A metaphorical analysis of electoral texts: The case of Philippine and Taiwanese online news commentaries

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Abstract

Drawing on contrastive rhetoric tradition, this paper analyses the metaphorical expressions utilized in the online news commentaries about the 2016 presidential electoral issues of two Asian countries, the Philippines and Taiwan. Upon a close scrutiny of the data, results show that Filipino journalists tend to thrive on individualistic issues dealing with certain political candidates whereas Taiwanese news writers seem to focus more on collective issues relating to a group such as political party and matters pertaining to their country in general. The data further revealed that Philippine commentaries are longer, contain more word-types and are metaphor-laden while Taiwanese articles are shorter, indirect, and loaded with direct quotations. Additionally, findings disclosed four dominant metaphorical themes describing the electoral campaign procedure of the two countries as: ‘straight campaign’, ‘dirty campaign’, ‘witchcraft campaign’ and ‘warlike campaign’. Finally, this study concludes that metaphorical choice reflects the writer’s cognitive and socio-political stance. Pedagogical implications are offered in the light of these findings.

Keywords: contrastive rhetoric; intercultural rhetoric; metaphors; metaphorical analysis; online news commentaries

Introduction

Kaplan’s (1966) pioneering article laid the groundwork for contrastive rhetoric (CR) studies, influenced by Sapir-Whorf hypothesis (Carol, 1956) and other linguistic theories. Kaplan posited that language and writing are cultural phenomena. He asserted that the logic manifested through the discourse of written text is culture-specific. It follows that people who speak different languages will organize the same reality in different ways. Kaplan (1990) theorizes that Asian languages’ speakers do not use the same type of discourse organization that native
English speakers employ. He described native English writers as being direct who follow linear pattern of thought, whereas Asian writers are described as being indirect, if not circular. A number of studies strengthened Kaplan’s theory. For instance, Hinds (1990) investigated the Japanese, Chinese, Korean, Thai expository writings in textbooks; while Kubota (1992) analyzed the oral interviews of China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Japan, Korea speakers, just to name a few.

Kaplan (1990, as cited in Connor, 1996, p. 37) further argues that the indirectness of Chinese writing is influenced by the eight-legged essay pattern followed in academic writing. This type of essay “constituted the principal framework for Chinese expository and persuasive writing in China, Taiwan, Hongkong, and Singapore.” (Connor, 1996). According to Cai (1993, as cited in Connor, 1996, p. 37) the designated eight parts are poti (opening up), chengti (amplification), qijiang (preliminary exposition), qigu (first argument), xugu (second argument), zhonggu (third argument), hougu (final argument), and dajie (conclusion). The inclusion of arguments from the required Chinese classics is another feature of Chinese writing.

Recently, Dastjerdi (2012) explored the ‘indirectness’ of academic writers by comparing the use of six indirectness devices in Persian and English argumentative essays: thesis statement, rhetorical question, irony, hedges, the passive voice, and conditional tense were the items investigated. The findings indicate that Persian writers made significantly greater use of devices such as thesis statement, irony, hedges, and the passive voice construction than their English counterparts. In the same vein, this paper would like to explore the metaphorical expressions employed by Filipino and Taiwanese news writers in presenting electoral issues. It is interesting to investigate the journalists’ metaphorical choices employed in news commentaries as they may reflect the two countries’ cultural and socio-political contexts.

In its general sense, metaphor is a figure of speech wherein a word or a phrase is applied to an object or action to which it is not literally applicable, or it is a symbolic representation of an abstract concept or a complicated situation (Underwood, 2021). In its simplest sense, metaphor is all about ‘expressing one thing and meaning another’ as may be seen in the statement below.

(1) ‘It seems to me that, when fortunate, the new president gets a well-oiled machine running only at the beginning of one’s third year going to the fourth, while often discontinuing the programs of one’s predecessor for sheer political reasons.’ - PDI, October 22, 2015

In (1), the phrase ‘well-oiled machine’ may represent the kind of incoming ‘government’ suggesting that it is going to operate efficiently like a well-oiled machine, but just like any mechanical device, its performance may decelerate as time passes by. Moreover, the writer’s decision of using a ‘well-oiled machine’ might have been based on the fact that everyone has schema on how something works if it is new, just like a car or any mechanical device. Thus, the reader could fully grasp the message that s/he was trying to convey. Also, the choice might be attributed to one of the famous cultural traits of Filipinos, ‘ningas cugon’, a burning enthusiasm and exuding effort when starting any endeavor but dies down eventually. In the example, one can say that the metaphorical expression has been used to indirectly project the message of the writer but at the same time it effectively concretized the abstract concept of leadership. As may have seen, the choice of metaphorical unit is anchored on the cultural
orientation of the writer. Hence, metaphor is an interesting area of language study because it does not only ornament the speaker’s utterance but it mitigates or intensifies the reconstruction of a particular circumstance.

Theoretical Background
The study of metaphors has received considerable interest since 1980s perhaps after the influential study of Lakoff and Johnson (1980) viewing metaphors as product of conceptual process based on interactions with the physical environment. While literature suggests that metaphor has just been explored decades ago, it is undeniable that ‘metaphorical language’ started back to the ancient times. In fact, one of Plato’s most famous dictums was that people should be suspicious of metaphor precisely because it is often used by poets and politicians to deceive audiences about the truth of real-world events. Moreover, Aristotle advanced that rhetoric existed primary to persuade and in order to make an argument, the text producer has to consider the three points: (i) the language which should be carefully crafted putting emphasis on word choice, the use of appropriate *topoi* or themes, and metaphors or *tropes*; (ii) the arrangement of various parts or the organization; and (iii), the means or sources of persuasion which can be achieved by making three appeals those of “logos” (the plain argument), “ethos” (the character of the speaker) and “pathos” (the emotional appeal on the audience) (Connor, 1996; Schoor, 2015).

In the field of contrastive rhetoric, researchers have also explored the richness of metaphors employing different methods of analysis in dealing with different genres. Some of these recent studies were conducted by Huang and Cheng (2020) on the creative use of “defeat is control” in sport metaphor; Aydin and Baysan (2018) on the perceptions of postgraduate students on academic writing skills; Asmali and Celik (2017) on EFL teachers’ conceptualization of their roles; Gibbs (2015) on the allegorical character of political metaphors in discourse; Schoor (2015) on the strategic purposes of political metaphor; Sahlane (2013) on the use of metaphor in newspapers’ opinion and editorial pieces reflecting the debate on the prelude to the 2003 Iraq War; and Bhatia (2006) on the discourses of terrorism who claimed that metaphors were used to highlight or hide the intentions of the actors involved in the particular issue. Some other studies on metaphors were conducted by Lopez and Lopis (2010) who made a comparison of metaphorical items registered in English and Spanish corpora of published journal articles on economic recession in 2008. They found that English articles have a higher number of metaphors used in a negative sense than Spanish articles. Although there is a ubiquitous use of image conceptualizations in both languages, the frequency found higher in English than in the Spanish corpus. Finally, they emphasized that a comparative study of metaphorical conceptualization reflecting the financial aspect cannot be contextually independent. This is to say that local knowledge and socio-political factors affecting the economic situation of the countries, whose languages are under comparison play a crucial role; hence, should be properly considered by the researcher. On the contrary, Trim’s (2012) study on conceptual patterns of metaphors in drug terminology by English, French, German, and Italian speakers revealed that non-contextual features are required to establish a reasonable interpretation of metaphor.

Urena (2012) conducted a contrastive analysis of English and Spanish scientific journals on the conceptual types of terminological metaphors in marine biology. She found the existence of cross-linguistic patterns in the two languages. Similarly, Falck (2012) investigated the metaphorical variation across L1 and L2 speakers of English and Swedish. The author reported
that despite the fact that both languages belong to the Western culture, differences in terms of metaphorical conceptualization and projection are evident.

On politics, Barry et al. (2009) reported the four observations of contemporary scholars as to how metaphors may influence political discourse. First, a social/political problem may be best explained using metaphors; second, it may be useful to citizens who are usually uninterested in political affairs; third, people tend to employ metaphors when dealing with complicated problems involving confusing or abstract concepts; and finally, metaphorical reasoning may be influential in the public’s assessment of social/political policy given the richness of metaphor in media discourse about politics (Barry et al., 2009).

In the Philippines, there were few CR studies focusing on newspaper genres. Some of these include Dayag (1997) on pragmatic features of Philippine English as represented in the newspaper editorials published in the three leading broadsheets in the country; Genuino (2002) on the interplay of culture on the use of cohesive devices; Gonzales (2002) on analyzing the organizational patterns and the use of politeness strategies and markers as used in the letter to the editor sections of the three leading newspapers in the country and compared them with Singaporean English and American English letters to the editors; Gustilo (2002) on the differences in the structure of news leads in American English and Philippine English; Rojo-Laurilla (2002) on the genre of Philippine advice columns in Filipino and English; Ranosa-Madrunio (2004) on the organizational moves and linguistic signals in letters to the editors in Singaporean English and Philippine English; and Mabuan (2017) on the intercultural rhetoric between Philippine and Sri Lankan newspaper commentaries.

This survey of local studies suggests the absence and thus necessity of exploring the metaphorical expressions employed in news commentaries. Investigating how metaphorical language is deployed in two Asian newspapers could possibly reveal cultural variations which may contribute to providing better understanding of each culture. Thus, this paper attempts to show how metaphors reflect the ‘culture of electoralism’ in the Philippines and in Taiwan as influenced by different social factors. Specifically, it sought answers to the following questions:

1. What cross-cultural differences in the rhetorical configuration of texts exist in the data?
2. What rhetorical variations are realized in the texts in terms of
   a. metaphorical motivational transfer, and
   b. metaphorical themes?

Methods

Research Design

This is a descriptive study comparing the metaphorical expressions utilized in commentary sections of Philippine and Taiwanese online newspapers reflecting the 2016 electoral issues of each country. The term ‘metaphor’ has been loosely defined here following Schoor’s (2015) notions of conceptual metaphor theory (CMT). The authors explicate the two levels of metaphors that are at play in CMT: the purposeful use of conceptual metaphors and the classical rhetorical figures. In the latter, a metaphor exists along with figures such as allusions, similes, metonyms, and among other figures of speech, whereas on conceptual level a metaphor is much
more broadly defined; something is a metaphor if it expresses a metaphorical relation between two cognitive domains, if there is a sort of ‘analogical thinking’. It means that conceptual metaphor can take the form of classical metaphor, which characterizes the purposeful metaphor as long as the element of ‘something is used to mean the other’ is present in the text.

Data
The news commentary data used in this study were culled from the articles in the opinion page of the Philippine Daily Inquirer (PDI) and Taipei Times (TT), published from September 1 to December 31, 2015. The two newspapers have been chosen as sources of data because their countries have scheduled presidential elections, a significant milieu in their nations’ histories – January 16, 2016 for Taiwan and May 9, 2016 for the Philippines. Initially, this study intended to include at least three newspapers per country but due to a limited number of English-language newspapers in Taiwan, the study was confined to the two mentioned online dailies. Because PDI commentaries are longer averaging 906 words per article as opposed to TT whose average is 593, the data had to be normalized to 21,165-word corpus for each newspaper derived from 25 articles of TT and 13 of PDI.

Each article was carefully read (more than once) to identify the presence of metaphors and to ensure that they were indeed utilized metaphorically. The manual analysis was complemented by computer-generated information using Antconc 3.4.3 (Anthony, 2016), a concordance tool that generates the number of word types and the number of hits for the top 20 most-occurring words in the corpora.

The top 20 lexical items only include content words such as nouns, pronouns, verbs, and, adjectives with the assumption that they are more meaningful than articles and prepositions which serve grammatical functions in the text. Thus, although the top three words in the corpora were the, of and to followed by prepositions and articles, they were weeded out until the twenty-most occurring contents words were identified.

Data Analysis
A number of steps were followed in the manual analysis. In metaphor studies, manual identification while laborious, is still de rigueur. Charteris-Black and Ennis’ (2001) criterion for identifying metaphor was used; i. e., “a word or expression that has a primary physical meaning or that normally has an animate subject is used to describe an abstract process” (p. 254). A common example would be using attack and strike as ‘warfare’ metaphor to describe the campaign strategy of the political parties. The initial scrutiny of the data suggests that Filipino journalists employed metaphorical language more often than Taiwanese writers. In this case, the researcher had to limit her analysis to fifty (50) metaphorical tokens to have equal sample size from the two newspapers. Each token was categorized according to themes identified. The initial draft of the categories was given to an inter-rater, a doctorate student in Applied Linguistics for validation. Disparities in interpretation were discussed and settled before writing-up the final analysis.
Results and Discussion

The following subsections present the lexical and metaphorical analyses of the data.

Lexical Analysis

Table 1 reflects that PDI corpus is lexically dense (3,815) than TT’s (3,490) out of the same number of word tokens (21,165). This finding may indicate that Filipino writers have a broader linguistic repertoire than Taiwanese journalists when it comes to English language. This is somehow expected considering that English is the second language of the Philippines and is deeply embedded in almost all of its social domains (home, school, community etc.) as opposed to Taiwan where English functions as its foreign language. Although former President Chen proposed for making English as the country’s ‘second semi-official’ language, it remains to be Taiwan’s EFL that is taught in school and is used for foreign relations (Kachru et al., 2006).

Further, Table 1 presents that president, their, candidates, and Taiwan, Ma, China are the top three lexical items that were predominant in the two newspapers, respectively. This choice of lexical items may suggest cultural orientation of the writers. It denotes that Filipino journalists have a tendency to focus on issues concerning individual personalities like the president and the candidates, other terms signalling individualistic orientation are Poe, his, her, vice president, she, I. Surprisingly, the words Philippines and Filipinos have never made it to the top-20 list. Conversely, Taiwanese column writers seemed to zero in on global or general issues such as Taiwan-China relations. Other terms like KMT (Taiwan political party) party, Chinese, DPP (political party) Taiwanese, people, and public, all denote collectivism and plurality are widely used in the corpus. Mohammed and Omer (2000) described collectivism and individualism as dimension of cultural differences. According to Jandt (1995, as cited in Mohamed & Omer, 2000), the English-speaking countries (e.g. the USA and Great Britain) have a high level of individualism, while Arab countries have high level of collectivism. The differences between the two cultural groups are embedded in all aspects of daily life: nuclear family vs. extended family, individual ownership vs. group ownership, loose social ties vs. close family ties, among others (Mohamed & Omer, 2000).

While Taiwan appeared 187 times in the TT corpus and collocated with words like Taiwan’s momentous, Taiwan’s transition, Taiwan’s achievement, Taiwan is unique, Philippines emerged relatively low (25 times) in PDI corpus, mostly employed as circumstantial element of the clause as part of prepositional phrases such as voters in the Philippines, internet users in the Philippines, citizens in the Philippines, returned to the Philippines among others. Circumstantial elements are one of the three components in transitivity system (participants, process and circumstances) that are optional in English clauses (Halliday & Mattheissen, 2004).
| Rank | Philippines | Taiwan |
|------|-------------|--------|
| #Word Types: | 3815 | 3490 |
| #Word Tokens: | 21165 | 21165 |

| Rank | #Search Hits: | #Search Hits: |
|------|---------------|---------------|
| 1 | president | 187 Taiwan |
| 2 | their | 176 Ma |
| 3 | candidates | 153 China |
| 4 | they | 143 KMT |
| 5 | Poe | 134 party |
| 6 | us | 133 meeting |
| 7 | his | 117 he |
| 8 | her | 94 Chinese |
| 9 | he | 93 Tsai |
| 10 | we | 92 President |
| 11 | voters | 79 Chu |
| 12 | election | 68 DPP |
| 13 | citizenship | 63 Xi |
| 14 | vice President | 62 US |
| 15 | vote | 58 Taiwanese |
| 16 | our | 57 people |
| 17 | time | 56 presidential |
| 18 | people | 50 public |
| 19 | she | 46 Chen |
| 20 | I | 45 Cross-strait |
In terms of pronominal usage, Filipino journalists utilized varied pronouns in terms of cases and number. It is notable, however, that Taiwanese writers only employ one case, the singular third personal pronoun, *he*. This may imply that the former thrived on specific issues about the political candidates’ actions while the latter dealt with collective issues concerning a political party which ranked third, fourth and twelfth in the top-20 list. Moreover, *people* employed 57 times in TT while only 48 times in PDI corpus.

**Metaphorical Analysis**

This section reflects the categories of metaphorical representations of electoral issues that manifest in the corpora. The findings signify the socio-cultural milieus and the political ideologies of the two cultural groups based on the metaphorical patterns employed by the writers.

**Animate versus inanimate metaphors**

Generally, this paper categorized metaphors into ‘animate’ and ‘inanimate’. Animate metaphor suggests resemblance to animate entities’ (human-like, animal-like, plant-like etc.) habits/behavior; while inanimate metaphors denote resemblance to lifeless entities’ (object-like) shape, color, function among others. Example of animate metaphor is presented in (3). The phrase *cut down the tree* might be equivalent to the literal phrase *destroy the government*, the speaker compares the abstract noun ‘government’ to a living entity, ‘tree’ denoting that the government is productive that it bears ‘fruits’ which could be accessible to some but not to all. Thus, ‘harvesting the fruits’ is another metaphor implying the government’s beneficial actions for the people. The message of the writer has been simplified through the use of the two metaphorical expressions that are accessible to everyone’s schema. However, these rhetorical devices may also blur the writer’s message because they conceal some aspects of reality or the situation. For instance, who is the ‘tree’ that is being referred to in the text? Does it refer to the president himself, the government, or to some people who maneuvered the action? And what kind of ‘fruit’ does the writer try to communicate, was this ‘fruit’ intended for public’s consumption or just for the chosen few. Indeed, “metaphors can be used to persuade, reason, explain, or offer new conceptualizations of reality …” (Semino, 2008).

(2) “Who in their right mind would decide to cut the tree down on a whim, when we have only begun harvesting its fruits? –(PDI)

(3) The poll found 59.5 percent agree that the president’s public announcement about the MaXi meeting only days before the event is a “blackbox” operation that had sidestepped due supervision, while 29.9 percent disagreed. –(TT)

The use of ‘blackbox’ in (4) describes the operation as something that may be mysterious and unknown to the public. In the context given, ‘blackbox’ is an inanimate metaphor for ‘strategies/tactics’ of the persons involved.

However, it seems that the visualization fails to project the image of what really the writer has in mind. The lexical collocate may create confusion because ‘blackbox.’ an inanimate metaphor is the anaphor of ‘sidestepped’, an action assigned to animate entities. The metaphorical production is not problematic because the writer knows exactly what s/he meant; the problem lies on the metaphorical recognition and processing since different readers might have difficulty in establishing the connection between the original meaning and the new
context (Falck, 2012). Hence, it maybe concluded that (4) is a readerly text giving the reader a greater responsibility in decoding the meaning of the text. Hinds (1987, as cited in Qi, 2007) categorized the rhetoric of various cultures according to the degree to which the reader is required to make inferential bridges between propositions and to deduce meaning from a text known as ‘readerly text’, as opposed to degree of the writer’s duty to explicitly provide explanations of propositions, a ‘writerly text’.

Table 2 presents the comparison between Filipino and Taiwanese journalists’ preferences in using metaphorical motivation transfer based on resemblance to animate and inanimate entities.

Table 2

| Resemblance | Philippines | Taiwan |
|-------------|-------------|--------|
| Animate     | 28          | 15     |
| Inanimate   | 22          | 35     |
| Total       | 50          | 50     |

Table 2 indicates that Taiwanese writers prefer to use inanimate objects in their construction of metaphorical expressions as may be seen in previous discussion as well as in (5) as opposed to Filipino journalists who are likely to employ metaphorical expressions that have animate referents as can be noted in (6).

(4) Playing the “ethnic card”… Weekly report as “baseless,” make a good novel, but not a news story. Becoming a “digital nation” and an “intelligent island” is …rice-ball issues… “Luckily, Taiwan still has its strong shields: people power … - (TT)

(6) … and black swans… failure would leave him the lamest of lame ducks: a lose-lose. The man is a politician’s politician, apparently cold-blooded and ruthless … the NPC was poised to … vote-buying can swing… I think there’s a crying need for such a stopover training facility for one salivating to become president… we are a young country… - (PDI)

Thematic contrastive analysis

The four dominant metaphorical themes representing the electoral issues of the Philippines and Taiwan’s 2016 presidential elections were identified as Straight Campaign, Dirty Campaign, Witchcraft Campaign and War-Craft campaign. Table 3 presents the sample metaphorical tokens under each thematic category.

Table 3

| Themes            | Philippines                                      | Taiwan                                                      |
|-------------------|--------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|
| Straight Campaign | Then, in the last two years, the president’s energy is focused on grooming one’s successor …by | China’s strategy of attack by drawing out the opponent is tantamount to |
presenting a ticket of a presidential candidate with the **spotless record** and, more importantly, the capability to be a virtual shoo-in for president.

**Dirty Campaign**  
After Estrada’s ouster, he was among a cabal of young congressmen who **engineered** the near-impeachment of then Chief Justice Hilario Davide Jr. on the **feeblest of grounds**.

Ma **sold out Taiwan** during the meeting and then, after **some drinks**, indulged in **incoherent babbling**, calling himself one of Xi’s officials.

**Witchcraft Campaign**  
But **Halloween** ain’t over yet so the **witches** are flying over the **Philippine skies** with their **broomsticks** and brewing their **potions** around town. As the **campaign season** begins, the air is starting to be filled with “wickedness” in the political arena.

**Little tricks** like these are hardly necessary and with only two months left to go, I hope we can all work together to keep this **classy**.”

It seems Ma became **intoxicated by Xi’s charm** offensive, so much so that the former “**communist bandits**” have now become **masters in the eyes of Ma**.

**War-craft Campaign**  
Effectivity in the “**air war**”—pitching for votes in media and online—can be challenged by the “**ground war**”—the hard, **door-to-door, village-to-village** slog by candidates, party members, and volunteers.

**China’s strategy of attack** by drawing out the opponent…. “one China” ….that the KMT’s real **enemies lie outside** the party headquarters…

**‘Straight campaign’ metaphor**

Metaphorical terms in this category were employed to signal direct electioneering activities. In particular, these expressions contain verbs as the headwords illustrating the actions executed not by the candidates themselves but the political party they are affiliated with or by other entities except them.

In (5), **grooming one’s successor** and **putting a straight jacket** in (6) exemplify this category. The similarities and differences between the Philippines and Taiwan’s polities maybe seen in the examples below. It implies that Filipino journalists tend to be less aggressive while Taiwanese writers sounds more antagonistic as projected by metaphor.

(5) Then, in the last two years, the president’s energy is focused on **grooming one’s successor** …by presenting a ticket of a presidential candidate with the **spotless record** and, more importantly, the capability to be a **virtual shoo-in for president**. (PDI)

(6) China’s strategy of attack by drawing out the opponent is tantamount to **putting a straightjacket** on the next president. On the road to the election, “one China” and the so called…- (TT)

**‘Dirty campaign’ metaphor**

Metaphors in this category are still verb-headed expressions denoting unethical or unlawful acts of the candidates themselves. The writers’ indignation toward the concerned personalities is created through their metaphorical diction; difference though is quite
observable at the syntactic level. In (7) the writer softens the claim by backgrounding the actions of the personality involved and by using the term \textit{engineered} which denotes positive value. However, the second metaphor on the \textit{feeblest of ground} projects the candidate’s weak character.

On the contrary, the writer in (8) appears to be more direct by foregrounding the candidate and her action. The structural constructions of statements in (7) and (8) enhanced the meaning of metaphors. Further, the observation in (8) seems to contradict Hinds’ (1987) finding that Thai along with Chinese, Koreans and Japanese writers follows a pattern that delays the introduction of the topic and that the thesis statement is buried in the passage.

(7) After Estrada’s ouster, he was among a cabal of young congressmen who \textbf{engineered} the near- impeachment of then Chief Justice Hilario Davide Jr. on the \textbf{feeblest of grounds}. (PDI)

(8) Ma \textbf{sold out Taiwan} during the meeting and then, after \textbf{some drinks}, indulged in \textbf{incoherent babbling}, calling himself one of Xi’s officials. (TT)

\textbf{‘Witchcraft campaign’ metaphor}

Witchcraft metaphors suggest a ‘supernatural power’ of the actor involved the text, such in (9 & 10). Unlike the first two categories discussed above which are headed by verbs, metaphors in this category are constructed through nouns such as \textit{witches}, \textit{brooms sticks}, \textit{potion} and \textit{tricks}. In this category, it appears that Filipino writer displays sarcasm by comparing political candidates to witches as compared with Taiwanese journalist’s metaphorical usage.

(9) But \textbf{Halloween} ain’t over yet so the \textbf{witches} are flying over the \textbf{Philippine skies} with their \textbf{broomsticks} and brewing their \textbf{potion} around town. As the campaign season begins, the air is starting to be filled with “wickedness” in the political arena. - (TPS)

(10) \textbf{Little tricks} like these are hardly necessary and with only two months left to go, I hope we can all work together to keep this \textbf{classy.”} – (TT)

Hamilton (2011, as cited in Gibbs, 2015) has aptly noted that political allegories, such as all of the above, are created to allow authors to make forceful, yet satirical, political statements while providing them some deniability about the import of their works.

\textbf{‘Warfare campaign’ metaphor}

Warfare metaphors are used to portray the process of political campaign as that of ‘war’ employing military tactics and great battle skills. The terms \textit{air war, ground war, position of great advantage, explosives, attack, enemies lie outside, headquarters}, all exemplify this category.

(11) Effectivity in the \textbf{“air war”}—pitching for votes in media and online—can be challenged by the \textbf{“ground war”}—the hard, \textbf{door-to-door, village-to-village} slog by candidates, party members, and volunteers. - (PDI)

(12) They are working to destroy and eliminate each other. Here’s hoping that there are \textbf{no explosives}. But haven’t you noticed or felt the ground is shaking already? The
Liberal Party, being in a **position of great advantage**, seems to be leading this **dirty war** in politics. -(PDI)

(13) **China’s strategy of attack** by drawing out the opponent.... “one China” ....that the KMT’s real **enemies lie outside** the party **headquarters**... - (TT)

The data show both Philippine and Taiwanese newspapers compare electoral campaigns to ‘warfare’ activities as signalled by the metaphorical expressions deployed in commentaries.

Analyzing the Philippine and Taiwan news commentaries on electoral campaigns reflects the journalists’ cultural perspectives and social orientations. The socio-political situations among other non-verbal factors may help explain the rhetorical preferences of the writers. For instance, the top 20-word list presented above discloses that the terms relating to collectivism and patriotism items such as *Taiwan, people, public, Taiwanese, relations* and names of political parties are mostly employed by Taiwanese writers whereas *president, candidates, voters, citizenship* and singular pronouns *he, she, his, her, I*, all lexical items signifying individualism were preponderant in the Philippine corpus. The lexical choice of the writers might have been underpinned by socio-political history of the two countries. Unlike the Philippines that regained its independence more than a century ago, Taiwan is under the People’s Republic of China. In 2000, Taiwan underwent its first peaceful transfer of power from the Nationalist (Kuomintang or KMT) to the Democratic Progressive Party. The dominant political issues continue to be management of sensitive relations between Taiwan and China, specifically the question of Taiwan’s eventual status - as well as domestic priorities for economic reform and growth.

In terms of metaphorical usage, this paper corroborates with previous findings that literary and rhetorical devices such as metaphors can help concretize abstract ideas. Undeniably, metaphor does not only embellish linguistic expressions but it simplifies a message in the same way that it conceals the intended meaning of certain utterance. Thus, metaphorical expressions may enable readers to be more critical when decoding the information set before them. As Koller (2004, as cited in Awab & Norazit, 2013, p. 231) states, “by favoring particular metaphors in discourse, journalists can reinforce, or even create, particular mental models in their readers’ cognition.”

**Pedagogical Implications**

In this increasingly globalized and digitized era, educational resources abound as they are just a fingertip away using internet-connected devices. Considered as an accessible and cost-effective classroom resource, online news may bridge the gap between school subjects and the real world contexts (Mabuan, 2017). The unique structure and format of news commentaries and metaphors about various situations in the society may provide an authentic resource depicting how communication is conveyed, negotiated and accommodated in a certain culture and context (Ene et al., 2019), which teachers may utilize to raise awareness among their students the communicative affordances that certain textual genres offer.
By employing consciousness-raising activities to the students about the presence of different literary and rhetorical devices in various communication channels available to them, teachers empower them to be media literate individuals who are able to decipher different linguistic codes and conventions as well as the various meanings that they convey to the audience. This media discourse approach in teaching (Bhatia, 1993) could empower students to develop their critical thinking skills and to be sensitive to genre distinctions, which are necessary language skills in order to actively participate in the community.

Conclusion
Drawing from the pedagogical viability of utilizing online news commentaries and metaphors in teaching media discourse in the language classroom, this study sought to analyze the cross-cultural differences in the rhetorical configuration and variation of texts from two juxtaposed cultures. The findings in the study revealed that writers from different cultures may demonstrate rhetorical preferences and may employ literary and metaphorical devices to convey their communicative intent, particularly in concretizing abstract concepts and situating ideas in a certain context. Furthermore, the findings unraveled both cultures’ writers’ propensities in the use of metaphors in their compositions to express their thoughts on issues, and to “add color, meaning, depth to the text” (Jenkins, 2022). Such use of metaphors in writing could incite emotions in the audience, and extend the experience of the reader beyond the mere literal meaning of the text, as it injects flair in the writing and helps readers understand the message more meaningfully and memorably. Loaded with meanings and a gamut of possible interpretations, metaphor-charged online news commentaries in this study may suggest writers’ stylistic acumen to shed light to societal issues and at the same time to cloak some sharp commentaries in order to assuage the impact of some rather direct verbal assault to the subjects involved.

Certain limitations must be considered based on the findings of this study. First, the study was carried out using only two sets of texts with limited corpora comprised of online news commentaries from only two English newspapers in the Philippines and Taiwan. Hence, the findings shown here may limit their generalizability to other news platforms, contexts, cultures, and writers. Second, the investigative point focused only on the rhetorical configuration and metaphorical functions of the news commentaries, which limits the scope of the findings, excluding other online news genres such as headlines, editorials, columns, news articles, etc. Future studies may investigate these genres and explore their rhetorical patterns and discursive functions when used in various cultures and contexts. Finally, the authors fervently hope that language practitioners may find this study as a helpful educational resource which could inform their pedagogical practices towards empowering their students to become media literate and effective communicators in their respective communities.
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### Appendix A. Summary of articles

| Philippine Daily Inquirer (N=24) | Taipei Times (N=36) |
|---------------------------------|---------------------|
| ‘People, wake up!’              | ‘Kinship’ a nonstarter for young Taiwanese |
| Analysis: Grace Poe’s use of US passport irrelevant | ‘Status quo’ a plan for unification |
| Better a college forum than a Senate hearing | Candidate urges Taipei to take over watershed |
| Challenge to each and every voter | Chen Chu ‘confirms’ Tsai running mate |
| Choose by platform              | Chu and Tsai ‘given same’ US treatment |
| Disappointed, still hoping for a 2016 Duterte ‘run’ | Chu’s ‘Washington Times’ article distorts truth: DPP |
| Duterte in the flesh            | Details withheld as Eric Chu meets with US officials |
| Duterte’s path to victory       | Detectives not involved in running mate pick: Tsai |
| Elevate ‘people’s representative’ to Senate | DPP denies report on severing of ties with the Vatican |
| Forget Poe; think De Lima       | DPP’s Tsai touts ‘digital nation’ as cities sign deal with Cisco Systems |
| Gov’t heads plan for next election only | An anomaly worth worrying about |
|                                | President Ma humiliated the nation |
|                                | President Ma’s Pyrrhic victory |
| Grace Poe’s 20 points | Stop politicizing public health issues |
|-----------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Greater pitfall in Poe run for presidency | The KMT’s twofaced strategy |
| Is Carpio wrong on Grace Poe’s citizenship? | Why fear the ‘Tword’? |
| Let party members select their candidates | Hung denies KMT gave her checks to withdraw candidacy |
| Mentor for ‘presidentiables’ | KMT’s Eric Chu opting for reckless scare tactics |
| Much ado about nothing | Lawmakers grill office over security |
| PH politics not a level playing field | Lee urges TSU voters to back Tsai |
| Poe presidential run a welcome development | Ma disqualified himself at Xi meet |
| Screening nuisance candidates and job applicants | Ma rebuffs claims on US notice of Xi meeting |
| Stop the lies, Bongbong told | Ma says history a better judge of presidency |
| The Great Referendum: The national election of 2016 | Ma speaks out on Xi summit after snub |
| The issue is ‘reacquisition of PH citizenship’ | MaXi meet won’t help the KMT in Jan. 16 poll |
| The three faces | MAXI MEETING: Eric Chu pleas for issue based election |
| | MAXI MEETING: KMT poll finds majority back MaXi meeting |
| | MAXI MEETING: Tsai says her ‘status quo’ is more about democracy |
| | No such thing as ‘Chinese people’ |
| | Party pushes marriage referendum |
| | Taiwan in charge of its future: Tsai |
| | Making sure Ma is yesterday’s man |
| | The path that lies in front of Chu |
| | Tsai and Fan cook side-by-side at Taipei event |
| | US expert praises Taiwan’s democracy |
| | US must not meddle in 2016 polls |
| | Xi’s ulterior motive for meeting Ma |
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