

PORTRAYAL OF CORONA VIRUS-19 (COVID-19) ON PHILIPPINE NEWSPAPERS EDITORIAL CARTOONS: A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

Editorial cartoons contained messages beyond the caricatures. It entails different social and political issues. The purpose of this qualitative study employing content analysis was to identify the satirical elements as portrayed on editorial cartoons. Also, it determined the social ideologies and social issues in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings showed that satirical elements portrayed were to attack, desire to instigate reform, wit, and judgment. Social ideologies embedded were on economic, health, political, and social aspects. Varied social issues were manifested in Editorial Cartoons at the height of COVID-19 pandemic. Hence, it implies that messages are explicitly implied in the editorial cartoons. Furthermore, these social issues are timely are relevant since these tackle the real condition in the country.

KEYWORDS: Editorial Cartoons, COVID-19, Philippine Newspapers, Critical Discourse Analysis, Philippines

INTRODUCTION

Rationale

Corona Virus-19 has brought economic, political, and social turmoil in almost part of the globe. There were many individuals who lost their lives as they battled for their breath. On the other hand, newspapers have been one the platforms to reach out the people and educate them relative to the effect of the virus to human body. Thus, editorial cartoons made the portrayal of the virus hidden which is deemed necessary to be deciphered.

The study of Joubert and Wasserman (2020) revealed that COVID-related cartoons in South Africa attributed it human characteristics which is often evil-looking facial expressions, and with exaggerated, stalks surrounding its body. Fear was the dominant emotional tone. But it provided a useful source to help people to understand the broader discursive context which public communication of science operates during the pandemic.

On the other hand, the portrayal of the COVID-19 was already studied by utilizing the international newspapers. The Dawn presented the domestic problems of the health care system and its severe attacks on the economy. Meanwhile, the Economist highlighted the cultural disorder of racism in the United States of America and the inability of the Brazilian government to contain the spread of the virus. Semiotics presented in the newspaper manifested the long-lasting effects in the contexts of culture and social practice (Alkhreshen, 2020).

The cartoon may highlight the issues related to religion, economy, law and order, and international emergencies. Socio-political cartoons bring humorous criticism and questions to the existing order (Abraham, 2009). The biases of newspapers and editors are the real questions that are often neglected. Cartoons and discourse together work as motivators (Lamb, 2004). The cartoons are considered a valuable part of the newspaper as the cartoons present the existing problems differently (Alkhreshen, 2020).

In this manner, the researcher tried to build a gap within the local setting by studying the satirical elements, social ideologies, social issues as embedded on editorial cartoons that talked on COVID-19 pandemic in the country. (Joubert, M., & Wasserman, H. (2020) Spikey blobs with evil grins: understanding portrayals of the coronavirus in South African newspaper cartoons in relation to the public communication of science, *Journal of Science Communication*, 19(7), A08. Also, this study is timely and relevant since it can be used in the teaching of language and to help the readers to have the deeper understanding of the implications of the cartoons in the society.

Research Questions

- What satirical elements of COVID-19 as portrayed on editorial cartoons?
- What social ideologies are manifested on editorial cartoons in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic?
- What social issues can be found on editorial cartoons in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic?

Limitations and Delimitations of the Study

This study was limited with the identification of different satirical elements, social issues, and social ideologies on COVID-19 as portrayed on the editorial cartoons of the Philippine Newspapers. The selection of the newspaper was based on the readerships. These were taken from their official websites.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study was qualitative employing the content analysis. Qualitative research approach aimed to focus on how people or groups of people can have different ways of looking at reality. Also, it is a systematic scientific inquiry which seeks to build a holistic, largely, narrative, description to inform the researcher's understanding of a social or cultural phenomenon. Primarily, it is an inductive process of organizing data into categories and identifying patterns among categories. This means that data and meaning emerge organically from the context of the research (Morse, 2015; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

Qualitative research worked out under a combination of observations, interviews, and document review (Mayan, 2016). It gives the importance of looking at variables in the natural setting in which they are found. Detailed data is gathered through open-ended questions that provided quotations, whereby making the researcher as an integral part of the investigation (Glesne, 2016).

Correspondingly, content analysis is a research tool used to determine the presence of certain words or concepts within texts or sets of texts. In fact, researchers can quantify and analyze the presence, meanings, and relationships of such words and concepts, then make inferences about the messages, the writer, the audience, and even the culture and time of which these are a part. The uses of content analysis can reveal international differences in communication content, detect the existence of propaganda, identify the intentions, focus or communication trends of an individual, group or institution, describe attitudinal and behavioral responses to communications and determine psychological or emotional state of persons or groups (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

This paper is qualitative-content analysis since it utilized the different types of memes taken from the Social Networking Sites. The different linguistic elements were identified as well as the ideologies through Critical Discourse Analysis. Accordingly, meanings were drawn without incorporating statistics in the analysis of the data.

Informants of the Study

There were 7 informants who participated in this study. They were chosen using the following criteria:

- A full-time faculty of the CFCST Elementary Laboratory School during the School Year 2021-2022;
- Teaching the English subjects; and
- Employed in the institution since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Locale of the Study

The materials of this study were editorial cartoons taken from the official websites of the Philippine Newspapers. There were 42 editorial cartoons taken from Philippine Daily Inquirer, Philippine Star, and Manila Bulletin.

Data Gathering Procedure

The data were collected from the online sources. Specifically, this was taken from the official websites of the selected Philippine Newspapers. The coverage of the selection was from March 2020 to April 2021 in order to determine the portrayal of the COVID-19. After which, each of the editorial cartoons will be coded to guide the researcher all throughout the course of the study. The data were analyzed based on the research questions. It was done by the data analyst who is an expert in Critical Discourse Analysis. In order to check the whether these anchored from the lens, the results were checked by the panel of experts for review comments and suggestions.

Data Analysis

The data were properly arranged based on the research questions. Identification of the parody in terms of satirical elements, social ideologies and social issues were anchored from the lens of the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Satirical Elements as Portrayed in Editorial Cartoons

The first research question talks about the portrayal of satirical elements in the editorial cartoons. As presented on table 1, satirical element in terms of attack is found in EC6, EC7, EC9, EC10, and EC41 respectively. Here the authors were trying to attack the governments’ response on the problems faced by the Filipinos.

Another is the desire to instigate reforms. Authors tried to portray the actions that the people and even the government have to do in order to survive in this pandemic. These are manifested in EC13, EC14, EC15, EC19, and EC38.

Meanwhile, their ability to use the words to convey meaning to readers are presented in EC3, and EC41.

Moreover, an element of judgement can be found on EC4, EC12, EC17, and EC37. The authors ridiculed someone so that changes in the society must be given an immediate action.

Table 1: .Satirical Elements as portrayed in Editorial Cartoons

Satirical Elements	Editorial Cartoons
Attack	EC6, EC7, EC9, EC10, EC41
Desire to Instigate Reform	EC13, EC14, EC15, EC19, EC38
Wit	EC3, EC41
Judgment	EC4, EC12, EC17, EC37

Social Ideologies as portrayed on Editorial Cartoons

Research question number two determines the satirical elements in the editorial cartoons. These are divided into four categories. Ideologies relative to economic aspects are found in EC3, EC2, EC5, EC8, EC11, EC12, and EC22,

On the other hand, ideologies on health are on EC15, EC16, EC18, EC20, EC24, EC25, EC30, EC33, EC34, EC35, EC36, EC38, EC39, and EC40,

Politically, EC7, EC9, EC10, EC13, EC28, EC37, and EC41 embed some political ideologies where a politician must be considered and be done in this time of the pandemic.

Lastly, social issues are among the most common explored topics in the editorial cartoons as manifested on EC1, EC4, EC6, EC7, EC14, EC17, EC19, EC21, EC23, EC26, EC27, EC29, EC31, EC32, and EC42 respectively.

Table 2: Social Ideologies Manifested in Editorial Cartoons

Social Ideologies	Editorial Cartoons
Economic	EC3, EC2, EC5, EC8, EC11, EC12, EC22,
Health	EC15, EC16, EC18, EC20, EC24, EC25, EC30, EC33, EC34, EC35, EC36, EC38, EC39, EC40,
Political	EC7, EC9, EC10, EC13, EC28, EC37, EC41
Social	EC1, EC4, EC6, EC7, EC14, EC17, EC19, EC21, EC23, EC26, EC27, EC29, EC31, EC32, EC42

Social Issues Manifested in Editorial Cartoons

The third research question answers the social issues that are manifested in editorial cartoons.

In EC1, it portrays the protection given by the frontliners to the people and their role to the distribution of food packages. The effects of COVID-1 pandemic on OFWs' remittances is expressed in EC2. On the other hand, EC3 talks on the looming effects of COVID-19 pandemic among the Filipino workers, and EC4 exhibits the continuity of the Build Build Program of the Duterte Administraton.

Editorial cartoons 5, 8, and 11 reveal the global effects of COVID-19 pandemic. Conversely, EC6 shows the myopic attitude of the Filipino people which could exhaust the frontliners. Because of the fear against the unknown enemy, the people were calling for mass testing (EC7). Even in the midst of the pandemic, problems with regards to corruption is still rampant (EC9).

Consequently, EC10 provides information on the implementation of restrictions which could cause a high percentage of unemployment (EC19). Poor working conditions of the frontliners are also conveyed in EC13 and EC15. A problem on the improper wearing of mask is evidently shown in EC14.

Indeed, there are challenges in the fight to find the elixir against the virus (EC16). Hence, it is still impossible for the DepEd for a face-to-face class (EC17, EC29, EC42). There are also issues with regards to the problems being faced by the OFWs that they might be a carrier of the virus (EC18). Thus, the government made a response in EC19 by supporting the infected persons (EC20). Conversely, the pandemic caused famine among the poor families as expelled in EC21,

Henceforth, the government made its efforts in EC22 to procure the vaccines. However, the threat of the virus stills looms in the horizon thus, lockdowns were still implemented (EC23, EC32). Likewise, the hope of the vaccine

(EC24, EC39) and its arrival (EC25) made a significant change. On the other hand, the natural calamities added to the dilemmas of the Filipinos in these trying times (EC26). The quality of life plummeted (EC27) and even made worst by the problem of peace and order (EC28).

EC30, EC35, and EC36 portray that many Filipinos are skeptical about the vaccination and its efficacy (EC33). Others see them as a protection (EC34). When 2021 arrived, Filipinos hope that the pandemic ended (EC31). On the contrary, even in the midst of the pandemic, politicking is still viewed in EC37 and EC41). Lastly, EC38 indicates that it is vaccination and discipline can end the spread of the virus.

Table 3: Social Issues Manifested in Editorial Cartoons

Social Issues	Editorial Cartoons
Frontliners and distribution of food packages	EC1
Effects of COVID-19 pandemic on OFWs' remittances	EC2
Looming Effects of COVID-19 among the Filipino Workers	EC3
Effects of COVID-19 on the Build BuildBuild Program	EC4
Global Effects of COVID-19 Pandemic	EC5, EC8, EC11
Myopic Mindsets and its threat to the Frontliners	EC6
People calling for Mass Testing	EC7
Ghost Recipients of Social Amelioration Funds	EC9
Implementation of Restrictions	EC10
Unemployment due to COVID-19 pandemic	EC12
Poor Working Conditions of the Frontliners	EC13, EC15
Not proper way of wearing masks	EC14
Labyrinth in finding solutions to COVID-19 pandemic	EC16
COVID carrier repatriated OFWs	EC18
Government's response against COVID-19 pandemic	EC19
Support to the infected COVID-19 patients	EC20
Famine brought by COVID-19 pandemic	EC21
Budget on Vaccination	EC22
Continuity of Lockdowns	EC23, EC32
Hope for COVID-19 vaccine	EC24, EC39
Arrival of the Vaccine	EC25
Natural Disaster in the midst of the pandemic	EC26
Plummeted Quality of Life	EC27
The threat on Peace and order at the height of the Pandemic	EC28
Impossibility of Face-to-face classes and its effect on quality of learning	EC17, EC29, EC42
The Scare of Vaccination	EC30, EC35, EC36
Hopes for the end of the pandemic	EC31
Skepticism on the efficacy of Sinovac	EC33
Vaccination Protection against COVID-19	EC34
Politicking in the midst of the pandemic	EC37, EC41
Self-discipline and vaccination	38

Implications for Practice

As a language teacher and a researcher, I found this topic very timely and relevant, I was able to realize that indeed picture paint a thousand words. Caricatures portray different social, health, political, and economic themes which could actually helpful for me to teach language. These can be used during instruction where I can ask my students to describe what they have seen and relate it into their daily observance of the societal issues.

In addition, I thought that everything that I learned with my baccalaureate course was already tantamount enough

to my ability as a language teacher. However, I was gravely mistaken. With the help of my adviser, I was able to wander in the wilderness of the cognizance. I was flabbergasted on how the issues were extracted from the editorial cartoons through Critical Discourse Analysis.

Similarly, this handiwork is a momentous achievement in my life as a pedagogue. I can utilize the editorial cartoons in help my learners to widen their horizons and become part of the societal change. More so, I can share these to my colleagues in order for them to have the backgrounds of this endeavor and can mirror them to their own learners.

Above all, the most important implication of this study in pedagogy is that it can tickle the minds of the learners to be mindful of the issues around them. Reading can help them powerful in all facets of life. The editorial cartoons are meant to change the society and their perspectives with regards to issues. Hence, they could take part in finding solutions to the problems.

Implications for Future Research

This study involved the complexities of Critical Discourse Analysis. Cartoons convey messages and lexemes that catch the attention of the readers. For future researchers, they have to identify the different elements of the language especially the morphology as well as the styles of written words that are embedded in the editorial cartoons. Meaning can be interpreted differently by different people. Thus, it may imply to future researchers to involve the member check and consider all the suggestions that they could share.

Since this study is the first of its kind in the graduate school of this institution, future researchers may also validate the results of this study by conducting the same and tried to compare and negate their own findings. Different interpretations can strengthen the vividness of the pictures as well as the meaning that they convey.

Basically, this study is qualitative that employed Critical Discourse Analysis. Everything that was embedded and seen by the researcher was discussed in this paper. This paper would serve as their guiding torch so that they could also be able to find better glory in this research interests. Above all, this study can be of great help to researchers who are interested in language and in different issues about the society.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

As an English teacher I know that this study could help me a lot. At first, I was hesitant to accept the challenge given to me by my adviser as he is really into applied linguistics. I was blinded by many realities in life that I almost buried in oblivion the bodies of knowledge which I learned way back in college. As a student and a mother, my journey was indeed full of challenges. I need to cater the needs of my children, husband, work, and my graduate studies.

To finish this study is a great triumph in most of my battle in life. As I put these words into writing I can say that I am still in the “cloud 9” trying to mesmerize those impossibilities can be at hand when there is persistence and the courage to fight all the nemeses that tried to block my way towards the zenith of success. I tried to manumit myself from the shackle of ignorance.

Now, I can say that I am ready to face the next chapter of my life. I know that there will be more debacles but I am proudly saying that I have the shield to face all the aridity. Aside from this, I made myself stalwart with full of vigor. With the intensity in my heart, I know I can do more in teaching. As I face all the uncertainties brought by the pandemic, I

learned to endure and face the realities of life.

Lastly, this study fascinated my heart and my mind. I considered myself as a superhuman since I was able to come up with a study that beyond what I was expected. Nevertheless, the infinitesimal support that this study can give to my learners can be considered as my greatest achievement in life. In the same manner, I know I can make a difference into their lives as I challenge them to develop awareness about societal issues.

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