



Regional Voices: Delving into the Ethnolinguistic Analysis of the Indigenous People's Languages

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Abstract. This study investigates how Indigenous languages serve as vehicles for cultural preservation by examining the Blaan and Manobo languages through an ethnolinguistic lens, with particular attention to their syntactic and semantic structures. Employing a qualitative approach, the research conducted detailed textual analyses of traditional songs, proverbs, and oral narratives to uncover linguistic patterns that encode cultural values, social norms, and communal knowledge. Findings reveal that both languages predominantly exhibit a Subject-Verb-Object (SVO) word order, with songs employing simpler sentence structures to facilitate memorability and communal performance, while proverbs utilize more complex syntactic constructions to convey nuanced moral and ethical lessons. Analysis further highlights the central role of divine and communal forces in shaping cultural narratives, demonstrating that language functions as a medium for transmitting knowledge, regulating social behavior, and sustaining the interconnected relationship among society, nature, and spiritual beliefs. Beyond linguistic structure, the study underscores the broader significance of Indigenous language preservation for educational inclusion, empowerment of marginalized communities, and alignment with Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities). The research advocates for future investigations into community-led language revitalization initiatives and the strategic use of digital technologies to support the documentation, teaching, and continued vitality of Indigenous languages, reinforcing their role as critical instruments for identity, knowledge transmission, and social equity.

Keywords: blaan, ethnolinguistic study, indigenous identity, language revitalization, manobo



INTRODUCTION

Language and culture are intricately interwoven, shaping identity, social behavior, and worldviews across regions and communities. Culture encapsulates shared values, historical narratives, customs, and practices that collectively influence individual and collective identities (Rovira, 2008), while language functions as both a reflection and transmitter of this culture (Prahalthan, 2015). Language, defined as a system of communication through symbols and sounds (Collins Dictionary, 2021), enables the exchange of ideas, beliefs, and lived experiences (Alshehri, 2016), and serves as a repository for collective memory and cultural knowledge. The endangerment of Indigenous languages, as highlighted by UNESCO (2024), poses critical risks not only to linguistic diversity but also to the preservation of cultural heritage, as these languages encapsulate traditional knowledge, social norms, and community practices. The loss of an Indigenous language, as Rishmaawi (2019) emphasizes, constitutes more than the disappearance of words or grammatical forms; it represents a profound erosion of cultural and historical identity, resulting in the diminishment of human heritage. Thus, documenting and analyzing Indigenous languages is imperative for safeguarding cultural continuity and understanding the ways in which linguistic structures mediate social and cultural practices.

Despite their significance, access to comprehensive documentation of endangered languages remains limited due to challenges in fieldwork, the oral nature of transmission, and historical neglect. This scarcity has created significant gaps in the understanding of the linguistic structures, semantic patterns, and cultural functions of languages such as Blaan and Manobo. Addressing this gap, ethnolinguistic studies have underscored the necessity of analyzing syntax and semantics to capture how language conveys cultural wisdom and social norms (Masyhur, 2023). In the context of Blaan and Manobo, documenting songs, proverbs, and oral narratives not only preserves linguistic forms but also provides insight into the cultural logic, moral frameworks, and social practices embedded in these communities. Language in this regard functions as a conduit for knowledge transmission, moral guidance, and community cohesion (Degawan, 2023), illustrating that syntax and semantics are not merely structural elements but integral to the perpetuation of cultural identity and social continuity.

Moreover, linguistic diversity is deeply intertwined with traditional knowledge systems, social values, and ancestral narratives, as demonstrated by Rajagukguk et al. (2022). Indigenous languages encode environmental understanding, cosmological beliefs, and community ethics, often transmitted orally in ways that rely on the unique semantic and syntactic capacities of the language itself. Such linguistic forms preserve metaphors, idioms, and cultural expressions that cannot be fully translated without losing contextual and experiential significance. However, Philippine ethnolinguistic research remains limited, particularly regarding the Blaan and Manobo languages, resulting in insufficient understanding of their syntactic structures, semantic richness, and roles in cultural preservation. Without systematic documentation, these languages risk further marginalization, as documented by Woodbury (2023), who emphasizes the necessity of grammar guides, lexicons, and audio records to sustain language continuity. Comprehensive recording of linguistic features provides the foundation for cultural preservation, educational initiatives, and community empowerment, supporting intergenerational transmission of identity, knowledge, and values (Lehmann, 2001; Gippert et al., 2006).

Guided by Fishman's Sociolinguistic Theory (1991), this study operationalizes the relationship between language, society, and culture by examining how sociocultural factors shape the syntactic and semantic attributes of the Blaan and Manobo languages. According to Fishman, language reflects social organization, cultural norms, and community interactions, while the maintenance, transformation, or decline of a language is intimately tied to broader social conditions and cultural continuity. Applying this theoretical lens, the present research focuses on three

operationalized variables: syntactic structures, semantic patterns, and cultural functions of language. Syntactic structures are analyzed to identify sentence constructions, word order, and complexity within cultural expressions, whereas semantic patterns are examined to uncover embedded meanings, metaphors, and culturally salient concepts. Cultural functions are assessed by documenting the ways language conveys social norms, moral teachings, and community identity through songs, proverbs, and narratives. This approach not only captures the structural and functional dimensions of language but also situates them within the lived cultural experiences of Indigenous communities.

In summary, existing research underscores the critical role of Indigenous languages in preserving cultural identity, transmitting knowledge, and sustaining community cohesion, yet there remains a lack of detailed ethnolinguistic documentation for the Blaan and Manobo languages. Gaps include insufficient analysis of syntactic and semantic structures, limited understanding of the role of language in encoding cultural and moral frameworks, and inadequate strategies for language preservation and revitalization. Systematic ethnolinguistic study of these languages is therefore essential to capture their structural and functional dimensions, provide empirical evidence for cultural transmission, and contribute to broader educational and heritage initiatives. By addressing these gaps, research can offer both scholarly insights and practical pathways for sustaining Indigenous languages, fostering cultural pride, and promoting intergenerational continuity.

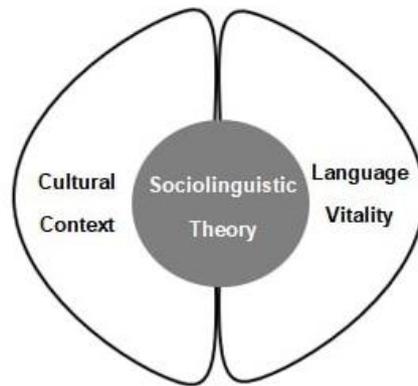


Figure 1. J.F. Sociolinguistic Theory

Research Objective

This study focused on the need for cultural identity amplification of the Blaan and Manobo languages through analysis of their linguistic features. Specifically, it attempted to explore the following objectives:

1. To examine the syntactic structures of Indigenous languages with identified groups.
2. To analyze the semantic structure through lexical choices, focusing on the register factor.
3. To determine the different and similar features of both groups.

METHOD

Research Corpora

The corpus of the study was divided into three general thematic areas: the representation of the community, linguistic diversity and the relevance of the culture. In developing this corpus, it was important that the Blaan and Manobo communities, which are two established Indigenous groups in UM Digos College, had their voices and the traditions represented properly by including the selected songs, stories, and proverbs. The characteristics of each of the language groups, vocabulary, syntax, and the way of how the stylistic device was used, the resources offered, contributed to achieve the effect of the comparison of the really important comparative analysis in the linguistic sense of the

word. In addition, the readings also revealed that there existed a lively cultural aspect, in regards to the tradition belief, social practice and the values, thereby providing a glimpse into lived experiences, and the world views of the two communities. The corpus reflected the changing face of Indigenous expression over time by uniting both the historical and the modern. In total, all these factors form a sound basis to study and analyze ethnolinguistic identity based on Indigenous literary forms.

Blaan Research Corpora

This study examined three cultural works of the Blaan people, which reflected their essential values of creation, people and wisdom. First, the story “The Blaan Story of Creation: Version Once (collected by Mabel Cook Cole) that told how Melu, a god-like being created the earth and mankind out of his own body. But mediation of Tau Tana created defects in the original creation. Melu corrected these and created more humans, highlighting divine origins and communal beginnings. The second, *Kastifun*, a song by Pammie Malayon, promoted unity, conflict resolution, and cultural preservation, emphasizing collective responsibility. The third, a proverb translated by Madelin Nuevo Sitcharon, “A woman with wisdom and knowledge is more valuable than silver and gold,” originally stated in Blaan as *"I libun fulong faldam na nun gnare mas mabtas balu di filak na blawen"*—reflects the Blaan’s esteem for intellect, especially in women.

Manobo Research Corpora

Three vital expressions of Manobo culture—a myth, a worship song, and a proverb were highlighted that reflected the community’s spirituality, values, and wisdom. The myth, *The Origin of the Star and the Explanation of Sunset and Sunrise*, recorded by H. Otley Beyer, told of the Sun and Moon as once-married beings whose tragic loss of their children led to the creation of the stars and the eternal chase that explained day and night. The worship song *Sikkow Re-En* by Jerry Angga, translated by Janice Lambac Sarmiento. The proverb “*Kung kavvow no oppat kos paa kosoyup nod gedeta oran pa oyok Minuvu?*” which translates as “*If a carabao with its four feet makes a wrong step, how much more a man?*” shows the community’s long-standing use of proverbs as a means of conveying inherited knowledge. Through these cultural pieces, the Manobo people revealed their perception of the cosmos, their devotion to faith, and their adherence to moral values.

Research Design

A qualitative research design was chosen to examine linguistic diversity and cultural meaning of the Indigenous languages with special attention to the linguistic analysis. This was an excellent design because it provided an opportunity to speak extensively on the role of language in cultural and social contexts (Denzin and Lincoln, 2017). Trends were traced in the patterns of language in literary work like songs, proverbs and stories and how it is understood and how it is contributing towards the formation of an identity (Kramersch, 1998). Bauer, Biquelet, and Suerdem (2014) defined textual analysis as "reading artifacts showing the designed texture of a symbol system and reflecting regularities in social practices." In this way, there was a chance to learn more about the significance of language as the means of expressing and communication of cultural values, practices and opinions (Gee, 1999).

Underhill (2012) defined ethnolinguistics as the process that involves the study of the intersection of language and culture with special focus on how communities describe and make sense of their experiences. The linguistic features that hold the greatest significance in establishing the distinctiveness of the Blaan and Manobo languages were determined in this textual analysis and they consist of linguistic features that fall in the areas of syntax, semantics, and specialized vocabulary (Crystal, 2000). It was found that these conditions stimulate culturally inculcated tendencies of

communication and manifestation on the basis of worldview. Study of syntax showed that there were characteristic habits of sentence-construction and arrangement of words peculiar to any language which corresponded to the inward causes of grammar. Meanwhile, culturally specific sense and metaphorical usage that could not ideally be conveyed into other languages and that could be linked to the presence of a plurality of local conceptual frames could be identified through semantic analysis. The presence of specialized vocabulary and words referring to natural phenomena, native belief systems, and kinship also indicate that culture and knowledge systems are manifested in the language.

As the research relied on the primary sources, including recorded stories, transcripts of oral traditions, published literary works, which were complemented by secondary sources giving language and cultural information on Indigenous knowledge systems (Grenoble and Whaley, 2006), ethical considerations were observed during the research process. Special care was taken in ensuring that the exploration of the Indigenous knowledge systems was done with respect and that the sources are credited accordingly (Smith, 1999).

Data Gathering Procedure

This study was ensured by ethical, legitimate and culturally sensitive data collection process. Gathering and examining the literature on the Blaan and Manobo in the peculiarities of their languages and the richness of their cultural traditions was the main task. It was acquired through several attentive processes.

The first was to choose literary pieces with strong community roots including oral literature, songs, proverbs, and folktales. The sources are credible archives, the community databases, and the direct submissions by the Indigenous knowledge keeper. The reasons behind the selections of these readings included availability as well as authenticity and cultural relevance. The process was sufficiently ethical and respected the intellectual and cultural rights of the communities.

Once the data was collected, the texts were checked and confirmed to be appropriate and correct in a culturally specific manner. This was done in order to ensure that the texts represented the written and the oral traditions of the communities. The texts of the special and valid sources identified by the authors as accepted by the Indigenous elders or experts in culture to be consulted in the future also allowed reducing the risk of erroneous interpretation and cultural bias that can affect the verification process.

After the validation, the texts were studied further in the context of culture and language in which the distinctiveness of the Blaan and Manobo languages were observed in the context of syntax, semantics, and culture. Not only did this comparative analysis broaden the scope of Philippine Indigenous literature, but it also illuminated how language can reveal identity, social life, and worldview. Particular emphasis was placed on how these texts reveal patterns and values of communication of the groups. The selection was also explained by the fact that Catoto (2022) and Masendo (2015) discussed the topicality of trends according to which language assumes the roles of social conditions and generational conditioning.

Another component of the process was collaboration with the specialists of the Blaan language and the Manobo language to try to find the confirmation and the right interpretation of the selected texts. The most respected of these experts were elders or native speakers who assisted in reviewing the structure, meaning, and use of some of the linguistic forms. The highest economy in ensuring that the analysis was not misconstrued of which their professional knowledge gave credence to the results and that they were based on lived cultural experience.

In order to support the technical part of the research, well-known linguistic theories were used. The discussion of the type of sentence and order of words proceeded in accordance with the scheme of the Gudivada et al. (2018) and the theory of register of Halliday, the aspect of field to consider how the language is functioning in the cultures under consideration (Halliday, 1978). By using both paradigms, it was possible to take a closer look not only at the grammatical nature of the languages but also at the way they are used in the society.

The texts collected were then put into a final research corpus, it is based on this corpus that similarities and differences between the Blaan and Manobo languages were established. It provided a good starting point in contrasting the ethnolinguistic identities of the two communities. Those findings were then checked and tested by experts in culture and trusted representatives of the communities to determine the level of the accuracy, authenticity, and genuine representation of their Indigenous heritage. The process of compiling was hence documented in a transparent and reliable way. By so doing, the corpus also became a crucial resource in not only analysis but subsequent preservation of culture.

The ethical responsibility was always the priority throughout the process. The research was primarily about honouring the cultural and intellectual; property of the communities. Sources and contributors were always credited. the study adhered to post-decolonized and participatory research standards by doing everything within its capacity to ensure that Indigenous voices and perspectives are at the center of the research, and openness and respect are the guiding principles of all steps.

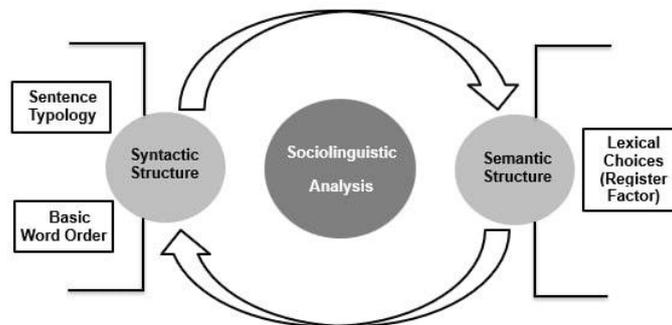


Figure 2. Gudivada et al. & M.AK. Halliday's Tools of Analysis

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Syntactic Structure

The research examined the syntactic structures of Blaan and Manobo languages as reflected in their proverbs, songs, and narratives. In both traditions, songs and stories generally follow straightforward sentence constructions. Blaan proverbs are often expressed in brief and uncomplicated statements, while Manobo proverbs tend to take on more elaborate forms that communicate deeper cultural insights. This contrast highlights how each group places emphasis differently: the Blaan value clarity and accessibility, whereas the Manobo focus on depth and expressiveness. Collectively, they showcase not only the unique qualities of each language but also the cultural richness they embody.

Table 1. Comparative Analysis of Sentence Structures in Blaan and Manobo Languages

Blaan	Manobo
<p>Di fule, ^SMelu ^Vdmisisyon mimo ^Obanwe. (Finally, Melu decided to make the Earth.)</p> <p>Ne ^SMelu ^Vmimo alwe ^Olagi. (Then Melu created two males.)</p> <p>^STau Tana ^Vmimo ^Oilong dadto afdatah. (Tau Tana made the nose upside down.)</p> <p>^SMelu ^Vbalmaling ^Oilong dadto afdana. (Melu turned their nose their nose to the other side.)</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>The Blaan Story Creation: Version One</i> <i>Translated by: Madelin Nuevo Sitcharon</i></p>	<p>Kos ^Skandin no mongo bitu'on ^Vid-dumaruma hantud tod ^Osellak. (Her starry train accompanying her to the dawn.)</p> <p>Ikos ^Smama kon-na rin don od ^Vsug-ga ko ^Oosawa rin. (The husband unable to soothe the wife.)</p> <p>Kos mongo ^Sbitu'on ^Vnongo ^Oondiyon to mosukirom no ^Otaw-wan. (The stars stand scattered in the stable firmament.)</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>The Origin of the Star and the Explanation of Sunset and Sunrise</i> <i>Translated by: Janice Lambac Sarmiento</i></p>
<p>Gel ^Sgu ^Vsalek di kalbong tubed ^OBlaan di banwe. (I always ask Blaan in our land.)</p> <p>Kelen kafnge ^Stu on ^Vkastifun kasakye ^OBlaan? (When will we have a gathering to unite the Blaan people?)</p> <p>Neng ^Sato baling ^Vsahal ^Okiyeh. (Let us not lose sight of each other.)</p> <p>Deen ^Sto baling ^Vsuteh nawa di ^Obanwe? (Why do we fight in our own land?)</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Kastifun</i> <i>Translated by: Madelin Nuevo Sitcharon</i></p>	<p>^SOraroy ^Vkon ^OMoppiya ^OKonami. (You are so good to us.)</p> <p>^SOraroy ^Vkon ^Omutuus, ^OMonama ^Oku. (You are so Powerful, our God.)</p> <p>^SSikkow ko id ^Vpomonnan to konamin ^Osongnga. (Our breath comes from you.) <i>Sikkow Re-en</i> <i>Translated by: Janice Lambac Sarmiento</i></p>
<p>I ^Slibun ^Vfulong ^Ofaldam na num gnare mas mabtas balu di filak na blawen. (A woman with wisdom and knowledge is more valuable than silver and gold.)</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Translated by: Madelin Nuevo Sitcharon</i></p>	<p>Kung ^Skavvow no oppat kos ^Vkosoyup ^Onod ^Ogedeta oran pa oyok ^OMinuvu? (If a carabao with its four feet makes a wrong step, how much more a man?)</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Translated by: Janice Lambac Sarmiento</i></p>

The comparative analysis of lines that were translated from Blaan and Manobo folk tales, songs, and proverbs identified principal syntactic structures that characterized these native languages. Both languages generally followed a subject-verb-object (SVO) word order, which is typical among Philippine languages (McFarland, 2004). For example, in the Blaan line "Di fule, Melu dmisisyon mimo banwe." (S-V-O: Melu/subject, dmisisyon/verb, banwe/object), the construction conforms to SVO ordering. An analogous structure can be found in the Manobo line "Kos kandin no mongo bitu'on id-dumaruma hantud tod sellak" (Kos kandin/S, id-dumaruma/V, sellak/O), showing the same syntactic tendency. These lines are basic proof of grammatical parallelism in both languages.

For Blaan, syntactic form was fairly uncomplicated with narratives, songs, and proverbs mostly employing simple sentence forms. This is illustrated in lines like "Melu balmaling ilong dadto afdana." (S-V-O: Melu/subject, balmaling/verb, ilong/object), where elements are explicitly given without other clauses or modification. Another clear example is the proverb "I libun fulong faldam na num gnare mas mabtas balu di filak na blawen." Here, the subject ("A woman with wisdom and knowledge") is followed by the verb ("is more valuable") and object ("than silver and gold"), reinforcing syntactic clarity. This preference for clarity and direct communication is aligned with previous research on Philippine languages, which underscored the use of uncomplicated syntax in oral narratives and musical compositions (Reid, 2004).

Moreover, Blaan linguistic expressions often followed a rhythmic and repetitive structure, especially in songs and chants, which aided memorization and reinforced the oral transmission of cultural values. For instance, the repeated use of the word "baling" in "Neng ato baling sahal kiyeh." (Let us not lose sight of each other), and "Deen to baling suteh nawa di banwe?" (Why do we fight in our own land?) exhibits rhythmic repetition that supports oral retention and cohesion. Proverbs leaned towards direct statements rather than metaphor-laden expressions, such as "Gel gu salek di kalbong tubed Blaan di banwe." (I always ask Blaan in our land). This directness reflects the community's cultural emphasis on clarity and moral instruction.

Similarly, the Manobo language also showed a parallel trend. The lines quoted from Manobo oral narratives strengthened the prevalence of *SVO word order* while depicting the community's communication preferences. For example, “*Oraroy kon mutuus, Monama ku.*” (You are so powerful, our God) follows the SVO structure, where “Oraroy” is the subject, “kon mutuus” functions as the verb phrase, and “Monama ku” as the object or predicate nominal. Another instance is “*Sikkow ko id pomonnan to konanim songnga.*” (Our breath comes from you), which again adheres to an SVO arrangement, reflecting the same commitment to grammatical order. Manobo stories and songs, like those of the Blaan, contained *simple and straightforward sentence structures* that focused on clarity in both oral narratives and lyrical traditions (Sardido & Palma, 2022). However, Manobo proverbs utilized more complex forms, reflecting the linguistic refinement inherent within their folk wisdom. For example, the proverb “*Kung kavvow no oppat kosoyup nod gedeta, oran pa oyok Minuvu?*” contains an embedded conditional clause (“If a carabao with its four feet makes a wrong step”) before arriving at the main clause (“how much more a man?”). The use of metaphor—comparing human error to that of a carabao—demonstrates metaphorical complexity and a deeper cultural meaning. This coexistence of *simple and complex sentence structures* across Manobo literary forms suggested that Manobo discourse maintained a balance between accessibility and depth, reinforcing its grammatical stability within the Austronesian language family.

Together, these syntactic observations highlighted the overall linguistic versatility of Blaan and Manobo, illustrating how their languages balanced clarity and complexity to fulfil various communicative and cultural roles. The Blaan line “*Tau Tana mimo ilong dadto afdatah.*” (Tau Tana made the nose upside down) illustrates the direct narrative structure, while the Manobo line “*Kos mongo bitu'on nonggo ondiyong to mosukirom no tau-wan.*” (The stars stand scattered in the stable firmament) features piled-up phrases that represent mythological depth. Through the exploration of these differences, researchers better understand the grammatical structures of these native languages and their typological connections in the Philippine linguistic environment.

B. Semantic Structure

Semantic structure refers to the organization of meaning within a linguistic system, where relationships between words and concepts are systematically analyzed (Lyons, 1977; Saeed, 1997). Halliday situated semantic structures within systemic functional linguistics, emphasizing the ideational function, which conveyed cultural knowledge and worldview (Halliday, 2014).

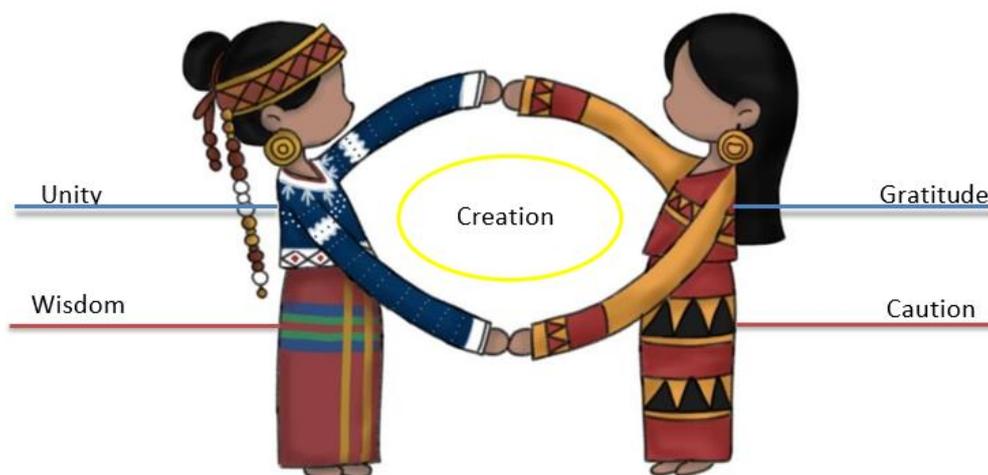


Figure 3. Comparative Thematic Model of Blaan and Manobo Cultural Texts

Legend

■ Belief System

■ Practices

■ Norms

Field. B1. Belief System: Creation

The creation myths of the Blaan and Manobo communities offered profound narratives that explained the origins of the world and humanity. These myths revealed significant cultural perspectives on divine authority, cosmic balance, and the transformative processes involved in creation. Despite their distinct cultural contexts, the Blaan myth, Ani Tulen Kimo Blaan Di Munan (*The Blaan Story Creation: Version One*), and the Manobo myth, Pomonan To Bitu'on Owoy Podpodado Tod Sellak To Allow Owoy Odtollak (*The Origin of the Star and the Explanation of Sunset and Sunrise*), demonstrated notable commonalities, particularly in their depiction of divine beings, the relationship between the celestial and human realms, and the role of conflict in shaping creation.

B1.1. Divine Creation and Cosmic Order

Both myths begin with divine beings responsible for the creation of the world, highlighting a connection between the creator and creation. In the Blaan myth, the supreme deity Melu created the earth from his dead skin:

*“Di fule, Melu dmisisyon mimo banwe.
Ne too galabek famkah dad mati kulit para non porman.
Melu mimo bong banwe na too lehew di nimoan.
Ne kayean mimo alwe to gambet bawehan.”* (Lines 9-12)

(Finally, Melu decided to make the earth;
so he worked very hard in putting the dead skin into shape,
and when it was finished, he was so pleased
with it that he determined to make two beings like himself.)

This act signified an intimate bond between the creator and the creation, as Melu's physical remnants form the world. Similarly, in the Manobo myth, the Sun and Moon are personified as divine beings who engaged in an eternal dance, producing two children as a result of their union:

*“Id ikahi no dong-ngan no ponahon,
kos allow owoy buwan so tod-osawa.
Si kandan kos id uw-wan para to kopyannan tod ubpa.
Orowa no anak kos pomonnan
to kandan no pod osoway.”* (Lines 3-5)

(It is said that in the olden time,
the Sun and the Moon were married.
They led a peaceful, harmonious life.
Two children were the issue of their wedlock)

The anthropomorphizing of celestial bodies in both myths suggested that divine beings shaped cosmic order, further emphasizing their central role in maintaining the balance of the universe. Allerton (2009) observed that many Southeast Asian indigenous myths personified celestial bodies, granting them agency to influence cosmic and human events. This idea of divine beings influencing both the material and spiritual realms is also echoed in the work of Tambiah (1976), who discussed the integration of cosmology and human existence in Southeast Asian societies.

B1.2. Human Existence and Divine Intervention

Another key parallel between the two myths is the active role of divine beings in the creation and development of humanity. In the Blaan myth, Melu meticulously crafted the first humans, but their creation is marred by imperfection when Tau Tana, another deity, placed their noses upside down:

*"Nite Melu amda di tah labon i kagkah dad to
di tana ne garean fan ale amlimes."
(Line 21)*

(Melu, from his place on the clouds, saw their danger,
and he came quickly to earth and saved their lives by
turning their noses, the other side up.)

This intervention underscored the theme of human imperfection and the ongoing relationship between the divine and the mortal. Similarly, in the Manobo myth, the children of the Sun and Moon are accidentally destroyed by the Sun, leading to their transformation into stars:

*"To unna pa, novakkan si kandin nod langot
kos sawa rin ika veen id sinoggow dob-bo id ponaman
no id angoy rin kos mongo notutung no mongo anak din.
To subran no langot, idpon lumbag
din id-da to lovuta ahad ingkon don noondiyon." (Lines 14-15)*

(She seized the burnt forms of her babes,
and in the depth of her anguish and her rage
threw them to the ground in different directions.)

The transformation into stars symbolized a cyclical process of creation and re-creation, suggesting that divine beings continue to shape existence, even in response to their mistakes or emotional turmoil. As Demetrio (1990) suggested, divine correction is a recurring theme in Philippine indigenous myths, which present creation as a dynamic, evolving process rather than a static event. It aligned with the views of Parmentier, who emphasizes the importance of divine intervention to maintain moral and social order within indigenous cosmologies (Parmentier, 1987).

B1.3. Conflict and Divine Resolution

Both myths featured moments of divine conflict that shaped the course of creation and established cosmic order. In the Blaan myth, Melu and Tau Tana disagreed over the design of humanity, leading to an imperfect creation that required correction:

*"Kanto tafan afnge kimoan di abwe lagi ne talo ilong de kulang,
amsut Tau Tana amda di dungan tana ne kayean atmabeng.
Kabay la maye Melu ku atmabeng
Tau Tana tamen du asdaas ale ne admaog Tau Tana." (Lines 15-16)*

(Taking the remnants of the material left after making the earth,
he fashioned two men, but just as they were all finished except their noses,
Tau Tana from below the earth appeared and wanted to help him.
Melu did not wish any assistance, and a great argument ensued.)

This conflict highlighted the interaction of multiple divine forces in shaping the world, suggesting that creation is not a singular act but a dynamic process influenced by opposing wills. The disagreement resulted in an imperfect yet functional humanity, reflecting the indigenous belief that

the world is a product of tension and compromise between cosmic forces. Similarly, the Manobo myth presented a divine struggle between the Sun and Moon, which led to their eternal separation:

*“Pod livod din, wara rin don nokita kos osawa rin no hantud don
en kounkay no ikos allow odsunuran din kos buwan
hantud nohimon bolli owoy alow.” (Line 17)*

(Upon his return, he could not find his wife, and so, it is to this day that they are forever apart.)

This separation explained the alternation of day and night, demonstrating how natural phenomena emerged from divine discord. The myth suggested that balance in the cosmos is achieved not through harmony alone but through the resolution of conflict, where oppositional forces—light and dark, presence and absence—coexist in a structured order.

Canayong and Sajulga (2024) argued that such dualistic conflicts in creation myths symbolized the balance of opposites, a recurring theme in indigenous Filipino cosmology. Scott (1994) expanded on this idea, suggesting that these myths reflect cosmic tensions and the reconciliation of opposites within social and moral frameworks. In both myths, divine conflict explained the imperfections of existence and the structured dualities observed in nature and society.

Consequently, the creation myths of the Blaan and Manobo communities illuminated the depth and complexity of indigenous cosmological thinking. Rather than presenting a singular, fixed origin, these narratives invited readers to understand creation as a culturally grounded, interpretive process rooted in spiritual meaning and symbolic continuity. More than just origin stories, these myths function as vehicles for transmitting moral insights, cultural values, and existential questions about humanity’s place in the universe. As Yu and Catalina (2024) argued, indigenous myths served as living frameworks through which communities interpreted their relationship with the natural and spiritual worlds. Turner (1997) further emphasized the enduring role of such narratives in shaping ritual and social life, suggesting that myth is not only a story of the past but a guide for present action and future orientation.

B2. Practices: Unity and Gratitude

Songs played a vital role in Indigenous cultures, serving as a means of preserving values, traditions, and communal identity. Oral traditions, mainly songs, are a repository of collective wisdom, transmitting social norms, ethical teachings, and historical consciousness across generations (Finnegan, 2012). Among the Blaan people of the Philippines, songs not only entertain but also educate and unify. The Blaan song *Kastifun* (Gathering) exemplified this role by emphasizing reconciliation and solidarity, calling upon the Blaan people to overcome internal divisions and restore communal unity.

A key line that conveyed the song's central message states:

*“Gel gu salek di kalbong tubed Blaan di banwe,
Git lito guh samfo yo gama, gusamfo gu roh.” (Lines 1-2)*

(I always ask to all Blaans in our land,
Your lineage is my lineage too)

This declaration underscored the concept of shared ancestry within the Blaan community. Kinship, deeply rooted in Indigenous societies, formed the foundation of unity, reinforcing the idea that internal discord contradicted the essence of communal identity (Rosaldo, 1993). The notion of

lineage as a unifying factor, where ancestral ties transcend personal conflicts and foster social cohesion, aligned with the broader Indigenous worldview, where family and tribal connections shaped one's obligations to the collective. This concept is emphasized by authors like Jackson (2005), who discussed how kinship ties in Indigenous communities form the backbone of social structures and responsibilities. Similarly, Cook-Lynn (1996) underscored the importance of tribal kinship in sustaining collective cultural identity, which transcended individual concerns for the sake of the community's well-being.

Further reinforcing this theme, the song inquired:

"Kelen Kafnge tu ron kastifun kasafye Blaam" (Line 4)

(When will we have gathering to unite the Blaam people?)

Kastifun or "gathering" signified a fundamental Blaam practice of communal decision-making. Such gatherings functioned as forums for resolving disputes, deliberating on social concerns, and reinforcing tribal bonds. In many Indigenous cultures, council meetings, and ritual assemblies played a crucial role in sustaining harmony and ensuring the continuity of traditions (McLennan, 1886; Paredes, 1992). The song's invocation of this practice highlighted the urgency of restoring collective solidarity among the Blaam.

The chorus further intensified the song's call for unity:

*"Kelen kastifun e lito Blaam,
Kamon to baling saklah dalan?"* (Lines 7-8)

(When will those with Blaam blood unite,
Why did we take different paths?)

Through rhetorical questions, listeners were encouraged to consider the causes of division and urged for reconciliation. Lamentation, as a form of social critique, prompting audiences to confront historical fractures and work toward healing. Smith (1999) noted that, "Indigenous stories are a way of passing on social knowledge, values, and understanding about the relationships between people and the environment." Similarly, Cajete (1994) emphasized that storytelling and lament in Indigenous traditions served as "both a healing and teaching process, allowing people to remember and reclaim what colonization attempted to erase." The repetition of the song of unity-related themes is a potent reminder that reconciliation is not merely an aspiration but a prerequisite for cultural survival.

Unity is traditionally preserved among the Blaam people by means of tribal councils, common rituals, and joint decision-making. Indigenous governance builds on relational accountability and mutual respect and oral traditions promote principles of reconciliation and consensus-building, as noted by Alfred (1999). Similarly, Maceda (1998) noted that cultural songs such as *kastifun* were also applied as a culture transmission method through which values and obligations that were shared among the people were transmitted by performance and through oral memory. With its suggestive lyrics, *Kastifun* does not generate divisions but reestablishes the necessity to come back to each other as a people.

In contrast to the Blaam emphasis on unity, the Manobo song *Sikkow Re-en* by Jerry Angga centered on gratitude, particularly about divine providence. Expressions of gratitude are deeply embedded in Indigenous worldviews which shaped interactions with both the spiritual and social realms. As emphasized by Kimmerer (2013), "gratitude is the thread that connects Indigenous peoples to land, community, and spirit," forming the basis of ethical relationships and daily practices. The song articulated a profound appreciation for God's role in sustaining life and bestowing blessings.

The opening lines established the central theme:

*“Oraroy kon Moppiya, Monama ku.
Oraroy kon Moppiya Konami”* (Lines 1-2)

(You are so good, our God
You are so good to us)

The repetition of divine goodness underscored the Manobo people's deep sense of thankfulness. It aligned with Indigenous theological perspectives that perceive life as a sacred gift, necessitating continuous acknowledgement and reverence (Deloria, 1994). The emphasis on God's benevolence mirrors broader Indigenous spiritual traditions, where reciprocity with the divine is expressed through prayer, song, and ritual (Buenconsejo, 2002).

The song further highlighted divine omnipotence:

*“Oraroy kon mutuus, Monama ku
Sikkow ko id pomonnan to konamin songnga”* (Lines 5-6)

(You are so powerful, our God
Our breath comes from you)

By linking the very act of breathing to divine power, the song portrayed existence itself as an extension of divine will. This perspective aligned with Indigenous animistic beliefs, where spiritual forces are integral to daily life and sustenance (Cajete, 2000). The chorus reinforced the response to divine generosity:

*“Sikkow Re-en kos ollog nos simba-anon
Sikkow Re-en kos ollog nod doyanon”* (Lines 9-10)

(You are the only one to worship
You are the only one to be praised)

Worship and praise are depicted as natural responses to divine blessings, reinforcing the Manobo's religious devotion. Indigenous spirituality often intertwines gratitude with communal rituals, demonstrating how faith and cultural identity are interwoven (Simpson, 2017).

Gratitude in Manobo culture extended beyond spirituality into social interactions, manifesting through acts of reciprocity and communal support. Spivak (1990) noted that thanksgiving rituals are integral to Indigenous societies, particularly during harvests, rites of passage, and significant communal events. Similarly, Angga's song captured this worldview, portraying gratitude as both a personal and collective obligation.

Both Kastifun and Sikkow Re-en embodied the fundamental values of their respective cultures—unity for the Blaan and gratitude for the Manobo. Whereas Kastifun promoted reconciliation and community solidarity, the Sikkow Re-en conveyed appreciation for divine blessings. Themes like these are not only central to their music but are also deeply rooted in the social and spiritual customs of each group. As the cultural artefacts' expressions, these songs facilitated the transmission of vital values down through generations, maintaining and preserving Indigenous identity and emphasizing the lasting importance of oral traditions.

B3. Norms: Wisdom and Caution

The proverbs of the Blaan and Manobo communities served and functioned as an important linguistic and cultural tool, reflecting their beliefs and perspectives. However, proverbs also

emphasized wisdom, but they differed in their thematic emphasis. The Blaen saying highlighted wisdom as a fundamental aspect of their culture, while the Manobo proverb emphasized caution as an essential principle for guiding human behaviour. As part of the tool in oral tradition, these proverbs uphold communal norms and ethical standards and played a vital role in passing down knowledge from one generation to the next (Mieder, 1992).

*I libun fulong faldam na nun gnare
mas mabtas balu di filak na blawen*

("A woman with wisdom and knowledge
is more valuable than silver and gold")

This Blaen proverb is used to explain how wisdom is better than material wealth. This corresponded to the hypothesis of Foley (1986), that oral traditions are documents of general knowledge, that the general knowledge is the organization of the society and a definition of what is right or wrong. Similarly, Bascom (1954) believed that proverbs served as moral codes and they strengthened values required to bind the society. The proverb went that wisdom was not an individual right, but a social institution, without which culture would cease and society would go to war.

The emphasis on wisdom as a moral and philosophical ideal is further supported by Yankah (2012), who highlighted proverbs as persuasive tools reinforcing communal values. Narayan (1993) similarly argued that indigenous wisdom systems prioritize knowledge as a sustaining force for survival and harmony. Dundes (2007) further noted that prioritizing wisdom in oral traditions reflects deep-rooted ethical paradigms that shaped indigenous societies.

Structurally, the Blaen proverb employed a direct comparative approach, positioning wisdom as the ultimate currency within their cultural framework. This approach corresponded with the observation of Finnegan (2003) that proverbs encapsulated philosophical ideals in succinct yet powerful expressions. Anderson (2000) suggested that the emphasis on a woman possessing wisdom spoke to the role of gender in Indigenous epistemology, where matriarchal figures often served as cultural custodians and knowledge transmitters.

In contrast, the Manobo proverb underscored the importance of caution and careful decision-making. This assertion aligned with Kövecses (2008) that conceptual metaphors influenced cognition and behaviour. The imagery of the carabao—an essential animal in Manobo's livelihood—conveyed the gravity of human errors through metaphorical association. Arewa and Dundes (1964) explained that metaphorical reasoning in proverbs helps contextualize abstract ideas within tangible, everyday experiences.

*Kung kavvow no oppat kos paa kosoyup
nod gedeta oran pa oyok Minuvu?*

("If a carabao with its four feet makes a
wrong step, how much more a man?")

The rhetorical question of the proverb served as an instructional device, instilling caution and reinforcing the expectation that individuals must deliberate before taking action. It coincided with the observation of Briggs (1988) that the interpretation of proverbs is culturally specific, shaped by the experiences and practical realities of the speech community. In parallel, Hymes (1974) contended that proverbs functioned as structured discourse tools encoding shared social expectations. Agyekum (2005) further emphasized that proverbs serve as persuasive linguistic elements shaping behavioural norms within societies.

In the Manobo context, the importance of caution met with interpretation of language as social semiotic system where Halliday (1976) argues that communicative discursive forms were used to control and regulate behaviour. Malinowski (1923) also underscored the fact that in oral tradition; language served as an effective tool in formulating social conduct. The implicit warning in the adage was that even the apparent well-prepared ones such as a carabao with four feet still stumbled. This expressed the wider admonishment that fallible human beings must use caution in the decisions they made.

Although these two proverbs were the didactic tools, they taught differently. The Blaan proverb elevated wisdom as the base component of the moral and the intellectual; identity and advanced it as a principle that should direct ethical behaviour. Conversely, the Manobo sayings demonstrated wisdom through application of cautionary messages which asserted the statement by Foley (1986) that oral Indigenous traditions were a system of practical knowledge. As an example of how the oral traditions were aligned with society values, Finnegan (2012) pointed out that the stylistic choices of each proverb reflected the priorities of the communities in which they were spoken.

Moreover, the Blaan proverb explicitly defined value by introducing wisdom as the most important asset un the community. In doing so, it revealed how Indigenous groups were likely to perceive moral intelligences as the key to maintaining social integration. Quite to the contrary, the Manobo proverb rested on metaphor and rhetorical questioning, which is a method that echoed an argument of Kövecses' (2008) that the metaphorical reasoning informed and determined cognitive processes as well as moral decisions.

In the end, the two proverbs proved to be very educative about their own cultural contexts and to show that the Indigenous knowledge was engrained within oral cultures. In the Blaan worldview, wisdom was the most important theme and it was the epitome of virtue and moral uprightness in their culture. In its turn, the Manobo outlook attached much significance to the idea of carefulness as the leading philosophy, which implied carefulness in dealing with the unpredictable aspects of life. Indigenous knowledge systems as the living sources of shared wisdom could be developed using these proverbs.

CONCLUSION

In this study, the syntactic and semantic structure of the Blaan and Manobo oral history were discussed and it was discovered that the framework of language was firmly embedded within the culture of transmission. In the sentence construction, verb morphology, and discourse organization analysis, it was found that the two communities were predominantly utilizing simple sentences with subject-verb-object (SVO) structures, but Manobo proverbs followed complex sentences. At the semantic level, they had different subject matters in their songs and proverbs. Their oral reports depicted that they wisely used syntactic variation, metaphor, and sequence in the communicative, didactic, and ritual roles. Individuation of verbs, difference of aspects and discourse markers among others, supported oral transmission, but also conveyed moral values, historic awareness and religious conceptions that played a key role in maintain the identity of the Indigenous people. Other than this, there were other motives extraneous or external to the present study which contained the influences of language contact and modernization of such traditions which demonstrated the desperate need to write down and keep them. It was reiterated that the language organization of Blaan and Manobo oral traditions was an advanced meaning-making system that served as a historical record, pedagogical instrument and the statement of community identity and that it fulfills an important function of safeguarding the knowledge and the cultural heritage of Indigenous people. Finally, this research reconfirmed that the language form of the Blaan and Manobo oral traditions was a higher-order

meaning-making system to communal identity, and hence once again justified their central role in imposing Indigenous knowledge and the cultural heritage.

THEORETICAL IMPLICATION

With the constantly increasing threats of homogenization and loss of traditional way of lifestyles, the survival of the oral culture of Blaan and Manobo became the focus of this study. The amount of change that takes place socio-politically and through institutional education and the infiltration of the mass media have significantly increased the speed of language shift and must be maintained through a revitalization that is conscious and community-wide. It has been found within such traditions that the work bears some relation to the practice of linguistic anthropology and Indigenous studies in the sense that it demonstrates that Blaan and Manobo storytelling is not aesthetic recreation, but is rather a form of sustenance, possession of the culture and the intergenerational knowledge transfer.

PRACTICAL IMPLICATION

In addition to the linguistic analysis, language preservation and revitalization were also highlighted in this research. As Indigenous languages were under the threat of extinction, there was a necessity to write and research about oral and written traditions. So that to preserve, revive, and carry on to future generations the usages of such languages, this study analyzed their literary and cultural sense. In the same manner, the study offered a critical view on ethnolinguistics through which it will contribute to the broader discussion on the relationship between language, identity, and artistic heritage.

Linguistic landscape was the concept that dominated this process. Linguistic landscape provided a dynamic depiction of the use, identity, and power of language in these communities. By investigating the salience of language in public places, in terms of signage, community markers, or even digital forms. Also, linguistic landscape representation and promotion might be viewed as an effective instrument in the revitalization of the Blaan and Manobo languages due to the fact that it will act as evidence of their presence in the real and virtual spaces.

Moving forward, the inclusion of Indigenous linguistic patterns in academic writing and educational curricula is vital to sustain these languages in both oral and written forms. Bilingual education programs, computer conservation of orals and the community-based storytelling program may all be implemented. Even linguists, teachers, and the Indigenous people were forced to work closer together so that the process of language preservation could become possible, culturally-relevant, and sustainable. Lastly, by acknowledgement of the oral traditions as an active language system, this research study highlighted the role of the oral traditions in maintaining the linguistic culture of the Blaan and Manobo people.

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