

Discursive Strategies in Designing Textbook Tasks: Critical Subjectivities and Embodiments

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative media education inquiry sought to critically identify and analyze the discursive strategies employed by textbook authors in conceptualizing and designing tasks in media literacy education. Using critical discourse analysis, the discursive strategies were examined based on how they contribute to the framing and setting of a media pedagogy that is contextual, creative, and critical. Among the discursive strategies that surfaced from the coded, thematized, and analyzed data include: 1) divergent and dialogic questioning, 2) binary opposition, 3) dialectical positioning, 4) collocation of 'social' as a form of contextualization, 5) omission and exclusion, 6) double legitimization, 7) popular in form and social in rendering, and 8) instantiation of alternative media. From the critical examination of the discursive strategies, exemplars were commended and some proposals were also forwarded.

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Introduction

Broadly speaking, a discursive strategy is a purposive approach and technique in employing discourses to fulfill a particular ideological, political, psychological, ethical, or linguistic set of objectives. Discursive strategy plays a powerful role when employed to produce, reproduce, and legitimize particular political values, communication practices, and language ideologies, especially those that represent the prevailing order. Alternatively, discursive strategies can also be methodically utilized to challenge and resist dominant norms and patterns in media and education in general and in media literacy education in particular. This, therefore, points to the fact that textbooks and textbook tasks, where discursive strategies are embodied and imbricated, are sites of struggles. (Apple, 1990)

Dealing with the Textbook Tasks as Texts and Counter-texts

The approach in making sense of the various discursive strategies may differ considerably across individuals and groups. According to critical literacy specialist Hilary Janks (1997), it can either assume as an engaged (i.e., reading with) or estranged (i.e., reading against) positioning. When one is coming from a subject position that adopts an alternative framework of analysis (i.e., discourse of suspicion), the reading assumes the latter, i.e., an oppositional stance. In many instances, the positionality of the authors may not appear as apparent especially when the discursive presentation is rendered as "normal" and "natural". This naturalization tendency which is associated with the engaged position is more pronounced in the realm of formal education and instruction especially when dealing with official texts such as the mainstream curricula, textbooks,

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and assessment tools. Janks (1997, p. 2) associates this hegemonic reading position with the assimilationist model of literacy wherein “readers are expected to identify with the textual positionings.” The default formal didactic nature of textbooks tends to normalize such domineering and unequal relations in the act of reading as a social practice.

According to Grice (1975, as cited in Janks, 1997) and Smith (1971, as cited in Janks, 1997), readers tend to engage with the text to understand and make sense of the material. Correspondingly, Scholes (1985, as cited in Janks, 1997) pointed out that writers produce text in such a manner that it will restrict alternative interpretations and thereby control their readers’ sense-making and meaning-making patterns. In the context of teaching, Freebody, Luke and Gilbert (1991, as cited also in Janks, 1997) argued that educators tend to favor dominant reading positions to make the students get acquainted only with the orthodox interpretations. Janks (1997, p. 3) summarized the foregoing factors as “co-operation, text power, and institutional practice.” In the educational setting, Bonvillain (2008) refers to these factors as “institutionally-derived rights” possessed by individuals and groups to assert their social, ideological, and intellectual ascendancy. The temptation to get swayed by the “text’s apparent naturalness” (Janks, 1997) away from the oppositional standpoint must therefore be exposed and interrogated. Meanwhile, counter-texts that are promotive of divergent and dialectical pedagogy must be recognized, advanced, and mainstreamed.

Making Critical Sense of Language Ideologies

Engaged and estranged positions also manifest in dealing with the use of language. Language use reveals an individual and institution’s ideological orientation. It also mirrors the positionality of the speakers, their discursive bias as well as the politico-cultural ecology where the language use is taking place. In various social settings, for instance, terminologies such as “hard sciences” and “hard news” are being liberally adopted without regard to their discriminatory insinuations in relation to their counterpart concepts, i.e., “soft sciences” and “soft news” and to those individuals and institutions associated with these substantive areas. The operative term “hard” when utilized in relation to “soft” connotes the superiority and pre-eminence of the former to the denigration of the latter. The same could be assumed with the widespread use of the binary terms like ‘hard skills’ vis-à-vis ‘soft skills’ in the field of formal education and human resource management.

The “hard news vis-à-vis soft news” classification tends to discriminate against topics generally associated with culture and heritage in favor of what are commonly perceived as consequential fields in public affairs such as economy, business, and politics. For critical media scholar Danilo Arao (2022), hard and soft news are “generic categories.” However, he argued that in actual practice, “hard news like politics would be trivialized and made soft” while “soft news like fashion and showbiz may be discussed critically, giving it hard news treatment” (Arao, 2022). In the Philippines, this can be observed in the manner wherein election-related stories are trivialized by mainstream media and how in the case of Pinoy Weekly, for instance, the entertainment stories are alternatively and commendably accorded with strong political economic slant. In the same vein, the “hard science vis-à-vis soft science” dichotomy involves similar issue and concern, i.e., the condescending insinuation – whether deliberate or otherwise – that one (in this case the natural and physical sciences) is more superior than the other (social sciences in this context). The discursive strategy that normalizes discriminatory dualism must therefore be problematized and transformed.

Changing Genre Norms and Discursive Strategies

In a dialectical pattern, norms emerge, evolve, and get challenged. In the context of textbook task conceptualization and formulation, the choice of what values and whose voice to privilege shall determine how the learning assessment will take shape, which dimension (e.g., communicational, cultural, political, etc.) and level of analysis (e.g., individual, family, organizational, community, national, global) shall be accorded higher premium, and what discursive strategies to employ. In analyzing genre norms, Berge (1990, as cited in Bakken & Andersson-Bakken, 2021) proposed a typology that explains how norms go through this process of transformation. The first is norm declaration which is enacted by an authoritative member of the discourse community and is also the mechanism by which deviation from the established norm is regulated or sanctioned. The second is norm incorporation which pertains to the “drift in norms” that takes place when new members are introduced to the long-standing norms and when tensions inevitably emerge from this stage of initial engagement. The third is functional norm constitution which takes place when the discourse community realizes that the existing norm is no longer serving its social mission and when there is an increasing group consensus to develop a new one. The last is the revolutionary norm constitution where an individual from the discourse

community challenges the dominant norm, develops a counter-norm, and is successfully able to recruit new adherents. This Berge (1990) typology is particularly useful in mapping the patterns how the norms in textbook task as a genre evolve over time under different converging and diverging socio-academic and socio-ideological systems and practices. Within this parameter, it is interesting and worth observing how the genre norm (and consequently the corresponding discursive strategies) of media and information literacy textbook task design will unfold in due course considering MIL's academic standing as a relatively new subject area.

Maintaining Genre Norms

In their textbook analysis, Bakken and Andersson-Bakken (2021) revealed that the Turkish science and language arts textbook tasks under review only manifested "marginal change" when compared with the published counterpart textbook tasks before the national curricular reform. These research findings showed that the textbook tasks failed to afford the learners with "sufficient opportunities to practice the competences underscored in the new curriculum" (Bakken & Andersson-Bakken, 2021). As such, the researchers conjectured that the tendency of textbook tasks to retain their inherent features generation after generation can be attributed to the "culturally specific genre norms." Drawing from the rhetoric and linguistic theories, the researchers defined genre as a "recurring and culturally specific textual pattern" (Bakken & Andersson-Bakken, 2021), hence its observed regularity and persistent embodiment in the pedagogical devices of the more well-established subject areas such as Science, Math, English, and Social Studies. In another light, Wang (2006) argued that genre possesses the attributes of being "conservative and creative" because of the condition of being "relatively stable and at the same time open to change." The researchers went on to conclude that the observed similarities or differences among the authors in designing textbook tasks are determined by their membership (or non-membership) to a specific discourse community. Breaking the discourse community's prevailing norms by way of conceptualizing alternative and unorthodox textbook tasks however "run the risk of being rejected or misunderstood by other members" (Bakken & Andersson-Bakken, 2021). This then points to the conservative inclination of sticking with the old norms and traditions.

Interrogating Orthodoxies in Assessments

In relation to assessment as a pedagogical tool, Bakken and Andersson-Bakken (2021) presented that the open textbook tasks are divided into subcategories, namely: Evaluative, explorative, and activating tasks. Evaluative tasks require the students to assess, reflect, interpret, and take a position. Explorative tasks assign the students to delve into the given topic by doing literature search or conducting research. Lastly, activating tasks ask the learners to perform specific actions with the objective of developing a competency or set of competencies. When taken altogether, these three subcategories possess a huge potential in enhancing the teaching-learning praxis of media and information literacy, especially in pursuing a socially relevant, reflective, and critical education. Divergent and open-ended question is in sharp contrast with the close-ended and what-type question. The latter conventionally has one definite answer while the former can be answered in multiple ways. In the 2020 Andersson-Bakken, Jegstad, and Bakken study, textbook tasks were categorized as either closed tasks (e.g., repetition of facts and application of standard rules or procedures) or open tasks (e.g., interpretation, reflection, and expression). Closed tasks are divided into reproducing and reasoning subcategories. Reproducing tasks ask students to repeat the answer already provided in the textbook or from other available sources while reasoning tasks require the students to arrive at the answer by applying the knowledge derived from the textbook or by following the standard procedure already presented in the learning material (Bakken & Andersson-Bakken, 2021).

The reliance on traditional assessment types that for the longest time marked the pedagogical practice in the Philippines educational system does not promote divergent and dialectical learning. Given its conventionally uncritical attribute, this assessment approach does not encourage insightful debate, divergent inquiry, and critical discourse among the learners because of its preference and focus on individualized and uniform responses. In several instances, there are profound themes and subthemes which could have been approached in a more deliberative and critical manner but were presented in simple fill-in the black, true or false, and multiple-choice types instead. The functionalist bias still holds sway in the domain of education, and it remains to be observable in many traditional instructional materials.

Framework

Discourse in the Foucauldian sense is the “system of possibilities for the creation of knowledge” (Mumby, 1997). A concrete materialization of this vast potential of discourse is what the subjects or agents can plausibly conceptualize, articulate, or carry out with the set of new knowledge, thus paving the way to a more perceptive, reflective, productive, transformative, and collective pedagogical praxis.

As such, discourse possesses the potential to produce and reproduce as well as challenge and reconfigure existing power relations and social order. Within the parameter of this research, discourse is embodied in the various techniques being strategically employed and deployed by authors as media producers in designing textbook tasks. Correspondingly, this influences how the learners make sense of the social world and deal with social contradictions. Crucial in this discursive inquiry is the identification of what narratives are articulated or muted in the political conversation. Corollary to this process of critical re-examination is the transgressive creation and expansion of democratic spaces and platforms to accommodate subdued forms of knowledge and systems of valuation.

Drawing on Foucault’s construct of “subject position,” this study sought to examine how the discursive strategies situate particular individuals and social groups in reciprocal or dialectical relation to each other. In the words of Janks (1997), discourse provides people (and the discourse communities they represent) with “subject positions from which to speak and read the world” as well as transform it. To illustrate the discourse’s “social constitutiveness,” Al Maghlouth (2017) forwarded that “discourse is socially constitutive of, as well as constituted by, society,” thereby reaffirming the potential of discourse to create and be created.

In this qualitative research, the communicative practice of textbook task formulation is unmasked as a discursive arena of politico-normative act of privileging a particular system of knowledge production and dissemination. By employing critical discourse analysis, textbook tasks were subjected to a process of examination that shall problematize and interrogate the text itself (micro) and its broader social context (macro). Consistent with Foucault’s (1966) contention on knowledge in relation to power, it can be argued that the prevailing knowledge regime serves as the fundamental basis of what constitutes to be broadly acknowledged and accepted as truth. Within the context of the prevailing intellectual order, the textbook as the knowledge product under consideration has a crucial role to play in proposing and promoting a viable counterculture.

Conceivably, this can be instantiated in the specific ways how social constructs, public values, and sectoral groups are represented and positioned in the social schema and hierarchy through the alternative textbook tasks. Critical discourse analysis bears significant relevance and usefulness because of its “multiplicity of analysis,” “plurality of approach,” and “multiplicity of conceptions” when adopted as a theoretical and methodological approach in qualitative research (Al Maghlouth, 2017).

Unpacking textbook using critical discourse analysis enables communication, media, and education researchers to identify and explore the “narrative modes and latent interpretive patterns of the socio-cultural knowledge it contains” (Hohne, 2003, as cited in Fuchs & Henne 2018). Apart from examining “what is and what is not recounted in the textbook,” critical discourse analysis also explores what “narrative strategies” as well as discursive strategies are employed to present, render, and disseminate the content to the readers (Handro & Schonemann, 2010, as cited in Fuchs & Henne, 2018). Situating these points of contention in relation to the focus of this current research, the discursive strategies were critically identified and analyzed based on how they were methodically employed in the textbook tasks and learning activities. This enabled the researcher to reveal the authors’ orientation or in Trachtenberg’s (1974) words “the intent of the communicator.”

Fairclough (1989, as cited in Mesthrie et al., 2007) argued that media discourse is a “form of hidden power, for the favored interpretations and wordings are those of the power holders in our society.” For instance, the widespread acceptance and adoption of the dominant language ideology despite its discriminatory, marginalizing, and oppressive tendencies is illustrative of ideology’s discursive power as well as discourse’s ideological power. More specifically, this “hidden power” is also reflected in the manner how the public honor and value textbook as a cultural and intellectual product written by subject area specialists and as an official text sanctioned by education authorities. As underscored by critical discourse analysts, it is in the attribute or condition of being “hidden” (i.e., opaque) that ideology becomes most powerful, penetrating, and perpetuating (Janks, 1997; Wodak, 2006).

Methodology

This media and communication inquiry is guided by a research procedure that drew heavily from the qualitative research paradigm and the critical tradition. Qualitative studies contribute to the goal of achieving a “deeper understanding rather than merely examining the surface,” thus affording the researchers to pursue and arrive at the “multiple

ways of establishing truth" and hence making critical sense of it (Golafshani, 2003, p. 10). In carrying out this study, this procedure is adopted and followed:

1. Identified the list of commercially available textbook titles in Media and Information Literacy that align with the Philippines K-12 curriculum. Specifically, the instantiated textbook tasks in Media and Information Literacy instructional materials served as the subject of this critical discourse analysis. The specific choice of academic texts afforded this critical qualitative inquiry to cover a range of diverse but comparable textbook selection from various local publishing outfits with authors coming from parallel and complementary backgrounds, such as communication, literature, film, business management, statistics, political science, and law.

2. Procured a copy of each title and checked the completeness of the pages. The instructional materials covered by this discursive inquiry include: Media and Information Literacy: Empowering the Discerning Audiences (J. R. Alagaran II, 2019, Abiva Publishing House); From Cave to Cloud: Media and Information Literacy for Today (P. Campos, 2016, Phoenix Publishing); Media and Information Literacy (O. Cantor, 2019, Vibal Group); Media and Information Literacy (B. Liquigan, 2016, Diwa); Media and Information Literacy: Enhancing Education through Effective Communication (C.M. Magpile, 2016, Intelligent Publishing); Media and Information Literacy: Being a B.E.S.T. Digital Citizen for Senior High School. (J. Yuvienco, 2017, C&E Publishing); and

Media and Information Literacy (M.J. Zarate, 2016, Rex Bookstore).

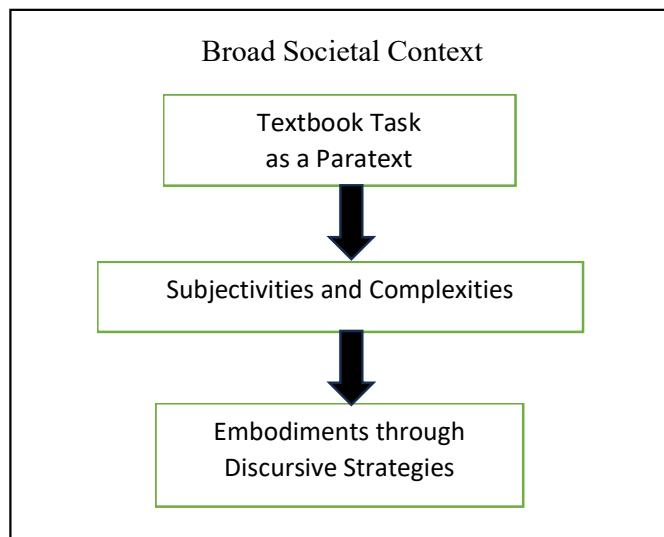
3. Skimmed and scanned the copies before proceeding with the close and critical reading of the text. The close and critical reading covered textbook task section of each chapter in every instructional material.

4. Coded and categorized the textbook tasks according to the discursive strategies adopted by the authors. The researcher iteratively went back and forth the texts to ensure plausibility and dependability in the process of sampling, classification, and analysis. In this social inquiry, particular attention is directed at the discursive function of questions, disdialectical rendering of concepts and precepts, collocation of specific textual qualifiers, and the correspondence of content and form in the discursive strategies.

5. Analyzed each discursive strategy based on its capacity to expose and interrogate social contradictions in media, education, and the broader development ecology as well as provided recommendations to up the ante in engendering criticality and agency.

As a paratext, the textbook tasks shall be textually and contextually analyzed by identifying and examining the discursive strategies that are interlaced and imbricated in the textbook questions and directions. In this context, paratext is defined as a text (i.e., textbook task) that surrounds the main text (i.e., textbook lessons). Paratext serves a complementary function to the main text by reinforcing its messages and meanings (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Subjectivities and Complexities of Textbook Tasks as Critical and Embodied Discourses



Specific emphasis is accorded to the textbook questions, instructions, and prompts that reflect the subjectivities and complexities of the authors' pedagogical values and discursive strategies. The whole explication is situated within the context of the broader development ecology characterized by polarization, differentiation, discrimination, stratification, and misrepresentation. Within the context of this critical inquiry, discourse is also viewed given its potential to tackle and transform undesirable social circumstances. Deliberately or otherwise, the failure to interrogate mainstream/orthodox discourse further secures its dominant position in the education sector, media industry, and the broader public sphere.

Result and Analysis

Based on the wide range of textbook tasks and learning activities covered, the following discursive strategies were observed either exclusively in specific textbook titles or broadly across all the seven instructional materials.

Divergent and Dialogic Questioning

Education specialist, Brenda Corpuz (2003) pointed out that questions of high-level, open-ended, and divergent type are crucial in improving the teaching-learning praxis and in the context of this critical communication inquiry such question type corresponds well with critical media literacy and pedagogy. Divergent questions allow the students to arrive at various answers and interpretations, enabling them to practice their critical, perceptive, and evaluative skills. These why- and how-type of questions are designed to be analytical and probing in character, which are particularly helpful in sharpening and enhancing the learners' critical perspective and practice. By answering this set of tasks below, for instance, students will apprehend the concept of 'people as media' in the specific socio-historical context of the role of *binukot* as preserver of family and community memories in Filipino ancient indigenous societies. Question of this nature is necessary in developing socio-historical analysis and in engendering critical self-reflectivity among the learners.

From the critical standpoint, the social practice of remembering and being nostalgic about particular people, places and practices essentially involved relationship of power and hence are determined by politico-ideological and socio-cultural biases. This task, however, can also be further developed to allow the students to make sense about the indigenous concept of nostalgia in comparison to/contrast with, say, the contemporary urban conception and experience.

"Think about nostalgia. In what form do you think could nostalgia for the past be understood in the time of the 'binukot,' if people then were ever nostalgic about something?" (Campos, 2016, p. 14)

In general, the textbook tasks produced by the authors may either be categorized as monologic or dialogic discourse. The discourse may be classified as monologic if the text is "authoritative" or dialogic when the meaning is "negotiated" (Bakhtin, 1986, as cited in O'Connor & Michaels, 2007). Viewed as a "transmission device," the monologic discourse functions to create homogenous experience and memory for the learners in sharp contrast with the dialogic discourse that acts as a "thinking device" allowing the creation of new and divergent meanings (Lotman, 1988, as cited in O'Connor & Michaels, 2007). Within the context of this qualitative media inquiry, the monologic tendencies of some textbook tasks can be effectively reconfigured to become dialogic in orientation by allowing the learners engaged with their co-learners within the class/campus and in the community through the dynamic and dialectical process of discovery, deliberation, and debate. Divergent meanings and interpretations can only be possible if the textbook tasks provide the learners with the opportunity to explore and examine the issues from various perspectives and positions. For instance, in this community dialogue task instantiated by Zarate (2016), the democratic representation in terms of industry, gender, and ethnicity was earnestly sought and invoked. Given the highly-stratified social structure in the Philippines, this requirement to apply diverse sectoral representation is a welcome initiative.

"Initiate a community dialogue... The ideal composite panel will have representations from various media industries: from small to big companies, and from print, broadcast, and web-based industries. Build a composite panel where all gender orientations can be represented, and if possible, even other ethnic groups." (Zarate, 2016, pp. 132-133)

While there is really a need to learn how media audience are categorized or segmented, it is equally important to pay critical attention to the way this classification is conceptualized and worded. In an activity by Zarate (2016, p. 67), the students were asked to "reflect on the words *baduy*, *jologs*, and *cheap* as words to describe audience preferences." In the Philippines cultural context, *baduy* and *jologs* are used as derogatory remarks that meant lacking in style and sophistication. The

follow-up question asking the learners if they “take these words seriously” is commendable because it will allow them to interrogate these social categories, especially with respect to their tendencies to promote multiple forms of discrimination on the bases of socio-economic status (i.e., class bias), culture (i.e., ethnic prejudice and cultural discrimination), and age (i.e., generational tension and chronocentrism).

Binary Opposition

Binary opposition (dualism) is an approach frequently used in examining an element or dimension of a social practice or social reality by relating or juxtaposing one against another. However, the use of binary opposition continues to be perceived with ambivalence. As a discursive strategy, it is potentially empowering and transformative when employed in revealing and interrogating social and structural inequities. However, binary opposition can also be disabling when instrumentalized to induce, reinforce, legitimize, and perpetuate prejudice (i.e., mindset) and discrimination (i.e., actual practice), particularly against the already vulnerable and disenfranchised.

By implication, when one concept or element is pitted against another, it creates an impression that they cannot go together. For instance, contrary to the common dualistic approach of perceiving independent film in the context of

how it differs from the mainstream counterpart, Liquigan (2016) sought to determine how they can actually “co-exist and complement each other” in terms of creative rendering and storytelling (e.g., “maindie”). This points to the pattern of convergence that can now be increasingly observed across various media platforms. However, in this confluence of elements, attributes, and forces, it is crucial to always ask whose interest between the mainstream and independent film dominates at the end of the day. Another inherent limitation of binary opposition is the failure to represent social realities in multiple categories (e.g., trichotomy, plurality, etc.).

The matrix of textbook tasks below also embodied binary opposition where the bases of comparison/contrast can be generally categorized in terms of the following renderings: superiority, dispensability, impact, attribute, representation, intention, and implication, with some implying patterns of convergence, co-existence, co-orientation, and contradiction. The comparisons and contrasts that were elicited foreground many dimensions of social reality in the Philippines politico-economic landscape such as digital divide, economic dualism, ethnic stereotype, generational conflict, and western hegemony which are, in fact, issues defined and influenced by discourse, ideology, and power (see Table 1).

Table 1. Binary Opposition

Elements/Entities/Processes	Bases of Comparison/Contrast	Authors
Hand-written text and word-processing technology	What the other may not be able to offer	Liquigan, 2016, p. 151
Web and mobile applications and traditional sources of information	If one can take the role of the other	Liquigan, 2016, p. 190
U-learning (ubiquitous learning) and traditional mode of learning	How does one impact the other	Liquigan, 2016, p. 104
Popular and scholarly source	When is one more useful than the other	Liquigan, 2016, p. 35
Broadsheet and tabloid	Variation in terms of creator, content, and consumer dimensions	Alagaran, 2019, p. 87
FM and AM	Aspects of similarities or differences	Liquigan, 2016, p. 40
Urban and rural landscapes	Intellectual and emotional effects of the comparison	Campos, 2016, p. 119
<i>Lumad</i> girl and city girl	Filmmaker's visualization	Campos, 2016, p. 120
Rich and poor dichotomy	Whether incidentally or intentionally rendered	Cantor, 2019, p. 203
American media and Al Jazeera	Differences of media depiction and the corresponding implications	Campos, 2016, p. 76
Oral and printed traditions	Differences on how the two social worlds narrate their past	Campos, 2016, p. 14
Book and radio	Quality of life in the society when dominated by a particular form of media in relation to another	Campos, 2016, p. 22
Book and television	Social condition when dominated by a particular form of media in relation to another	Campos, 2016, p. 22
Wisdom and information	Inherent and qualitative differences	Campos, 2016, p. 9
Independent and mainstream film	Techniques and thrusts	Liquigan, 2016, p. 182
Philippines and Western music	Similarities and differences in production and consumption	Yuvienco, 2017, p. 82

This discursive strategy is also reflected when media technologies are perceived with ambivalence and contradictory positions. The positive regard is identified with the myriad of benefits that they offer while the negative perception is associated with the set of dysfunctions that they bring about as consequences—intentionally or otherwise, to wit:

- Advantages and disadvantages of media and information use (Alagaran, 2019, p. 24)
- Advantages and disadvantages of technology (Liquigan, 2016, p. 106)

- Benefits and pitfalls of wikis as information sources (Liquigan, 2016, p. 106)

- Media technology's effect on enhancing or deteriorating people's memory (Campos, 2016, p. 9)

- Ambivalence of media message (Campos, 2016, p. 105)

- Ethics (i.e., rightness or wrongness) of cybercrime law (Liquigan, 2016, p. 94)

Dialectical Positioning

In relation to binary opposition, the discursive strategy employed by the authors

involves the dialectical positioning of elements and entities. In this first case, the textbook task below foregrounds the positioning of the learners in relation to other stakeholders in a dialectical pattern, thereby promoting both self-awareness and other-awareness. The textbook task in question also reveals the sharp divide that characterizes the relationship between the tourists and the local municipal and subsistence fisherfolks in terms of material and non-material considerations. In particular, this strategy will allow the students to take into consideration their social positions and the social situatedness of the other sectors in the society whenever they create or consume any media content. In the second entry, on the other hand, the dialectical positioning is framed as an act of resistance to orthodox media perspectives, persuasions, and practices.

“Do you think that vacationing by the sea is really “the life”? Why does uploading on social media incline us toward writing such posts? Will the people who do not go to the beach for their vacation but actually live by the sea, such as fisherfolk, share our sentiment?” (Campos, 2016, p. 60)

“What are the means by which media and information texts from television, print, radio and the internet glorify negative behaviors? What have I done to resist?” (Zarate, 2016, p. 96)

Dialectical positioning as a discursive strategy aims to enable the learners to locate themselves in the social schema, thereby making them realize that they are not merely passive social entities and that they, in fact, can affect and are also, in turn, affected by other individuals and social groups surrounding them, and that, ultimately, they can act upon these dialectical encounters with strong political resolve, efficacy, and agency. From the ideological standpoint, this presupposes that media consumers can assertively position themselves as *active audience* who are in an empowered stance to hold out against prevailing pattern of cultural decadence and epistemic violence in mainstream (read: lamestream) media.

Collocation of ‘Social’ as a Form of Contextualization

The specific task of introducing the students to concepts such as “social computing, social software, and social bookmarking” (Yuvienco, 2017) and then asking them to add more to this “social list” is remarkable. This learning activity will allow the students to contextualize the technical and technological concepts in relation and as applied to social behaviors, processes, and interactions. In fact,

from this expanding list, a preliminary glossary can even be started and developed. The practice of socially contextualizing the terminologies from other technical areas was earlier observed in the coinage of the terms such as social entropy and social catalyst, among others. The task in question, however, can still be enhanced by incorporating the critical perspective in apprehending the substantive area of information and communication technologies (ICT), e.g., critical social computing, critical social analytics, and critical social cybersecurity, among others. Through this discursive strategy, the students will not only be able to adopt and expand the use of the concepts to the social realm but to also make critical sense of the overt and covert power relations involved. This ontological assumption asserts that the technological and digital realms have social and sociological bases and are, therefore, influenced and underpinned also by ideological biases of certain groups.

A thorough review of the tasks across the textbook titles also revealed numerous terminologies being collocated with the qualifier “social,” namely: “social groups, social media site/app, social good, social awareness, social development, social issue, social responsibility, social problem, social network, social science, social interest, social lives, social responsibility, social context, socially relevant, social services, social necessity, social forces, social participation, social task, social movement, and social construction of reality” (Alagaran, 2019; Campos, 2016; Cantor, 2019; Liquigan, 2016; Magpile, 2016; Yuvienco, 2017; Zarate, 2016). This points to the immense potential of media and information literacy in contributing to the broadening and deepening of social and sociological analysis, and vice versa. This pattern of complementarity is favorable to media and information literary and social justice education, especially when the empowering frameworks and approaches of both fields of inquiry are mutually adopted and employed in enhancing the pedagogical praxis.

Omission and Exclusion

Whether intended or otherwise, omission (or exclusion) is one of the discursive strategies employed by the authors in the politico-communicative act of textbook task formulation. This is manifested in the approach whereby pressing development issues as subjects of inquiry and debate are missed out or ignored in the textbook tasks. Excluding the most relevant and pressing issues will render the objective of critically analyzing the “economic, education, social and political” challenges in media and information literacy as well as the associated “threats, risks, abuse and misuse” in media practice fragmentary, incoherent, and wanting to a great

extent (Department of Education, 2013). Within the context of the Philippines social realities, among the politically charged and hence highly ideological development issues that were not instantiated and incorporated as contexts and sub-contexts that could have further enriched the substantive dimension of the textbook tasks are chronic hunger, urban poverty, land-use conversion, communist insurgency, and judicial reform imperative.

Two authors devoted a substantive and critical discussion about media killings in the main text (Campos, 2016 and Cantor, 2019); however, it was only Campos (2016) who incorporated a learning activity pertaining to this human right issue in the textbook task section. In this particular task, Campos (2016, pp 186-187) inquired the students about the number of journalists in the country who have been murdered “in the line of duty.” The author also asked about the “patterns of violence” across countries and, consistent with the progressive orientation of critical praxis, he then inquired the learners about what concrete action should be taken given the available researched information about media killings. The instantiation of the pervasive culture of impunity in connection with journalist killings for class deliberation, analysis, and action-taking is contributory to the promotion of human rights and social justice education and must also be encouraged for general adoption. In 2016, the Philippines ranked second as the most dangerous place for journalists and, considering its gravity, media killing qualifies as a legitimate media-related issue that necessitates serious examination, inquiry, and position-taking.

Given the prevalence of armed conflict, MIL’s role in social justice education and peacebuilding becomes even more pressing. From the critical standpoint, long-lasting peace is not possible if it is not based on social justice (i.e., just peace). However, it was only Campos (2016) who touched on the peace process in Mindanao pointing out how this development issue is being eclipsed by the sensationalized reporting of celebrity news in mainstream media.

Omission strategy is observed when pressing and hot-button issues are excluded in the instantiated points of debate, topics of media production or backdrops of context-based exercise in the textbook tasks, thereby creating a wrong notion about the problem’s non-existence, non-importance, and non-urgency. This discursive strategy can also be interpreted as a reflection of the author’s (1) valuation of the degree of importance and urgency of the development and policy issues, (2) political stance on matters of public interest, and/or (3) perception about the students’ social readiness and political maturity to tackle and deal with complex and sensitive social issues.

Double Legitimization

Apart from the wide variety of learning activities that the textbook authors require the students to perform and act upon, they also provide supplementary reading and viewing tasks. Customarily, the reading and audio-visual materials that the authors recommend also reflect their discursive orientation. The practice of providing and invoking supplementary academic resources leads to the mutual reinforcement of the textbook itself and the accompanying complementary materials, thereby bringing about *double legitimization*. Double legitimization, in the context of this study, pertains to the phenomenon where the academic reputation of the authors and the influence and authority of the institutions and individuals they invoke lend credence to each other’s ‘cultural capital,’ ‘symbolic capital,’ and ‘institutionally derived rights’ (Bonvillain, 2008). Double legitimization, therefore, refers to the complementation of the legitimacy of the textbook authors born out of their qualification as scholars, researchers, and practitioners in relation to the influence and authority of the institutions/individuals that they recommend as supplementary texts in the tasks and learning activities. Along this line, alternative media pedagogy is conceived to be accomplished by simultaneously interposing a critical theme, a sharp line of questioning, and a complementary enrichment material.

Cases in point are the materials from the following institutional sources being proposed and instantiated for reference and analysis: Center for Media Literacy (Zarate, 2016), UNESCO (Alagaran, 2019; Yuvienco, 2017), Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism (Campos, 2016), Rappler (Magpile, 2016), Center for Media Freedom and Responsibility (Campos, 2016), Reporters Without Borders (Campos, 2016), Committee to Protect Journalist (Campos, 2016), and International Press Institute (Campos, 2016), among others. By invoking this above-cited list of media institutions, the authors are able to foreground and introduce among the students the following mutually reinforcing advocacy agenda: people empowerment, media freedom, independent journalism, human rights, and democratic space.

Legitimization therefore must be socio-historically and socio-politically situated and, as underscored by van Leeuwen (2007, p. 92), a “decontextualized study of legitimization is not possible” as it always involves the “legitimation of the practices of specific institutional orders.” Within the parameter of this social inquiry, the institutional orders would constitute the contending social forces and arrangements in the education, media, and development realms.

Popular in Form and Social in Rendering

In an ingenious attempt to promote social relevance and critical thought among the young learners, some textbook authors devised ways to do so through popular means and approaches. For instance, there are tasks which require the students to apply their learning within the context and format of mainstream and popular culture (e.g., television noontime variety show) that involves incorporating socially relevant contents (Magpile, 2016). While this approach has its merits (e.g., integration of family values), the effort might be compromised by the prevailing decadent culture that is all-too-common in mainstream media. This dilemma reflects what Campos (2016, p. 87) raised as “messages that will be hard to communicate given only conventional media form.” In the specific context of this research, it pertains to the discursive alternatives that will be difficult to articulate and accomplish employing only the orthodox pedagogical strategies. From the critical standpoint, this discursive strategy (i.e., popular in form and social in rendering) may only be considered as a *transition* that must eventually be reconfigured and redesigned as coherently alternative in both form and content.

A political advocacy promoting an anti-bigotry standpoint is embodied in one of the academic tasks by Yuvienco (2017) which enjoins online gamers to participate in the social cause. The website which he featured seeks to contribute to the goal of ending the use of stigmatizing, discriminatory, and hateful language in online games. This popular in form and social in content approach in advocacy work possesses a huge potential in the promotion of ethical and responsible media use, especially among the youth. In relation to the approach of examining and problematizing online games, the task that requires learners to apply game studies to Facebook Gameroom and Dinomaster is also an effective media text analysis for students. As a form of media criticism, this task involves the analysis of online games in their respective socio-technological and socio-historical contexts.

For his part, Liquigan (2016, p. 44) required the student in his context-based exercise to assume the role of a radio disc jockey who needs to reconceptualize the radio show into a “more informative and educational” format. Apart from the format, the learners are also required to take into consideration the language, target listeners (i.e., teenagers ages 13-16), time slot, and segments, among others, as key socio-demographic considerations.

A question that adopts a popular topic and incorporates social and sociological analysis is this one by Campos (2016, p. 8) asking the students why ghost stories typically involve “search for justice.” This perceptive question is very helpful in

revealing what the researcher believes to be the dysfunctional character of the country’s criminal justice system (i.e., law enforcement, prosecution, court, penology, and community) such that in the creative storylines ghosts are typically rendered and depicted as instrumental in resolving criminal investigation and in seeking/achieving justice.

“Why are ghost stories which feature mediums as characters typically about the search for justice?” (Campos 2016, p. 7)

“How is the genre of horror a suitable vehicle for a story about injustice?” (Campos 2016, p. 92)

Conceivably, the popular in form and social in rendering can be considered as an innovative strategy that seeks to appeal to the social sensibilities of the youth by mainstreaming development discourses and social advocacies through the interposition of popular and contemporary format and style.

Instantiation of Alternative Media

Information is a vital resource in the life of an individual and in the existence of an institution. As such, it is necessary that media and information literacy students not only understand the variety of available information but also the contending ideological standpoints of their sources. This is especially crucial on issues with reference to highly contentious and polarizing development debates. Within this context, students need to be also exposed and initiated to alternative sources of information and analyses about global, national, and local affairs. This will allow them to examine the development issues from various perspectives, dimensions, and levels of analysis. Towards this end, learners need to develop the skills of locating, understanding, analyzing, and evaluating alternative media contents and information sources. Some of these alternative resources are introduced through the textbook tasks as required or supplementary reading materials. In the case of Campos (2016, pp. 69 and 76-77), he provided Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism (PCIJ) and Al Jazeera as alternative resources upon which the students will base their reflection on making sense of these media institutions’ valuable contributions in providing countervailing perspectives on development and policy issues. With reference to PCIJ, Campos (2016) interposed this very perceptive question below about the value of independent media organizations.

“What kind of information will we be shielded from if such organizations did not independently construct their media messages?” (Zarate, 2016, p. 69)

Strategic approach is needed in countering the inimical effects of mainstream media to the public's psyche and perspective. However, this effort must begin by enabling the learners to clearly understand the transgressive and transformative attributes of alternative media. Consistent with the critical standpoint, alternative media is conceived by the authors in the following dimensions and interpretations, i.e., a means to communicate alternative messages that may be difficult to do so in conventional media (Campos, 2016, pp. 86-87); "radical in content-political or cultural-as well as strong aesthetic form" (Atton, 2001, as cited in Zarate, 2016, pp. 124-125); "in-depth, contextualized and hard-hitting" in approach (Campos, 2016, p. 69); contains "new ideas, new forms and new outlets for creative expression" (Zarate, 2016, p. 94); and non-mainstream that "challenge the status quo" (Zarate, 2016, p. 94). These representations and depictions suggest that alternative content can only be most effectively and appropriately articulated through alternative media, presupposing that content and form therefore must be consistent and coherent in their progressive expressions and embodiments.

In accordance with this counter-tradition, Campos (2016, p. 69) enjoins the learners to make critical sense of how "alternative media organizations" such as the Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism (PCIJ) is able to commit itself to "in-depth, contextualized, and hard-hitting" reporting which regrettably is not the norm in Philippine media's commercial mainstream. The students are also tasked to ascertain if the earlier assessment of PCIJ in 2000 about Philippine media still holds true in the contemporary setting, thereby allowing them to analyze if there were positive changes that took place (i.e., development), if the condition remained much of the same (i.e., status quo), or if the situation has only worsened (i.e., deterioration and decay).

In a task by Zarate (2016, p. 94), she asked the student to interview independent media creators about how they struggled to produce and disseminate films despite the limitations posed by (1) financial constraint, (2) crowding out effects of mainstream films, and (3) the restrictive conventional platforms. Through this task, Zarate was able to highlight how alternative artists assert their presence to "push for new ideas, new forms and new outlets" and "challenge the status quo" despite the persistent structural drawbacks.

Through this set of reflective questions, Campos (2016, pp. 86-87) makes the learners realize about the usefulness of "familiar media conventions" in making media content more easily accessible and intelligible to the public. However, he is also deeply concerned about how these familiar media conventions marginalize and

undermine alternative messages that do not fit the traditional frame and format. Corollary to this is his follow up question about how the audience are only likely to be responsive and accommodating to familiar media form and content, thereby crowding out non-mainstream and unfamiliar media messages. Another relevant but challenging question posed by Campos (2016) is inquiring the students about specific media message that they can think of which will be "hard to communicate given only conventional media form." This profound question runs parallel with the contention of the research at hand which argues that alternative discourses are best discerned, embodied, and pursued through alternative pedagogies.

Summary and Conclusion

A discursive strategy is both intentional and methodical, aimed at fulfilling the authors' politico-communicative objectives. It even becomes more purposive when the set of discursive strategies is employed and deployed for a textbook task functioning as a didactic form of media. Based on this research, among the observed discursive strategies that were adopted include (1) divergent and dialogic questioning, (2) binary opposition, (3) dialectical positioning, (4) 'social' as a form of contextualization, (5) omission and exclusion, (6) double legitimization, (7) popular in form and social in rendering, and (8) instantiation of alternative media. Correspondingly, these discursive strategies contribute to both the reproduction of and resistance to the dominant perspectives and practices by critical questioning, dichotomizing, positioning, contextualizing, (de)emphasizing, complementing, popularizing, and interrogating specific elements and dimensions of social realities. This set of discursive strategies represents the political resolve of the textbook authors to tackle and transform the widespread condition of monopolies, orthodoxies, and exclusions in various dimensions and levels of human engagement.

By way of dialogical questioning, critical dichotomizing and divergent positioning, the textbook tasks are able to foreground the complexities and contradictions of social, institutional, and state relations. By means of social contextualization and substantive complementation, the content is accorded deeper level of sociological analysis. By paying perceptive attention to the excluded/omitted dimensions, critical education stakeholders become circumspect of what textbook authors tend to emphasize and/or de-emphasize, thereby providing an opportunity to redress this oversight/gap. By adopting popular formats in rendering the critical content, the young learners are introduced to the prevailing social and sectoral issues. Ideally, this then must transition into an arrangement that

interrogates both mainstream content and form and that also engenders a coherently alternative discourse and pedagogy.

Based on the foregoing discursive analysis, the textbook tasks broadly possess strong pluralist ideology as reflected by the multisectoral and multistakeholder dimensions that these assessment instruments seek to privilege and establish. Corollary to this is the social practice of introducing and invoking supplementary materials produced by media and civil society organizations with strong democratic and human rights commitment. A consistent pattern of dualism was also foregrounded to depict the dialectical relationship between the social forces in the development sector, thereby revealing and interrogating the prevailing complexities and contradictions in the broad societal currents.

As a counterweight to orthodox learning, textbook authors sought to strategically employ both traditional and non-traditional media platforms in mainstreaming alternative voices, discourses, and pedagogies. Based on the subthemes that emerged, the discourses on alternative media are identified to possess the following coherent and mutually reinforcing attributes, namely: (1) radical in both form and content, (2) critical and contextualized, and (3) heterodox and counterhegemonic. This is consistent with the parallel strategy of interposing a textbook task that fulfills both the counter-discursive and counter-pedagogical criteria.

Etymologically, the term “text” came from the Latin word “textus” which means “tissue” or “woven.” Drawing inspiration from Barthes, scholars Branston and Stafford (2010) explicated that “narrative texts were not one thing but a weaving together of different strands and processes,” some being “internal to the story, others make connections to its outside.” This is most certainly the case with reference to textbook task conceptualization, which is also an interweaving of diverse discourses and discursive strategies, with attributes that are internal and external to the discursive practices and processes and may turn out also as consistent or inconsistent and convergent or divergent with each other. Conceiving the social practice of task design as a genre, Wang (2006, p. 65) pointed out that genre possesses both the characters of *conservativeness* and *creativity* because of being “relatively stable and at the same time open to change.” Essentially, these *hybridities* and *subjectivities* that the authors embody and articulate in the textbook tasks cannot be divorced from their intellectual history, pedagogical orientation, and social milieu.

Doyle (1983, as cited in Anderson-Bakken, Jegstad & Bakken, 2020) argued that textbook tasks shape the learning process of the students by (1) “directing their attention” to the specific substantive dimensions of the lesson and (2) “specifying ways

of processing information” to respond to the questions and perform the role assignments. Based on how the authors frame their textbook tasks through various discursive techniques, they then are also able to condition and shape how learners should “think, act, and reason” (Anderson-Bakken, Jegstad & Bakken, 2020).

Consistent with Foucault’s conception of ‘subject position,’ the authors effectively mediated how the learners should problematize and challenge the society’s hierarchical positioning and categorical representation of various social groups in media and the broader social ecology through their instantiated textbook tasks. In accordance with this productive attribute of discourse and the transformative mission of critical media literacy, textbook tasks were strategically employed to expose social disparities, oppose social structures of oppression, and, more crucially, propose alternative social and communication order.

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