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The Development of Kalagan and Isamal Linguistics: An Archival Research

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Abstract

The Philippines is a linguistically rich archipelago, holding about 3% of the world's languages. However, it is also considered a "language hotspot" due to the rapid disappearance of languages in the area. Amongst these languages are Kalagan and Isamal, with their language vitality classified as endangered. With this in mind, this paper looks into the status of Kalagan and Isamal linguistics. It examines the progress made from 1885 to the present day. It documents scholarly articles published by the Summer Institute of Linguistics and other academic journals, focusing on advancements in lexicography, phonology, morphology and syntax, grammar, discourse, and literacy materials within Kalagan and Isamal linguistics. The findings reveal that while significant research has been conducted on Kalagan linguistics, the trend is the opposite for Isamal linguistics. The paper concludes by highlighting the implications of the study for the broader field of Philippine linguistics while providing directions for further research.

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The number of languages worldwide is not absolute, but it is widely acknowledged that around 7,000 languages are spoken across the globe today (Bromham et al., 2022; Grenoble, 2011). Noteworthy is that the Philippines, as a linguistically rich archipelago, holds about 3% of these languages. Historically, most of the languages in the country belong to the prominent Austronesian language family, one of the largest language families in the world, which spans a vast geographical area, including Indonesia, Malaysia, Polynesia, Melanesia, Micronesia, parts of Taiwan (known as Formosan languages), Indochina, and even the national language of Madagascar, Malagasy (McFarland, 1994). Its rich historical interconnectedness sets this language family apart, with its members believed to have originated from a common ancestral language. For instance, scholars generally agree that individuals speaking Malayo-Polynesian languages left Taiwan around 3,000 BCE. These people then traveled southwards through the Philippines in less than a thousand years (Zorc & Almarines, 2021).

Language estimates in the Philippines have varied over the years. As cited in Ingilan and Jubilado (2021), around five decades ago, Reid (1971) estimated it to be over 80, while McFarland (1980) listed it as 118 and reduced it to 110 a few years later (McFarland, 1994). Constantino (2000) made an informed guess of about 110 languages, whereas Ethnologue (2005), the most influential source on languages in the world, recorded 175, including Chavacano, which is a Spanish-based creole widely spoken in Zamboanga City. The latest comprehensive count from Ethnologue in 2018 identified 187 languages, 183 of which are currently used (Eberhard et al., 2024).

Though hailed as one of the countries with the most linguistic diversity, the Philippines is a “language hotspot” where languages are rapidly disappearing (Living Tongues Institute for Endangered Languages, 2019, cited in Alejan et al., 2021). A case in point is the extinction of two Aeta languages, Dicomay Agta and Villa Viciosa Agta, while some 32 more spoken by Negritos are considered endangered (Headland, 2003). This trend of language extinction is not unique to the Philippines; globally, there is a concerning tendency for at least two languages to die out each month. If this trend continues, it is projected that half of the world’s languages will disappear by the end of the 21st century (Headland, 2003). This is a matter of great concern as languages are not just a means of communication but also an important part of our cultural heritage. Losing languages means losing a valuable piece of our society, including a part of human thought and worldview that cannot be replaced. In the words of Wurm (2001), the loss of languages would result in the loss of a rich and diverse cultural tapestry that reflects the unique perspectives and experiences of different communities across the globe. Hence, the preservation of languages is essential to ensure that our cultural heritage remains intact and that future generations can learn from and appreciate the diversity of human experience.

Major languages in the Philippines, often institutional, like Tagalog and Cebuano, are documented extensively (Jubilado, 2021). Nevertheless, others are disappearing faster than we can amply record them. Amongst these languages are Kalagan and Isamal, with their language vitality classified as endangered (Eberhard et al., 2024). Cahill (1999 cited in Headland, 2003) has identified two key factors that indicate language endangerment. The first factor is when children in a community cease to learn the language, which could happen for various reasons, including social, economic, and even political situations. The second factor is the gradual decline in the number of people speaking the language. When the number of speakers in a community decreases, the language becomes less prevalent and is at risk of extinction.

In terms of linguistic typology, Kalagan and Isamal languages belong to the East Mindanao subgroup and are part of the Mansakan language family tree (Zorc, 1976). Gallman (1983) reconstructed this subgroup into Proto-East Mindanao, referring to many languages indigenous to Mindanao. Within this overarching category, a nuanced division can be observed, comprising three distinctive branches: firstly, the North East Mindanao, a linguistic branch that includes Mamanwa, Suriganonun, Butuanaun, and Tausug. Secondly, Central East Mindanao includes Kamayo,

Davawenyo-Banganga, Davawenyo-Monay, and Davawenyo-Digos. Lastly, the South East Mindanao comprises Mandaya-Kabasagan, Mandaya-Caraga, Mandaya-Boso, Mandaya Maragusan, Mandaya-Islam, Mansaka, Kalagan-Kaagan, and Kalagan Tagakaulu.

The Kalagan language has a range of speakers ranging from 10,000 to 1 million individuals. Within this ethnic community, all adults mainly use this language as their first language, and some children also speak it fluently. Yet, there is a lack of formal instruction or inclusion of the Kalagan language within school curricula (Eberhard et al., 2024). The Kalagan language, the bigger part of the SEM group, has four branches: Tagakaulo, Muslim-Kalagan (piso), Kalagan Samal, and Kagan. Although Tagakaulos, Kagans, and Muslims who speak Davawenyo may also identify themselves as Kalagans (Wendel & Wendel, 2002). Davawenyo is a native Mansakan dialect influenced by Tagalog and Cebuano (Zorc, 1977).

In addition, there are other meanings associated with Kagans. Historically, they are a group of people who embraced Islam in Caraga, Davao Oriental. Adhering to the 'sarip' teachings, they were labeled as Kagans. They were recognized as dedicated followers of Islam in the Davao area (Tiu, 2005, as cited in Yu, Manidoc, and Tsuji, 2021). However, an oral tradition tells a different story. According to Reginio (2024), a Kagan elder in Banaybanay recounted that the term "Kalagan" or "Karagan" was initially used. Such a term is derived from the word "Allag", which represents the light of dawn, given that its first rays shine over Eastern Mindanao through the Pacific Ocean. The particular area touched by this light is referred to as "Kaallagan", but over the course of time, pronunciation changes transformed it into "Kalagan", which confused the Spaniards, who eventually adopted "Kagan" to identify the community. This term includes the meanings of "Allag", "Kalagan", and "Karagan".

Isamal is a variety of Kalagan spoken by approximately 8,000 indigenous people in Samal Island. This indigenous group is commonly referred to as Sama, although derogatorily labeled as Kanlaw by non-native islanders (Jubilado, 2021). Zorc's (1976) classification situates Isamal within the Eastern Mansakan cluster while Kalagan within the Western Mansakan cluster. However, Walton (1977, as cited in Wendel & Wendel, 2002) classifies it as a subgroup of SEM along with Tagakaulo, Muslim-Kalagan (piso), Mansaka, and Mandaya. Jubilado (2021) states that Kalagan and Isamal languages exhibit approximately 70-80% mutual intelligibility. The Kalagan community in Samal Island comprises fewer than a thousand individuals. Geographically, the Kalagan people predominantly inhabit the coastal regions of the Babak district. In contrast, the Isamal community resides across various areas, including Babak, Samal, and Kaputian town centers, spanning the city's three districts. Noteworthy is that the vitality of the Isamal language is deemed threatened, signifying a decline in its number of speakers over time.

Overall, Kalagan and Isamal languages are currently classified as endangered. As such, it is vital to explore the latest developments within the Kalagan and Isamal linguistics field. As cited in Ingilan and Jubilado (2021), studies on Philippine linguistics have been extensively carried out by McKaughan (1971), Reid (1981), and Gonzales (1986). Still, these studies have yet to focus specifically on the status of Kalagan and Isamal languages. This study aims to fill this gap by examining the significant contributions made in the fields of Kalagan and Isamal linguistics, particularly in lexicography, phonology, morphology and syntax, grammar, discourse, and literacy materials. This paper will discuss the importance of these studies to the broader field of Philippine linguistics and provide directions for further research.

Materials and Methods

This study is archival in nature, which includes researching, collecting, and analyzing documents that contribute to the understanding, preservation, and overall development of Kalagan and Isamal

languages. The archival research method delves into data repositories such as historical papers, manuscripts, recordings, photos, organizational records, and other materials (Danto, 2008; Dobson & Ziemann, 2008; Gidley, 2011; Jordanova, 2012; Brundage, 2013, cited in Moore et al. 2016). Akin to a time capsule, archives contain a group's history, preserved for future exploration. Archival studies give researchers the opportunity to offer new perspectives by integrating and synthesizing various documents and texts. Herein, the working definition of archives includes linguistic data and other materials collected from the Summer Institute of Linguistics-Philippines (henceforth SIL). These resources are readily searchable in the Philippine archive section on their website. Scholarly publications such as open-access journal articles, theses, dissertations, and conference papers available online are also included in this study. This ensures the data is credible, contributing to Kalagan and Isamal linguistics development.

Results and Discussion

Studies on Philippine linguistics were historically approached from an outsider's standpoint. The archives included in this study suggest that even the most prominent studies in Mindanao languages were conducted by Foreign nationals. For example, the earliest documented research was a colonial scholarship. Montano (1885) mentions Tagakaolo amongst other languages spoken by the indigenous peoples, such as Ata, Bilaan, Manobo, and Samal. Nonetheless, research on Kalagan and Isamal languages has flourished through the years, with Filipino scholars joining the discussions.

Advancements in Kalagan Linguistics

The data collected on Kalagan languages shows that there exists a major advancement in Kalagan linguistics from its first mention in Montano's (1885) report to SIL and Glosbe's introduction of the online dictionary, in addition to the latest scholarly publications in 2022, such as the descriptive linguistic analysis of its morphemes, the archetypal criticism of its poems, as well as the cultural analysis of its folktales.

Lexicography

During the early 1900s, an anthropologist operating in Davao, Philippines, assembled three wordlists. These collections are thought to embody distinct languages, including Tagakaulo, Kalagan, and Kulaman (Cole, 1910). Throughout time, there has been extensive lexical documentation. This includes SIL's (1960) Kalagan wordlist, Murray and Murray's (1966) Kalagan-Tagakaolo (of Mainit) wordlist, SIL's (1966) Kalagan Tagakaolo (of Sta. Cruz) wordlist, SIL's (1971) Kalagan-Davawenyo (Islam) Piso Banaybanay, SIL's (1973) Kaagan Kalagan-Dawis, Digos wordlist and Kalagan-Davawenyo wordlist, Compania's (1973) Kalagan Davaweno (of Piso) text, Nickell and Wendel's (1979) Kalagan-Muslim-Digos wordlist and Kalagan-Muslim of Dahikan Beach wordlist, Nickell's (1979) Kalagan-Muslim of Tarragona wordlist, as well as Wendel's (1979) Kaagan Kalaganan (of Hagonoy) wordlist.

In addition to these wordlists, SIL published a comprehensive vocabulary compilation featuring Kalagan with corresponding meanings in Cebuano, Pilipino (now Filipino), and English compiled by Guili et al. (1975). This vocabulary bank is designed to facilitate literacy initiatives within the Kalagan-speaking communities of the Sarangani Peninsula, serving as a linguistic resource and imparting knowledge for Kalagan speakers to acquire proficiency in the national language of the Philippines, Filipino. As evidenced by SIL's (2018) introduction of the Kalagan-Samaleño wordlist, the Kalagan lexicon continued to develop, adding 372 lexical items in Kalagan of Samal Island with English gloss. Moreover, SIL and Glosbe introduced an online dictionary, facilitating easy access for users to explore Tagakaulo to English vocabulary. These digital resources enable convenient word searches, reflecting a substantial effort in linguistic preservation and accessibility. Such a progression highlights collaborative efforts between scholars and community members to enrich the linguistic heritage of the Kalagan community over time.

Phonology

The foundational study on Kalagan’s phonology was Dawson’s (1958), noting 21 phonemes in Kalagan. Amongst these phonemes, there are six vowels: /a/, /e/, /i/, /i/, /u/, and /o/. /a/ is a low central unrounded vowel, /e/ is a mid-front unrounded vowel, /i/ is a high front unrounded vowel, /i/ is a mid-central vowel, /u/ is a high-back rounded vowel, and /o/ is a mid-back rounded vowel. Along with these are 15 consonants: /p (p)/, /b/, /m/, /w/, /t/, /d/, /n/, /s/, /l/, /y/, /k/, /g/, /ng/, /q/, and /h/. The voice and the place and manner of articulation for each phoneme are shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1

Voice-Place-Manner Chart of Kalagan Consonant Phonemes (Dawson, 1958)

MANNER OF ARTICULATION	PLACE OF ARTICULATION														
	Bilabial		Labiodental			interdental		Alveolar		Alveo Palatal	Palatal		Velar		Glottal
Stop	p	b					t	d					/k/ /q/	g	
Fricative							s								h
Affricate															
Nasal		m						n						ng (ŋ)	
Lateral Approximant								l							
Retroflex Approximant															
Glide		w									y (j)				
STATE OF THE GLOTTIS															
VOICELESS								VOICED							

As shown in Figure 1, the phonemes /p (p)/ is a voiceless bilabial stop, /b/ is a voiced bilabial stop, /m/ is a voiced bilabial nasal, /w/ is a voiced bilabial glide, /t/ is a voiceless alveolar stop, /d/ is a voiced alveolar stop, /n/ is a voiced alveolar nasal, /s/ is a voiceless alveolar fricative, /l/ is a voiced alveolar lateral approximant, /y/ is a voiced palatal glide, /k/ is a voiceless velar stop, /g/ is a voiced velar stop, /ng/ is a voiced velar nasal, /q/ is a voiceless velar stop, and /h/ is a voiceless glottal fricative.

Collins (1967) also described the structure of Kalagan, including phonology and morphophonemics, amongst other linguistic features. Reid’s (1971) paper, “Philippine Minor Languages: Word Lists and Phonologies”, is a collection of data from various Philippine languages that compares Kalagan phonological features to other languages in a broader linguistic context. The phonetic elements of Kalagan, along with other languages, are examined in this study. Two years later, Reid’s subsequent work focuses on the historical changes in vowel systems in Philippine languages. In his paper titled “Diachronic Typology of Philippine Vowel Systems”, Reid (1973) examines the reasons why the PPH four-vowel system broke up into several different ones spoken in many languages. His study reveals the emergence of diverse vowel systems, including eight-vowel, seven-vowel, and six-vowel patterns across different languages. Notably, at least five languages, including Kalagan, have undergone a reduction from the original PPH four-vowel system to only three vowels.

SIL published a collaborative vocabulary compilation in Kalagan with meanings in Cebuano, Pilipino (now Filipino), and English. This publication, led by Guili et al. (1975), not only documents the Kalagan alphabet but also offers pronunciation guidance. This includes nuances like the adaptation of the sound ‘e’ similar to that of Pangasinan’s e’ and the pronunciation of the vowel combination ‘ai’, pronounced as ‘e’ in the English word “let”. It guides non-Kalagan speakers by noting that the glottal stop is retained, indicated by a hyphen between vowels or before a vowel in a prefixed word stem and represented by an apostrophe at word endings.

In addition, Wendel and Wendel (1978) conducted an extensive study of the phonemic statements

of Kaagan-Kalagan, shedding light on its sound system and enhancing our understanding of Kalagan's phonology. Their study stemmed from the speech of approximately 400 Kalagan-Kaagan individuals residing in Hagunoy. This extensive research unfolded during a six-month immersion in 1977 within the Kalagan-Kaagan community of Leling, Hagunoy, encompassing roughly 50 households. The paper explores the phonemes within syllables, phonological words, length and stress, interpretation of /i/ and /u/, contrasts and description of phonemes, distribution of vowels, as well as consonant clusters across syllable boundaries. In addition to this, the study also delves into morphophonemics, more specifically, the changes brought about by prefixation, suffixation, and numbers. Similarly, Erkmann's study (1990) used the same framework but focused on the phonological statement of Muslim Kalagan.

Furthermore, Gallman's (1983) doctoral dissertation from the University of Texas at Arlington aims to investigate the relatedness among South-East Mindanao (SEM) languages. The study focuses on reconstructing the phonology of Proto-South-East Mindanao (PSEM) to demonstrate internal relationships among these languages. Kalagan-Tagakaolo (KLT), Kalagan-Kaagan (KLK), Mandayan-Islam (ISM), Mansaka (MSK), Mandayan-Maragusan (MDM), Mandayan Kabasagan (MDK), Mandayan-Caraga (MDC), and Mandayan-Boso (MDB) were the languages under investigation. The reconstructed phonological system consists of /p/, /b/, /m/, /w/, /t/, /d/, /n/, /s/, /l/, /y/, /k/, /g/, /ng/, /ʔ/, /i/, /i/, /a/, and /u/, based on 439 reconstructed vocabulary items. The vowels /i/ is a high-front unrounded vowel, /i/ is a mid-central vowel, /a/ is a low central unrounded vowel, and /u/ is a high-back rounded vowel. For consonant phonemes, the voice, as well as the place and manner of articulation for each, are shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2

Voice-Place-Manner Chart of Kalagan Consonant Phonemes (Gallman, 1983)

MANNER OF ARTICULATION	PLACE OF ARTICULATION											
	Bilabial		Labiodental	Interdental	Alveolar		Alveo Palatal	Palatal	Velar		Glottal	
Stop	p	b			t	d				k	g	ʔ
Fricative					s							
Affricate												
Nasal		m				n				ng (ŋ)		
Lateral Approximant						l						
Retroflex Approximant												
Glide		w						y (j)				
STATE OF THE GLOTTIS												
VOICELESS						VOICED						

As summarized in Figure 2, the phonemes /p (p)/ is a voiceless bilabial stop, /b/ is a voiced bilabial stop, /m/ is a voiced bilabial nasal, /w/ is a voiced bilabial glide, /t/ is a voiceless alveolar stop, /d/ is a voiced alveolar stop, /n/ is a voiced alveolar nasal, /s/ is a voiceless alveolar fricative, /l/ is a voiced alveolar lateral approximant, /y/ is a voiced palatal glide, /k/ is a voiceless velar stop, /g/ is a voiced velar stop, /ng/ is a voiced velar nasal, and /ʔ/ is a voiceless glottal stop.

In using the comparative method, Gallman (1983) notes that it is crucial to work at the phonemic level rather than the phonetic, despite some word lists needing to be phonemically transcribed. Gallman compensates for this by reinterpreting data using phonemic forms from Kalagan-Tagakaolo and Mansaka, though these analyses remain tentative. The phonological data, mainly from these languages, is deemed reliable, although fallible. Also, through lexico-statistical comparisons, shared phonological features, and probability analyses, Gallman hypothesizes internal relationships among these languages. For example, Kalagan-Kaagan and Kalagan-Tagakaolo might have been among the

first in one area, while Mansaka and others moved there later. Gallman also groups these languages based on their similarities, showing which ones are more related.

Morphology and Syntax

The study of Kalagan morphology and syntax has seen some advancements over the last few decades, offering insights into the language's structural complexities. A case in point is Dawson's (2017) paper on voice and case relations, which aims to show the relationships between the verb of an utterance and the substantive phrases in that utterance. He highlighted two critical connections: "case", which links verbs to specific phrases introduced by particles called case markers, and "voice", which connects verbs to the main topic of the sentence. The article clarified that a part of the verb's form indicates the sentence's voice, while the topic represents the emphasized phrase. These insights helped distinguish verbs as central in sentence structure, separate from phrases introduced by case markers.

Dawson (1964) also explores relation markers to explain the complex relationship between verb affixes and particles introducing substantive phrases. The paper notes that these affixes on verbs serve a dual purpose: marking the voice of the utterance and signifying the relationship between the utterance's topic and the verb. Moreover, the permissible substantive phrases that can follow the verb are also described. In this context, the "topic" represents the substantive phrase that is either the focal point or the subject of discussion within the utterance. Notably, verbs are construed as inflected forms functioning as centers of predication, distinct from constructions introduced by case marking particles, constituting substantive phrases. More so, as highlighted in the preceding section, Collins (1967) outlined the structure of the Kalagan language. In addition to phonemes and morphophonemics, the researcher extensively covered the morpheme category alongside syntax and syntactic cues within Kalagan.

Wendel and Wendel (1979) compiled Kaagan-Kalagan verb classification and Kaagan Kalagan noun phrases. Additionally, Erkmann (1990) provides detailed charts on verbal affixes, pronouns, and demonstratives, providing comprehensive examples to aid in understanding these linguistic components. Murray (2022) meticulously categorized 18 distinct sentence types in Kalagan, expanding our understanding of its syntax. These classifications encompass various sentence structures, including but not limited to simple, contingent, merged, and coordinated. The paper also contains information about the peripheral exponents of the sentence, such as sentence margin proper and sentence periphery proper, amongst others. This elaborate categorization gives a detailed basis for understanding different structures and constituents found in Kalagan's sentences. Travis (1991), in her paper "Derived Objects, Inner Aspect, and the Structure of VP", suggests that in Kalagan, the "topic" moves within the sentence but stays within the verb phrase. The position of the topic, especially when it is not the doer of the action, follows the doer and precedes other parts of the sentence. Travis used the order of maximal projections within the verb phrase in Kalagan to show that this special position for the topic is within the verb phrase.

Burton (2003) investigates the lexical borrowing between Sarangani Manobo and the Tagakaulo. In addition to traditional historical and comparative linguistic methods, the study employs two other approaches to determine the reasons for the major overlap in vocabulary between Tagakaulo and Sarangani Manobo. The findings show that Manobo lexemes are primarily from Northern Manobo. These words changed phonologically and were carried from the northeast part of Mindanao to the southeast by its speakers. These then became part of SEM languages, including Tagakaulo and Mansaka. The high number of shared lexemes between both languages is due to community interactions and language contact of their parent language family. According to Burton (2003), Pallesen's hypothesis dates the split of the eastern and western branches of Proto-South East Mindanao to around AD 1100. However, clues from agriculture and language suggest this date may be too early. For instance, the

use of the word “batad” varies across different Filipino languages. In Binukid, it means “sorghum”, in Cebuano and Tagalog, it means “millet”, yet in Tagakaulo, Mansaka, Agusan Manobo, and Dibabawon, it means “maize”. This suggests that maize may have been introduced to the Philippines by the Spanish in northeast Mindanao. Further, the most recent additions of Mansaka lexical data to the PSEM data indicate that 88.5% of Mansaka vocabulary is related to PSEM, an increase from the earlier 74.5% figure. This means that the eastern and western parts of PSEM were divided earlier than previously thought. Finally, the languages of the eastern and western branches of PSEM have undergone very little phonological change since their split. If the split had occurred much earlier, we would have expected more changes in the Tagakaulo and Mansaka languages, but there is little change.

Moreover, Ingilan’s (2016) study looks into the lexicalization of profanities in the Bahasa Sug and Kagan languages. Noteworthy is that Islamic principles are inculcated in both languages, thus shaping the lexicalization of their profanities. For instance, Kagans might say, “*Astagfirullah! Kayot mo! Karippa sawman sang gawbok mo ky lumon.*” This translates to “*Astagfirullah! Slut! Your job is so dirty!*” The term “Astagfirullah” is borrowed from Arabic, meaning they seek Allah’s forgiveness, reflecting their Islamic identity. Essentially, because of the influence of Islam on both languages, speakers from these communities regard profanity as harmful, associating it with discomfort and unhappiness.

Finally, Marfa (2022) cross-linguistically compares the morphosyntactic features of Kalagan amongst other languages in Mindanao. Using functional-typological framework, the study shows that the morphemes *-a* and *-i* are imperative inflection morphemes in this language. As with the phonological variations of the morphemes, each imperative inflectional morpheme in Kalagan has three phonological variations. More specifically, the imperative-forming morpheme *-a* has *-a* for roots concluding in consonant sounds, as well as *-ya* and *-wa* for roots ending with vowel sounds.

Grammar

Collins’ (1970) dissertation focuses on views of Kalagan grammar. The study employs the traditional structural sketch of the syntactic structure of Kalagan along with the generative “case grammar” approach. The traditional structural sketch of the syntactic structure of Kalagan serves as the foundational reference for those unfamiliar with the language while also allowing them to understand the second part of the analysis. The generative “case grammar” approach used in this study is based on Fillmore’s (1968) case grammar theory, which is generally used to examine how verbs, adjectives, nouns, and other predicates combine with deep cases as components of sentences. Collins examines word order patterns in Kalagan and suggests a basic sequence: V-Agent-Object-Instrument-Benefactive-Locative-Time. Notably, when the *ya-* phrase (topic) does not function as an agent, it follows the agent but retains all other phrase positions. Using traditional and contemporary approaches, Collins provides a fair perspective by acknowledging the importance of generative frameworks for linguistic analysis while cautioning against ignoring the practical benefit of the traditional approach.

Erkmann’s (1990) work “Grammar Essentials: Kalagan” presents an extensive outline of various grammatical aspects of Kalagan, including text samples written in this language with their English translations inserted into them. Erkmann’s study carefully looks at various grammatical elements, taking the readers through NP and VP constituents, adverbs, noun phrases, and non-verbal clause types, illustrated with some Kalagan texts to better understand these linguistic components in context. Moreover, it examines how verbal clauses are modified and identifies which non-verbal clause types are negated within Kalagan discourse. It also investigates how questions are made, including the intonational patterns for interrogatives with or without question words. Generally, it explores temporal relations whereby Kalagan deals with its notions of time within its language system. It also discusses the role of conjunctions in developing and expressing connectivity among sentences in

Kalagan discourse. Finally, it offers examples that show how relative clauses functioning as modifiers provide contextual information about persons or things described.

Discourse

SIL has extensively documented Kalagan's discourse. For instance, Key (1965) published a paper explaining the semantic functions of reduplication that cut across different languages, including those spoken by the Kalagans. Wendel and Hale's (1979) efforts were also made to understand how a noun phrase can be focused on in the middle of Kalagan sentences. Nevertheless, their study slowly became more general; it became a study on factors that select the scope within conversations in terms of focus. The conversion also revealed the dependence between some specific criteria and the larger context dealing with the issue of focus in the Kaagan-Kalagan dialogue. Wendel's subsequent work (1986) concentrated on reported speech and quote formula selection that contributed to our understanding of the means used in communication in Kalagan.

Longacre's (1994) investigation broadens this discourse to describe the uses of quoting formulas. By this, he shows that these linking devices tie utterances directly into narratives and how participant mentions or non-mention serves as an index of intensity of interaction in dialogue across languages such as Kagan-Kalagan. In addition, Murray's (1965) contribution to Kalagan linguistics touches on speech disguise. This work provides valuable insights into pragmatic and sociolinguistic aspects of Kalagan discourse; it underscores the importance of contextual and functional linguistic analysis in the broader arena of Kalagan linguistic studies. Mallorca (2007) also goes into the subject of rhetorical questions in Kalagan discourse, explaining all their nuances and presenting several functions they can serve. The author identifies seven uses of rhetorical questions in Kalagan discourse. These include prompting listeners to contemplate and engage with the subject, highlighting a fact, conveying an assessment of an impending decision, expressing frustration, delivering a gentle reprimand, conveying intense negative feelings, and indicating uncertainty and doubt.

Tudy and Tudy (2022) has focused on the life stories and aspirations of Kalagan women who have faced challenges. Notably, the paper delves into some women's stories among the Kalagan tribe. Among the significant challenges they face are poverty, lack of knowledge, and discrimination; meanwhile, their aspirations veer towards achieving respect and ensuring that their children get an education and good jobs in the future, thus necessitating more government attention. Sultio and Gomez (2022) also provide an intriguing analysis of select Kagan poems, discussing how certain archetypal symbols convey intense meaning and other thematic threads present in them from a phenomenological perspective. For example, essential themes highlighted by the authors are the preservation of poems, among others. Other prominent issues discussed included cultural transmission and integration of Kagan identity into literature and practices. This study shows Kagan's poetry as art and a repository of cultural heritage per se. Through the analysis, the study underscores the intertwined relationship between literature, culture, and the collective identity of the Kagan community.

Yu, Manidoc, and Tsuji (2022), utilizing a descriptive method and ethnographic approach, look into the multifaceted dimensions of Kalagan oral literature. A collection of folktales offers insights into the multifaceted aspects of Kalagan culture that correspond to diverse elements of society. These include social practices such as Rido (family rivalries), traditional musical instruments like *gongs* and *balao*, wedding customs, native baskets' significance, courtship dowry system, historical references to slavery, and traditional clothing like *malong*. This study stresses the importance of these narratives in conserving Kalagan culture and preserving indigenous values amidst a rapidly changing world.

Literacy Materials

For several years, the Kalagan literacy materials were produced by various authors. Starting with foundational works, Dawson and Dawson (1955) contributed to studying the Kalagan alphabet.

Murray and Murray's (1968; 1974; 1975; 1979) *Magbasa kita sa Kalagan* (1, 2, 3, and 4), Murray and Murray's (1969) *Ya manga kasampetanen na Kalagan*, Murray and Murray's (2007) *Ya manga kasampetanen na Tagakaulo Kalagan*, as well as Murray and Murray (1978) *Tagakaulo Kalagan* [language texts] were also vital in developing early readers in the Kalagan language. Wendel and Wendel (1978) further enhanced the body of narratives with the story "Yani ya Kasampetanen kan Tariri" adapted from the book *Tariri My Story*. Alongside this are Enangkile, Wendel, and Wendel's (1978) publications of "Kasampetanen na mga Kalagan" (Kalagan folktales) and "Ya kasampetanen na ube aw kalibangbang" (telling the story about the monkey and the butterfly). Resmondo (1979) also enriched the cultural landscape with an Indigenous story, "Ya Sanam na duwa mannanap" (The fight between the two snakes). This exploration of Kalagan heritage continues through various significant publications. Buat's (1983) "Si putri gawmidang", Buat's (2001) "Manga Gogodanun nang manga Kalagan," and Buat and Martin's (1983) "Mga gogodanun ng mga Kalagan", stand as vital repositories of Kalagan folklore.

Additionally, Pagapak's (1984) "Si Biya Piyanotokan," Pagapak's (1984) "Yang Karibangbang aw yang karabaw", Lynip's (1984) "Si Joakin aw yang anak nan: yang tobig na Bobong", Lynip's (1985) "Si Kadir aw yang kakana nan: makapantag sangpagbong ng pari," Pacio's (1984) "Mga oman-oman ng mga Kalagan", as well as Labaro and Yamami's (1987) "Yang yamasonog na isu" and "Yang makakatul na lawas ni Olo", collectively contribute to the preservation of indigenous stories and folktales, keeping the cultural legacy and heritage of the Kalagan people alive through vivid narratives into their traditional ethos. Perez (1979) offered insights into the customs of the Kalagans with the publications of *Ya kabatasan na mga Kalagan kaasidi*. As well as Guili (1974; 1988; 2008) authored the stories *Ya Katanem na mga Kalagan*, *Mag-ubat-ubat kita: Ya mangkanengeya na banwa*, *Katanem a manga Tagakaulo*, and *Katanem na manga Tagakaulo*. In addition to these, Erkmann (1991; 1992) and Arcenas (2000) detail Kalagan Wedding Customs, with the latter outlining a thorough account of the step-by-step procedure leading to a wedding, beginning with the formal presentation of the man's request to the girl's family (presental), followed by the engagement (kagon), and concluding with the wedding ceremony (kawin).

Furthermore, SIL (1971; 1999) has translated an array of religious and cultural texts within the Kalagan community. This includes the publication of "Madyaw tugun umba kan Kadais Diisas niasulat ni Matyu na umagakan ni Diisas" (The good news about Jesus Christ, written by Matthew, a disciple of Jesus) by Scriptures Unlimited in New York. Similarly, the Abraham comic "Si Abraham: Ya ubaybay na Tyumanem" as well as the story of Jonah "Ya kasampetanen kan Jonas" was produced by TKLM in Malunгон, Sarangani Province. SIL also published "Liblu na dalangan" (Kalagan songs), a collection of songs translated by Murray and Murray (1976), which was released in Nasuli, Malaybalay, Bukidnon, as well as Erkmann's (1991) Kalagan interlinearized text— *Yang paggawbuk nang kopras*, which is a translation of Kalagan's copra making process. It should be noted that these works are only a tiny portion of all other essential translated stories being published.

During the 4th Literary Studies Conference of Children's Literature in Southeast Asia, Tumamac (2016) discussed a non-governmental organization's (NGO) initiative where they provide opportunities to the indigenous peoples of Blaan, Tagakaolo, and Tboli to produce picture books for their children. The Tagakaolo retells the story of Tó and the Animals. This story revolves around Tó, who went hunting and met Deer. Tó, along with Monkey and Omen Bird, followed Deer to find food but ended up in a trap set by Python, Deer's accomplice. Fortunately, Eagle saved them, and they learned not to trust strangers. In making the books, the NGO worked closely with Indigenous groups to ensure that their cultural practices were incorporated into the literacy materials.

Advancements in Isamal Linguistics

Dr. Rodney Jubilado, currently working as a distinguished professor at the University of

Hawaii, has significantly contributed to Isamal Linguistics. Jubilado holds a Doctorate in Theoretical Linguistics and has had academic papers published in globally recognized peer-reviewed journals, including the British multinational publisher known as Routledge.

Amongst Jubilado's notable contributions stands an early scholarly endeavor displayed in the unpublished master's thesis titled "Ang Teta-Tyuri sa Isamal" (2002) from the University of the Philippines Diliman. This work aims to give a brief introduction to how syntax works in the Isamal language. Additionally, Jubilado's (2007) paper, "The Syntax of the Isamal Language: The Principles and Parameters Theory", is considered one of the first studies exploring Isamal's syntax extensively. In this paper, Jubilado delves into Isamal verbs and their syntactic structures utilizing the Principles and Parameters Theory, which is meant to make known not only the categorial and semantic selections of Isamal verbs but also unravel their underlying argument/thematic structures while representing their syntactic configurations. For instance, how do lexical properties find structural representation in Isamal verbs? It shows how these properties guide specific selectional characteristics, signifying the subcategorization of these verbs. Thus, the structure implies that all complements are internal to the VP structure as proposed by the VISH hypothesis. The analysis shows that any complement of the verb can be turned into the grammatical subject following its adherence to certain governing principles and conditions outlined by grammar. This observation underscores the flexibility and structural adaptability inherent in the syntactic makeup of Isamal verbs, contingent upon the grammatical constraints set forth.

Further, Jubilado's (2021) paper on the Morphosyntactic Analysis of Isamal Ergatives used the Minimalist Program as the analytical framework, focusing on the movement of elements within the linguistic structure. This paper primarily deals with verb morphology and explores the projections of lexical information encoded within the argument and thematic structures of the verbs. Isamal ergatives, like other ergative languages, have a singular argument, mainly the theme— DP. Jubilado analyzed three fundamental syntactic structures— VP, TP, and CP in detail. Using the Minimalist Program, he comprehensively shows movement within the ergative structures. His analysis reveals that verbs, arguments, and adjuncts can undergo movement processes.

In his paper "Comparative Ergative and Accusative Structures in Three Philippine Languages", Jubilado (2021) analyzes Isamal and two other Philippine languages. Syntactic relations and processes of ergative and accusative structures in these languages are explored in this paper. More specifically, the research investigates the verb phrase (VP) and tense phrase (TP) vis-à-vis argument structures and thematic structures of verbs. This analysis applies the Minimalist Program, which involves movement, feature checking, and theta role assignment. For the three languages, the VPs and TPs have similar structural relations; hence, the verb moves from VP to TP, whereas verb complements merge in VP for local case checking and theta role assignment.

Furthermore, Marfa (2022) conducted a linguistic analysis focusing on the imperative inflectional morphemes in Mindanao languages, including Isamal. Along with the imperative inflection morphemes, the study also looks into the phonological variations and the sentence structures required to meet the grammar rules for these morphemes. The sentences *Get the fish* and *Get me a fish* were translated to provide a basis for the analysis. Findings have shown that even though Sinama, Isamal, Kalagan, Ilonggo, Surigaonon, and Kinamayo are different, there exists a similarity in morphemes that transform the verbs into their imperative form. A case in point is the suffixes *-a* and *-i*, changing a verb's neutral form into its imperative form. As for the syntactic requirement of the morphemes *-a* and *-i*, the former's requirement for a complete sentence differs from the latter. The suffix *-a* typically requires only one argument, but the second person does not necessitate a mention in imperative sentences. Further, the suffix *-i* requires two arguments: a direct and an indirect object. Missing one can lead to ungrammatical sentences.

Marfa and Estrera (2020) presented the topic “Grammar Notes on Isamal” during the international conference of the Linguistic Society of the Philippines in Manila. They briefly describe the Isamal language and its speakers and then discuss morphosyntactic components such as word classes and syntactic constructions. Using Payne’s (1997) method of morphosyntax description, they specifically confer about nouns, pronouns, verbs, word order, and pragmatically marked constructions.

In addition, Famoso (2021) looks at the oral narratives of the Sama people living in the Samal Islands. This qualitative-descriptive research focuses on the structures and cultures found in the selected legends and folktales of Sama. It employs Greimas’ theory to analyze the actantial model of these narratives alongside Malinowski’s cultural theory. The research indicates that Sama folk narratives do not fully conform with Greimas’ narratology theory as much as the theories used are foreign while the collected folk literature originates locally.

Nevertheless, Famoso’s (2021) study demonstrates that Sama folk narratives mirror the way of life of their people. These narratives exemplify the social, economic, political, and religious practices of Sama. For example, in the story “The Red Hen”, the widowed hen raising her four chicks exemplifies important values to them. The Sama culture emphasizes individual and communal responsibilities within the family, especially the mother’s. The tale “The First Fish Trap” depicts the seafaring practices of the Sama people, while “The Legend of Talikud Island” narrates the complex processes involved in Sama courtship. Also, religious customs are deeply ingrained in Sama culture. The story of Dagom highlights the religious elements of Sama practices from long ago. The ancient Sama community believed in anitos or spirits and preserved some traditional beliefs even after embracing Christianity. As well as they worship a single deity known as *Magbabaya*, which translates to god or creator. The author posits that the oral tradition of Sama served not only as a form of entertainment but also as a means of preserving their cultural heritage.

Conclusion

This study examines the status of Kalagan and Isamal linguistics concerning lexicography, phonology, morphology and syntax, discourse grammar, and literacy materials development. The archives included in this study are collected from the Summer Institute of Linguistics alongside other scholarly publications. Noteworthy is that the Endangered Languages Archive (ELAR) was also consulted in the conduct of this archival research. Yet, ELAR only includes six languages from the Philippines: Arta, Northern Alta, Binukidnon, Kinaray-a, Palawan, Ibatan, and Tagalog. This highlights the need for more extensive documentation and archiving of Philippine languages, ensuring linguistic preservation while also allowing for further research.

The field of Kalagan linguistics has seen notable progress, from the earliest documented lexicographic endeavor of Tagakaulo [klg], Kalagan [kqe], and Kulaman [mbt] languages in 1900 to SIL’s introduction of the Tagakaulo-English online dictionary in 2018. What could be done next is to utilize technology further to improve the development and accessibility of Kalagan lexical resources. By integrating machine learning, NLP, mobile applications, and digital platforms, we can enhance Kalagan lexicography and allow this ethnolinguistic community to participate actively in language preservation and dissemination efforts.

Further, Kalagan phonology has shown interesting recurrent patterns and variations among research findings. For instance, Reid (1973) reveals that at least five languages in the Philippines, including Kalagan, have undergone a reduction from the original PPH four-vowel system to only three vowels. Nevertheless, the earlier study of Dawson (1958) on Kalagan’s phonology presents a more extensive vowel inventory. Exploring the reasons behind this change could offer insights into the historical evolution of Kalagan’s vowels. In addition, more studies on Kalagan morphology and syntax

are needed, more specifically, exploring how sociolinguistic factors influence the morphosyntactic structures in Kalagan. To address this gap, it is suggested that the impact of sociolinguistic factors on Kalagan morphology and syntax be investigated, examining variations across different socio-economic groups, gender, age cohorts, or communities.

The Kalagan grammar has been documented by Collins (1970) and Erkmann (1990). As such, it may be worthwhile for future researchers to explore how Kalagan employs complex sentence structures to convey intricate relationships among ideas, such as using embedded or subordinate clauses. Researchers could also look at advanced syntactic cases such as ellipsis, coordination, serial verbs, and other complex constructions to give insight into crucial components constituting Kalagan grammar beyond its basic sentence structure. Despite abundant research, only a few have analyzed Kalagan's discourse. Hence, exploring current discourse and its developments could fill this literature gap. Studying how digital media or technology has impacted Kalagan discourse can be a good academic practice in today's digital age. These investigations would reveal whether social media, internet communication, and digital storytelling impact language use and cultural preservation among the Kalagan people. As with literacy materials, the current literature combines literary works, folktales, customs, and religious writings. Another research avenue is exploring other media used in Kalagan culture. Using oral traditions, performance arts, visual arts, or new digital media (if any) representing Kalagan heritage could provide a more comprehensive understanding of their cultural richness.

On another note, while delving deep into the landscape of Isamal Linguistics, scholarships are focused only on morphology, syntax, grammar, and folk narratives. Studies on lexicography, phonology, discourse analysis, and literacy materials remain scarce. In line with this, scholars may engage in lexicographic endeavors and phonological studies to capture and preserve Isamal lexicons and sound systems. The latter could pave the way for understanding the relationship between Isamal's phonological, morphological as well as syntactic features and how they differ from other languages. Further, discourse analysis can be done to explore how Isamal functions in contexts and how such a language creates and maintains the identities of its speakers. Literacy material development could also aid in promoting the reading and writing skills of the Sama people, the indigenous group in Samal. Not only textbooks but also language apps and online literacy resources are instrumental in facilitating language preservation efforts and supporting mother tongue-based education initiatives. This is especially important given that Isamal and Kalagan languages are unavailable on the DepEd's Learning Portal. This lack of such resources poses potential impediments to the efficacy of mother-tongue-based education initiatives. In this vein, future researchers may explore the accessibility of learning resources. Are there challenges in distribution, availability, or inclusivity? Important considerations could involve discussing ways to make these materials widely accessible to educators, learners, and even those outside the Kalagan and Isamal communities.

In addition, SIL already maintains a central database that stores linguistic data gathered through fieldwork and other academic endeavors. Suppose we are to preserve the indigenous languages of the Philippines and improve their accessibility and understanding. In that case, it is worth looking into technological advancements, including developing machine translation systems customized to these languages, drawing on data from reputable linguistic organizations such as SIL. Technology has an essential role in preserving languages. There are various machine translation systems currently. These advances can help bridge the gaps in our current language situation, enabling accessibility, revitalization, and conservation efforts. Nonetheless, most of these platforms ignore less-known languages. For instance, Google Translate only supports 133 languages, which account for a meager 1.9% of the total number of existing world languages. This depicts the underrepresentation of indigenous languages in technological advancements due to poor computation resources and corporate disinterest due to perceived low profitability, as noted by

Sañudo (2023). In line with this, it is deemed necessary for institutions, universities, research centers, and communities to be made aware of the challenges that we face in preserving different languages. Investing in language technologies is one way to preserve the richness of the indigenous languages in the Philippines. Using such tools helps keep linguistic diversity alive and preserve cultural heritage. Essentially, there must be a collective effort towards promoting and preserving linguistic diversity.

Finally, this paper aims to prompt scholars, particularly those from the Philippines, to conduct research on the country's indigenous languages, with a particular focus on Isamal linguistics due to the lack of research in this area. Like any other Philippine language, this language deserves attention within the Philippine linguistics field. Studying Isamal, Kalagan, and other indigenous languages in the Philippines expands the scope of linguistic studies and promotes a more inclusive academic discussion. By fostering an environment that supports research into these languages, scholars contribute to preserving and understanding linguistic diversity. This effort not only enriches Philippine linguistics but also acknowledges the intrinsic value of these languages in human linguistic heritage.

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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