

Comparative Analysis of Philippine Newspaper Editorials

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Abstract: This research aimed at making a comparative analysis of editorials that fit the inclusive criteria. Employing the descriptive qualitative research design, the study determined the type of the editorial and the obligatory structures present. Analysis and interpretation on the corpus of the study classified the materials as Editorial of Argumentation and the other Editorial of Criticism. Sample A used a more catchy two-word phrase to present the entirety of the arguments as contrast to sample B which used a simple and usual phrase to present the wholeness of the arguments. The arguments of Sample A cater to all three rhetorical appeals by using prominent experts to talk on the issue, citing the extensive dangers of the project and using figures and facts to enhance credibility. Sample A used all five obligatory structures namely : *Headline, Background Information, Addressing an issue, Argumentation, and Articulating a position in comparison to the other editorial* which used only three of the obligatory structures.

Keywords— Comparative Analysis, Editorials, Obligatory Structures, Generic Structure Potential, Environmental Issue

Introduction

Boracay, a world-famous tourist destination which has consistently been voted as the best beach in the world for many years, has been restricted to tourists for six months, starting in April 2018, after Pres. Rodrigo R. Duterte ordered “total closure”[1] as he was infuriated by commercial establishments violating environmental laws and turned the said beach into, as the President said, a “cesspool” [2]. The effort of rehabilitating the beach was productive and thus, yielded positive reactions from the people. Months after, the government through the initiative of the environment secretary embarked on another clean-up drive. Dredging and cleaning campaigns on a planned 7-year “Save Manila Bay” program kicked off in January 2019 to rehabilitate Manila Bay[3].

However, the operations of sucking the dirt and removing accumulated wastes to name a few were seen by some as not just environmentally- driven effort but also politically-driven. Specifically, with the passing of Executive Order 74 by President Rodrigo Duterte on February 2019, transferring the Philippine Reclamation Authority (PRA) to the Office of the President delegating to the PRA governing board the power of the president to authorize reclamation projects [4]. Since then, after the approval of reclamation projects throughout the length of Manila Bay, the Philippine Reclamation Authority (PRA) was inundated with a number of applications to develop more land along the coastline. Property developers and local government units (LGUs) are vying for a piece of the booming real estate market in the so-called Bay Area [5].

Following this issue were opinion and editorial articles from different Philippine Daily Newspapers that either criticize or commend the current administration on this rehabilitation project. Two of these articles were an editorial entitled “Reclamation Craze” by the *Philippine Daily Inquirer* and a column, “Pros and Cons of Manila Bay reclamation” published in *The Manila Bulletin*.

The Philippine Daily Inquirer, which has been publishing for more than three decades, is one of the most widely circulated newspapers in the Philippines. It is distinguished by different award-giving bodies and committed to deliver “

balance news, fearless views” to readers when and where it matters [6].

Despite the credibility it had amassed, this newspaper is seen to be critical of President Duterte’s administration. Accordingly, it had all started during his first State of the Nation Address (SONA) in 2016, when he decried the *Inquirer’s* famous [Pieta-like front page photo](#) of a victim of the war on drugs[7] and thereafter threw successive attacks to, according to Duterte, “bullshit” *Inquirer* over unfair news.

In its editorial entitled “Reclamation Craze” last February 2019, the *Inquirer* exhort the masses that the Manila-bay clean-up project was just a front for other ulterior motives. That beneath the jubilant pictures, however, there appears to be something more to the Manila Bay rehabilitation program than meets the eye [8]. That is, to rehabilitate the area for reclamation projects.

The author tried to appeal to the reason citing the different permitted reclamation projects of the PRA and significant figures attached to the reclamation ventures.

It had also appealed to the emotions by quoting former environment secretary saying that reclamation projects would be “catastrophic for all of us” and environmental sciences luminary/ geologist on the detrimental effects of reclamation. The editorial article ended leaving a question to the public as to the action of the country’s head of state of signing EO 74 and thus delegating to the Office of the President the power to authorize reclamation projects.

Two months after, the Manila Bulletin, through its columnist, Floro Mercene published the “Pros and Cons of Manila Bay reclamation” laying down the positive and negative effects of land reclamation purely based on science devoid of politics and emotions [9].

The Manila Bulletin is the country’s second-oldest newspaper, having been published for more than a hundred years. Through fairness, accuracy, and features, as well as keeping the public fully informed during the most difficult and hard periods, it has lived up to its reputation as a “exponent of Philippine growth.” [10]. The writer, on the other hand, is a regular columnist of Manila Bulletin residing in California, USA.

The article began by stating that reclamation can in fact be beneficial if it obeys sound engineering practices and the simple steps of achieving so. The cons of a “no-reclamation” scenario follows after implying that it could pose challenges on the environment department and other government agencies. The writer took his stand in favoring of the issue at the end part of the discourse stating that Manila Bay reclamation should see the successful reclamation projects around the world as a learning experience and even a source of inspiration.

As cited by [11] There are only a few substantial works on the rhetorical structure of (English) newspaper editorials that have been published (see, e.g., Bolivar, 1994; Sugiura, 1996; Riazi & Assar, 2000). As Connor (1996, p. 144) puts it: Research on [newspaper] editorials is significant even if ESL students do not become editorial writers for, in most cases, they are readers of editorials. In all countries, good editorials are regarded as some of the best examples of persuasive writing; they set the bar for written persuasion. At the present time, little is known about this genre. The goal of the research was to determine the type to which the selected editorials fall under and the obligatory structures contained in them.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study was conducted to make a comparative rhetoric analysis of two editorial articles on the same issue. Specifically, it presented the type of editorial used; the obligatory structures used in the editorial; and comparison of the editorials in terms of their type and obligatory structures.

METHODOLOGY

The descriptive qualitative method was utilized for this study. It was used to identify the type of editorial used and the obligatory structures used in each editorial article.

Two editorial articles on one issue from two different publications were used in this study.

To gather data needed in the study, the researcher selected two editorial articles and analyzed the editorials determining their types, their obligatory structures and their comparison. Selection of the editorials was carried out on the basis of the following inclusive criteria: published within the same time period; discuss one issue; taken from leading national newspapers; and written in English.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Types of Editorial

Utilizing the types of editorial identified in Journ Society, the editorial published by the Philippine Daily Inquirer entitled “Reclamation Craze” can be categorized as an editorial of argumentation.

The Journ Society describes an argumentative editorial as one in which the editor makes a case to persuade the reader to agree with his or her position on a topic. Unlike the editorial of criticism, this type does not present the pros and cons of the issue but the writer takes one side of the issue and presents arguments to influence the readers to believe the viewpoint.

Initially in the editorial, the writer gives a background information on the issue. In the third paragraph, the writer affirmed *an arguable premise or claim* stating that what the public believes may not appear to be as straightforward as it appears to be.

“Last month, hundreds of government workers and volunteers trooped bright and early to Roxas Boulevard to kick off a three-year, P42.95-billion program to rehabilitate Manila Bay.”

“The week that followed saw photos of the “newly rehabilitated” bay getting hosannas on social media, followed by hordes of Filipinos trooping to swim in the waters and enjoy the garbage-free shoreline.”

“Beneath the jubilant pictures, however, there appears to be something more to the Manila Bay rehabilitation program than meets the eye.”

In the paragraphs that follow, the writer explored the arguable premise or claim by providing facts and evidence. In the following excerpt, the writer discusses a significant event which could make the readers doubt the aims of the rehabilitation project.

“Just five days after the cleanup launch, Malacañang issued Executive Order No. 74, which transferred the Philippine Reclamation Authority (PRA) to the direct control and supervision of the Office of the President — to “rationalize the approval process for reclamation projects toward an economically and environmentally sustainable resource development,” according to the EO.”

“The move has raised not a few eyebrows, since one of the reclamation projects already approved by the PRA is the 265-hectare project called Pasay Harbor City, led by known Duterte supporter and campaign donor Dennis Uy.”

Facts, evidences and different points of view from experts were also used to explore the arguable premise or claim. The writer quoted prominent individuals to emphasize the claim that these projects could be harmful to the people.

“Literal admitted that these reclamation projects would affect what’s left of the Manila Bay ecosystem, but that measures are supposedly being put in place to mitigate the adverse effect.”

“Former environment secretary and Buhay Rep. Lito Atienza was far less blasé, warning that further large-scale reclamation would be “catastrophic for all of us.”

“Kelvin S. Rodolfo, professor emeritus of earth and environmental sciences at the University of Illinois, has said in no uncertain terms that massive reclamation projects in Manila Bay — the waters of which reach Cavite, Parañaque, Pasay, Manila, Navotas, Bulacan, Pampanga and Bataan — will put these areas at risk of destructive phenomena such as soil liquefaction, subsidence and storm surges.”

Some lines from the quoted statement appealed to the emotions.

“The massive flooding in Navotas, for instance, stemmed from a reclamation project there, he said, adding that ‘there seems to be a reclamation craze in the Philippines’ and that the PRA seems more inclined to approve rather than disapprove projects whose proponents trumpet potential revenues and job generation while failing to disclose the possible environmental impact such projects may cost the cities and communities around the bay.”

“Rising water levels could see coastal communities displaced by floods or giant waves, while the physical alteration of the bay will destroy its marine ecosystem, which the multibillion-peso cleanup was supposed to protect in the first place.”

“In his 2014 study, ‘On the geological hazards that threaten existing and proposed reclamation of Manila Bay,’ Rodolfo said ‘the ongoing rush to execute several of these projects is alarming in how little its proponents seem to understand the littoral environment, and their seeming indifference to the hazards it poses... It seems that science is again being blithely ignored by the financial interests and government authorities promoting the various reclamation projects. Will we never learn?’”

The editorial further tries to convince readers to believe in viewpoint presented by including a powerful question and emphasizing the benefits that the majority and the community could get.

“Will we never learn?”

That official endorsement of reclamation, however, came unaccompanied by the necessary environmental and other studies that would assure the people of these cities that the zeal of their City Halls for creating more ersatz real estate out of the bay would not, in fact, rebound only to a few while proving detrimental to the larger community.”

“Forgoing the short-term gains of big-ticket commercial development for a sustainable and viable way of life for the people, and even the businesses, around the bay ought to be the vision of enlightened political leaders.”

“Absent that, the communities themselves must ask for it, for their own sake.”

“As Rodolfo put it: ‘If the wishes and opposition of enough people prevail so reclamations do not proceed, some of the greatest beneficiaries will be its wealthy proponents, even if they do not realize it now.’”

The editorial article ended leaving a punch-up question slamming the action of President Duterte of signing EO 74 which gives authority to the Office of the President to allow reclamation projects.

“But, as it happens, those 22 or so critical reclamation projects have now become, under EO 74, the sole discretion of the President. What gives?”

Pros and Cons of the Manila bay reclamation

The second opinion-editorial published by Manila Bulletin can be classified as an editorial of criticism. Journalism and Mass Communication Society as cited by Abao, J. (2018) describes an editorial of criticism as one that highlights the positive and negative aspects of a topic or scenario discussed in the news that concerns and intrigues readers. Its goal is to persuade. The writer frequently employs the scientific approach, which entails describing a problem, reviewing all relevant information, and tentatively proposing a remedy.

The headline alone gives the readers an instant impression that the opinion-editorial identifies the positive and negative aspects of the issue.

In presenting the positive side of the issue the writer gives a background as to why Manila bay needs to be rehabilitated citing the factors that causes it to be heavily polluted

“From scientific basis devoid of politics and emotions, land reclamation can in fact complement accompanying rehabilitation.”

“Manila Bay is heavily polluted from the refuse coming from major tributaries like Pasig, Paranaque, and Tullahan Rivers, and about 20 other rivers.”

“Manila Bay is also the outlet for esteros, refuse from Informal settlers, and untreated sewage from business establishments.”

Identification of possible ways on properly reclaiming the place in accordance to sound engineering practices helps strengthen the idea that Metro Manila would in fact benefit from the project.

Undergoing organized clean-up and water management, mobilization of both public and private sectors, and providing adequate fund were identified as ways in properly carrying-out the project.

“First, we must remove years of deposited silt, garbage, and scraps from the sea bed.”

“This could be done by providing centralized and controlled waste water management thru engineered drainage system and by institutionalizing organized responsibilities for the control of sewage pollution.”

“The LGUs, in joint-venture arrangement with the private sector, could carry out the Manila Bay rehabilitation more effectively. Funds for environmental protection could be adequately provided.”

“Moreover since the ‘mandamus’ on Manila Bay places responsibilities on the LGUs,...the mandamus can be more effectively carried out.”

Inherent to the editorial of criticism, arguments on the issue’s disadvantages are also being presented by the writer. The writer contends that without reclamation, preserving the quality of Manila bay, limiting the “mandamus” role of the local government to take part in fulfilling a certain duty, resolving other obstacles and challenges attached to the issue would continue to be burdens of the government

“Without reclamation the socio-economic development plans of urban communities will necessarily be instituted on shore. Assuming contiguous land are available for a realistic development plan, serious obstacles are seen, like maintaining the quality of Manila bay.”

“There is extreme difficulty bordering on incapability of the various locators of this on-shore based development plans in complying with Department Admin. Order 2016-18.”

Issues on Right-of-Way for the drainage system are also potential challenges.

“The LGUs will not be integral part of the organization that will implement the waste water management system, thus emasculating their otherwise effective role. Their role in the exercise of the “mandamus” will also be limited.”

“Without a central institution monitoring individual sources of waste water discharges, that would create formidable challenges even to the DENR.”

To end the article, the writer left a recommendation that the reclamation project in the country should mirror and take inspiration from the successful projects of other countries.

“The voluminous evidence of successful reclamation projects in the world like New York, Shanghai, Hong Kong, Dubai, and Singapore, to name a few, should be a learning experience and also source of inspiration for Manila Bay reclamation.”

Obligatory Structures of the Editorials

Headline

Analysis on the organization of the editorials is based on Ansary and Babaii’s (n.d.) Obligatory Structures of Editorials. In their study, “The Generic Integrity of Newspaper Editorials: A Systemic Functional Perspective”, they identified five obligatory structures of editorials. These are the Headline, Background Information, Addressing an Issue, Argumentation, and Articulating a Position.

Sample A, which is the editorial article from the Philippine Daily Inquirer is a powerful two-word phrase short but strong enough to capture the entirety of the arguments. It implies that there seems to be a fad or obsession for reclamation.

Reclamation Craze

On the other hand, Sample B can be categorized as a direct headline which according to Bly’s Copywriter’s Handbook is a headline that goes straight to the heart of the matter. It is a one-liner headline that uses a familiar phrase “pros and cons” which clearly presents the entirety of the write-up which is to present the arguments for and against the issue.

Pros and Cons of the Manila Bay reclamation

Addressing an Issue

The “lead” of the Sample A presents the “news peg”. This indicates that there exists an issue which must be

debated upon. In the following lines, the issue is established together with the background information which helps achieve the strength of the paper or the article itself.

“Last month, hundreds of government workers and volunteers trooped bright and early to Roxas Boulevard to kick off a three-year, P42.95-billion program to rehabilitate Manila Bay.”

“The week that followed saw photos of the “newly rehabilitated” bay getting hosannas on social media, followed by hordes of Filipinos trooping to swim in the waters and enjoy the garbage-free shoreline. Beneath the jubilant pictures, however, there appears to be something more to the Manila Bay rehabilitation program than meets the eye.”

Sample B, however, does not give background information on the issue. Instead, the author implies his stand on the issue-in favor of reclamation- for it could in fact be beneficial for the place.

Argumentation

Both editorial articles as well satisfy another obligatory structure which is Argumentation. Specifically, Sample A presented arguments to justify and refute the standpoint on the issue while Sample B presented both sides of the issue.

Arguments against the reclamation project have been produced to persuade the readers that the Manila-bay clean-up project was just a front for other ulterior motives. However, it appears that there is more to the Manila Bay recovery program than meets the eye beneath the jubilant photographs (PDI, 2019). That is, to rehabilitate the area for reclamation projects.

In the following lines from Sample A, the author tried to appeal to the reason citing the different approved reclamation projects of the PRA and significant figures attached to the reclamation ventures.

“The move has raised not a few eyebrows, since one of the reclamation projects already approved by the PRA is the 265-hectare project called Pasay Harbor City, led by known Duterte supporter and campaign donor Dennis U.”

“But that’s just one project; some 22 other Manila Bay reclamation ventures are pending before the PRA, revealed Joseph Literal, PRA assistant general manager, at a hearing on Manila Bay’s rehabilitation at the House of Representatives on Monday.”

Lines from Sample B tried to appeal to the emotions by quoting former environment secretary saying that reclamation projects would be “catastrophic for all of us” and environmental sciences luminary/ geologist and PRA assistant manager during the hearing of Manila Bay’s rehabilitation on the detrimental effects of reclamation.

“Former environment secretary and Buhay Rep. Lito Atienza was far less blasé, warning that further large-scale reclamation would be “catastrophic for all of us.”
“Literal admitted that these reclamation projects would affect what’s left of the Manila Bay ecosystem, but that measures are supposedly being put in place to mitigate the adverse effects.”
“Kelvin S. Rodolfo, professor emeritus of earth and environmental sciences at the University of Illinois, has said in no uncertain terms that massive reclamation projects in Manila Bay — the waters of which reach Cavite, Parañaque, Pasay, Manila, Navotas, Bulacan, Pampanga and Bataan — will put these areas at risk of destructive phenomena such as soil liquefaction, subsidence and storm surges.”

The use of Pathos as a rhetorical techniques can also be clearly identified in sample A as the arguments included prominent experts in the field such as former environment secretary, environmental specialist and geologist based in United State and an official of PRA.

Sample B on the other hand, began presenting arguments in favor of the issue by stating that reclamation can in fact be beneficial if it obeys sound engineering practices and the simple steps of achieving so.

“Manila Bay is heavily polluted from the refuse coming from major tributaries like Pasig, Paranaque, and Tullahan Rivers, and about 20 other rivers.”
“Manila Bay is also the outlet for esteros, refuse from Informal settlers, and untreated sewage from business establishments.”

The argument, however, lacks supporting evidences based on facts such as valid examples from successful reclamations and specific ways by which the local government could implement the projects when it presented the possible ways of doing the reclamation following good engineering processes.

“First, we must remove years of deposited silt, garbage, and scraps from the sea bed...by providing centralized and controlled waste water management thru engineered drainage system and by institutionalizing organized responsibilities for the control of sewage pollution.”
“The LGUs, in joint-venture arrangement with the private sector, could carry out the Manila Bay rehabilitation more effectively. Funds for environmental protection could be adequately provided.”
“Moreover since the “mandamus” on Manila Bay places responsibilities on the LGUs,... the mandamus can be more effectively carried out.”

The cons of a “no-reclamation” scenario follows stating that it could pose challenges on the environment department and other government agencies. Just like the arguments in favor of the issue, the arguments against the issue lack the necessary facts to support them.

“Without reclamation the socio-economic development plans of urban communities will necessarily be instituted on shore. Assuming contiguous land are available for a realistic development plan, serious obstacles are seen, like maintaining the quality of Manila Bay.”
“There is extreme difficulty bordering on incapability of the various locators of this on-shore based development plans in complying with Department Admin. Order 2016-18.”
“Right-of-Way issues for the drainage system are also potential challenges.”
“The LGUs will not be integral part of the organization that will implement the waste water management system, thus emasculating their otherwise effective role. Their role in the exercise of the “mandamus” will also be limited.”
“Without a central institution monitoring individual sources of waste water discharges, that would create formidable challenges even to the DENR.”

Articulating a Position

Both editorial articles articulated their position on the issue. Sample A ended leaving a punching question to the public, “What gives?”, questioning the implication of the action of the president of signing EO 74 and thus delegating the power to approve reclamation projects to the Office of the President.

“But, as it happens, those 22 or so critical reclamation projects have now become, under EO 74, the sole discretion of the President. What gives?”

Sample B’s author took his stand in favoring of the issue at the end part stating that Manila Bay reclamation should see the successful reclamation projects around the world as a learning experience and even a source of inspiration.

“The voluminous evidence of successful reclamation projects in the world like New York, Shanghai, Hong Kong, Dubai, and Singapore, to name a few, should be a learning experience and also source of inspiration for Manila Bay reclamation.”

CONCLUSIONS

Sample A used a more catchy two-word phrase to present the entirety as contrast to sample B which used a simple and usual phrase to present the wholeness of the arguments.

The arguments of Sample A catered to all three rhetorical appeals by using prominent experts to talk on the issue, citing the extensive dangers of the project and using figures and facts to enhance credibility.

The editorial article from the Philippine Daily Inquirer used all five obligatory structures: The Headline was a powerful two-word phrase short but strong enough to capture the entirety of the arguments implying that there seems to be a fad or obsession for reclamation; An issue was articulated and established through a background information which

helps achieve the strength of the paper or the article itself; Arguments against the reclamation project had been produced to persuade the readers that the Manila-bay clean-up project was just a front for other ulterior motives; and a position was articulated on the issue by leaving a punching question to the public, “What gives?”, questioning the implication of the action of the president of signing EO 74 and thus delegating the power to approve reclamation projects to the Office of the President.

Sample B met only three of the obligatory structures: A direct headline was used which clearly presents the succinctness of the arguments which is to present that the article contains the arguments for and against the issue; Issue was identified but not articulated, which means no information was included as background; Arguments in favor of the issue were presented by stating that reclamation can in fact be beneficial if it obeys sound engineering practices and the simple steps of achieving so; and the cons of a “no-reclamation” scenario were also included by stating that it could pose challenges on the environment department and other government agencies.

RECOMMENDATIONS

ESL teachers and students, as writers or simply readers, are encouraged to enhance their competence in discerning a good editorial article by determining the basic and mandatory structures.

ESL teachers may use the results of this study as input of enhancement in modules on Language subjects, particularly in Journalism classes, Purposive Communication subjects and English Language Proficiency subjects.

Future researchers may explore studies on analyzing other journalism articles. In doing so, they could help journalism advisers, ESL teachers and students have a basis in teaching and learning writing quality journalism articles.

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