its lexicography, morphology, syntax, and literacy materials, indicates that the language is under-researched. This poses a higher risk of endangerment to an indigenous language with threatened language vitality.

Therefore, the researchers highly recommend that future researchers investigate the current use and vitality of two threatened Manobo languages, the documentation of oral literature, and the regional variations of Obo Manobo and Kinamiging Manobo to document and map dialectal differences, if any. Most importantly, the researchers recommend that future researchers conduct comprehensive documentation on the Kinamiging Manobo linguistics.

Conflict of Interest Statement

We have no conflict of interest to disclose.

AI Disclosure

We declare that this manuscript was prepared without the assistance of artificial intelligence. Hence, the content of this paper is original.

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