

# Intersections of Metaphor and Mythology in a COVID-19 Vaccination Campaign

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## ABSTRACT

The use of campaign materials for vaccination campaigns is essential as such materials include preventive measures to contain the spread of the COVID-19 virus, save more lives, and maximize the rollout of vaccines. Highlighting the realities of the pandemic as a crisis, this study aims to elucidate the intersectionalities of metaphor and mythology in a COVID-19 campaign material and explore its narrative relation to the crisis. Employing conceptual blending theory and textual analysis as analytical methods, the findings reveal that the vaccination campaign material localizes the health crisis using mythology and narrative norms. The material also used metaphors to contextualize the COVID-19 pandemic through mythical creatures in Philippine folklore. This is to emphasize the narrative relation of traditional preventive measures and the pandemic itself. The intersectional perspectives of metaphor and mythology embedded in the vaccination campaign material are not mere public announcements but rather creative tools for persuading primitive cultures about the realities of the pandemic and ways to counter it. Ultimately, the use of metaphor and folklore in campaigns signifies a crucial move to constitute crisis communication models to cater to multilingual communities and groups.

**Keywords:** conceptual blending theory, content analysis, COVID-19, metaphor, mythology

## INTRODUCTION

In December 2019, stories of people consuming bat meat and other exotic animals made their way to the rest of the world. Such stories originated from a certain wet market in Wuhan, China, which gained attention from the Western press, followed by a series of compelling investigations and growing mass panic. At first, there was no known cause, and people continued to assume the roots of the rapidly spreading disease were in China. While these international headlines influenced our belief towards people in this part of the world, the COVID-19 pandemic created a certain experience that has altered the course of human history. Subsequently, this prompted the World Health Organization (WHO) to declare a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) in January 2020, which was to become a global pandemic in March 2020 (World Health Organization). The effects of the worldwide health crisis posed several challenges to national and international agencies and institutions across the globe. Living conditions became unbearable, and unprecedented measures took place to contain the spread of the virus.

The introduction of vaccines developed by several biotechnology companies has significantly enabled countries to reduce morbidity and mortality among people. In doing so, vaccination campaigns also propelled this vision of mitigating the virus. However, this process is not always linear, as millions of people were also hesitant to be vaccinated because of misinformation, public distrust, and lack of democratic vision from world leaders (Pennisi et al. 2024). The use of vaccines also contributed to the development of public health policies and preventive measures, enabling countries to maximize the rollout of vaccines during the surge (di Domenico et al. 2025). However, vaccination campaigns during the public health crises were designed not merely to inform people but can also be treated as texts. This indicates, in this novel argument, that vaccination campaigns containing local elements can also be effective tools to strengthen the vaccination efforts and initiatives.

For several years of facing the crisis, the studies that proliferated hold a special place in this turning point of human history, such that the contributions made by scholars across the disciplines were able to create a specific genre in studying language and communication in media domains. Terms such as "post-pandemic" emerged at the time when the WHO officially declared the end of the COVID-19 pandemic in May 2023, contributing to the broadening areas of the "posts." With this, I intend to forward that language and culture are two of the best ways of viewing this premise, where different issues concerning the subject matter encourage more scholarship in the already existing and or thriving phenomena in attempts to understand human existence. In light of the post-pandemic, the fundamental use of metaphors and myths describes such scholarship in the field, and they are integral in elucidating the perceived efficacy of vaccination in general during the health crisis and the role it plays in establishing a space for meaning-making and an inclusive setting.

The use of metaphors first appeared in the scholarship of Greco-Roman philosophers and thinkers. Among such influential works is Aristotle's *Ars Rhetorica*, where the term *metapherein* (metaphor) transliterates the idea of "transference." This early notion of integrating metaphors in everyday language was used to describe or symbolize a phenomenon that does not conform to its literal denotation, which in turn explains the natural existence of arbitrariness in language. Hence,

Aristotle has convincingly argued that metaphors provide warmth, facility for language to be appropriate and elegant (Nodelman, Allen, and Perry 2010). Such elements enabled scholars to apply their power in persuasive discourse and portray an expression of liveliness and surprise. Similarly, scholars such as Ricoeur et al. (2003) asserted that a metaphor provides a beautiful decree of creation that assists in the creation of blending different elements which have never been done before. Moreover, this is why Aristotle explained the importance of using metaphor against the creation of terminological definitions (Ashworth 2007).

The Greco-Roman tradition contributed to the influence of the classical definition of 'poetics.' Aristotle, who was the first to identify four types of metaphors, explained these in detail in his classical theory of metaphors. In his writings, Aristotle described metaphors as "analogy," which intends to transfer meaning based on characterized similarities. This type functions as a primary element that enhances meaning in accordance with a certain analogy. Another interesting type of metaphor comes in both forms of substitution. A metaphor by "substitution of species for genus" aims to generalize a specific human phenomenon. For instance, the sentence "*He died*" can be articulated quite differently using this type of metaphor to "*He left this world.*" This example shows how indirect this metaphor is in (re)constructing meanings. Incidentally, metaphors on "substitution for genus for species" illustrate how general concepts produce specific meanings. In this example, "*Soldiers are lions*" can be interpreted based on the symbolism a particular object or entity carries. Hence, an image of a lion signifies bravery, which can be attributed to a soldier's vocation. The last type, according to the classical tradition of Aristotle, is also a form of substitution called "part-whole substitution," otherwise known in layman's terms as '*synecdoche*.' In this type of substitutional metaphor, a part of a phenomenon replaces the whole phenomenon. For instance, "*A new star has risen*" refers to a phenomenon of the success of a person, which creates concrete mental images to elucidate meanings (Mukhiyatdinovna 2024). Incidentally, metaphors during the time of Quintilian and Cicero became among the many distinctly recognized figures of speech, viewing their transference solely on the basis of supposed analogy and likeness between the spaces of regular and special referents (Nodelman, Allen, and Perry 2010).

As the study is also foregrounded by the integration of local culture, specifically the use of mythological standpoint, it is important to briefly discuss the potential role of mythology (mythical creatures) in the construction of new meanings related to the COVID-19 pandemic as a crisis. The early accounts of the Greek writer Homer already made a distinction to the definition of myth as a form of legend or a story (Van Staden 2005) while scholars such as Plato, used the term myth to imply the existence of Greek gods as they are famously known (Groenewald 2006) and Aristotle who discerned myth as a 'plot of the narrative' and finally, myth is said to be an expression of perception from the past, as forwarded by Stewart (1971). In the context of mythical narratives, Bultmann (1967) explained that narratives of mythologies are more likely to be in a mythological frame of reference that serves as the first form of science, revered by many to give answers on peculiar occurrences or manifestations of the world beyond what we know, which takes us to a familiar context of the "otherworldly." Dealing with narratives, the creation of stories or narratives is not solely to provide a wide array of stories to tell, but it is how humanity thrived and engaged in

the world, arguing that myths created a syncretic image of the world, in which the involvement of humans has allowed the creation of these images (Tychkin 2015).

In studying the intersection of metaphors and myths, it is important to consider questioning the interpretation of myths as a form of metaphor. The seminal essay of Malan (2016) shed light on this question, where he discussed the nature of narrative myths being synonymous with the traits of metaphors for certain aspects that they deal with. We begin by acknowledging the fact that myths and metaphors are types of analogies that work as relations of relations according to Frank (1945), which is synonymous with the definition of metaphor forwarded by Aristotle. Another is the fact that these intersections need to be interpreted, considering that they are types of analogies, which also means that dissimilarities are fused in a human and god relationships, enabling the transference of meaning from two different realms.

Conversely, narrative myths as metaphors are explanatory and context-bound, meaning they allow the intelligible structure of meanings in a certain human culture being studied and adhere to the way that culture created and shaped the world. Thus, the interpretation of myths and metaphors opens infinite possibilities for the reconstruction of universal symbols that have a basis in root metaphors or conceptual metaphors that are only nuanced based on narrative myths (Malan 2016). In this way, we can unravel more of these texts by allowing new interpretations across different realities and domains to exist in order to provide cultural and social understanding of myths and metaphors.

Drawing on the earlier grounds introduced by the different traditions of myths and metaphors, this study aims to interpret an infographic material used in an online platform during the COVID-19 pandemic and hence employ the conceptual blending theory to analyze the present elements of metaphors and myths used in the material. Through a textual analysis, I also draw on rhetorical criticism as an approach to make sense of the data.

Foregrounded by this thought, the study is interested in illustrating the interplay of human language and culture as primary elements to the importance of a COVID-19 vaccination campaign as an attempt to localize the realities of the pandemic using vaccination campaign material. There is a much-needed discussion on the intersectionalities of metaphor and integrating local culture, such as folklore, to connect traditions and beliefs using the creative side of language. It also aims to examine the efficacy of a vaccination campaign material and what intergenerational perspectives are present in such material with reference to the context of language and culture. As such, the paper also aims to identify the mythical creatures, folkloric practices, and other native traditions in the vaccination campaign material, their functions, and reconstructed meanings as complementary elements that make the material effective towards its consumers.

I also intend to discuss these intersectionalities in four different parts: in this section, I lay bare on the structure, objectives of the paper, and methodical framework; in section two, I discuss the milieu of metaphors and myths in the context of Philippine oral and folk tradition, the relationship between language and culture, and the conceptual blending theory (CBT); in section three, I present the research methodology and theoretical framework used in the study; in section four I elucidate the findings of the study based on the analytical methods I outlined; the last section concludes the

study and pathways forward and ultimately articulate how metaphors and myths can be used in crisis communication and media studies using campaign materials.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

In the Philippines, language is deemed responsible for the promotion of culture and the arts in the country. Languages alone in the Philippines sum up to an outstanding 175, divided among 117 million people. As such, language and culture are considered prime requirements for national development. This means that when we study languages, we also promote and learn the culture of their people. Due to this strong relationship, the Philippine government promulgated the Republic Act 7356, an act creating the National Commission for Culture and the Arts in April 1992. The Commission is responsible for the promotion and preservation of Philippine culture and the arts, and that includes the country's native traditions (Cruz n.d.).

From this standpoint, a specific language is needed to understand one's culture, and a certain culture cannot be understood without learning the language first. Language always carries meanings and references that go beyond itself: a language's meanings are what make up a social group's culture. Interacting with a language necessitates interaction with the culture that serves as its common denominator. We could not understand a culture without having direct access to its language because of its intimate connection. Kroeber (1923, as cited by Guessabi 2021) said, *"culture, then, began when speech was present, and from then on, the enrichment of either means the further development of the other."* According to Clifford Geertz (2008), in his interpretative theory of culture, culture is *"a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life."* It is transmitted in a large part by language, through teaching.

## Mythology and Philippine Culture

The existence of mythology and monsters has been present since the precolonial Philippines. They are also a feature of different interpretations in nearly every culture around the world, and the Philippines is not exempt (Johnson 2017). The Philippines, with its geographical location, archipelagic nature, and the ethnolinguistic groups within it, has been formed by various historical events that have continually shaped its people through the stories told and transferred from one person to another (Eugenio 1985).

Regional folklore also arose in different regions of the Philippines. The story about the world's creation is the most famous folklore in Luzon. However, every region in the country has a different version of the story. In Luzon, Bathala Maykapal is the transcendent Supreme Being, the creator, and ruler of the universe, according to ancient Tagalog Indigenous religion. The Filipino term Bathala means *"the supreme being"* and is used as a generic term for any divine being capable of creation, destruction or even manipulation of common elements. He also explains how he came to be the ruler of the universe, the etiology of the coconut tree, and how everything on Earth came to be in the story (Clark 2016).

In the Visayas region, the story revolves around the birth of the Sun and Moon. According to the story, the sun burned the stars, which upset the moon. They began to fight, but the moon fled, and

this explains why the sun and moon appear to be “chasing” each other. Furthermore, in Mindanao, there is a legend about Pamulak Manobo, who was thought to be in charge of other natural occurrences. For example, when it rained, the Bagobos believed it was the great god spitting or throwing water from heaven. On the other hand, the white clouds were smoke from the fires created by the other gods (Clark 2016).

Consequently, a sinister counterpart also exists because, aside from all the godly and all-powerful creatures mentioned above, a lot of terrifying mythical creatures were also introduced. Tales of a *sigbin*’s blood-sucking malevolence, *Dalikamata*’s clairvoyant abilities and thousand eyes, and a *Kapre*’s enchanted stones and wish-granting promises – the citizens of the Philippines are believed to already have some kind of “religion” and “beliefs.” These narrative counterparts indicate a universal notion of what is good and what is evil.

Philippine mythology is a rich collection of traditions and folklore that centers on magical beings—often regarded as deities—whom our ancestors believed governed all aspects of life. It forms a vital part of Filipino folklore, encompassing various forms of traditional knowledge passed down through generations. Filipinos hold that the early inhabitants of the islands embraced mythology as a way to explain natural phenomena and to find meaning and guidance in their existence, especially when certain events seemed beyond human understanding. From the ripening of crops to the setting of the sun, they believed in powerful entities presiding over the rhythms of daily life. This belief system brought order to their world and nurtured a deep respect for both nature and community.

During the 19th century, when nationalism began to expand and heighten, Filipinos began to cherish folklore as a part of their cultural heritage, according to Eugenio (1987). Dorson (1972, as cited in Eugenio 1987) claims that folklore and folk tradition have an impact on the emergence of nationalism since folklore is connected with national history and literature. Learnings are more easily assimilated into the awareness of beings, particularly children, through stories, because the imagination has a greater impact on an individual’s mind (Shoniwa 2013; Evans 2010). Individuals are better able to compare and relate fundamental thoughts to their own experiences and realities through stories, and these tales serve as a foundation for how to interact with other people, other living beings like animals and the environment, and the spirits they believe in (Evans 2010).

### Studies on Metaphors

There are a lot of figures of speech used by writers or speakers in their speeches, whether in oral or written forms, and one of them is a metaphor. A metaphor is a figure of speech that makes an implicit comparison between two different things without using the words *like* or *as*. (Britannica 2017). Additionally, metaphors are a common type of figurative language where individuals use various expressions or words that have a different concept or meaning from their literal definitions. If one would express something figuratively or metaphorically, understanding their words in their literal meanings would be nonsensical and absurd. Take for example, if one would say “*It is true that I am the black sheep of the family*” it means that he or she considered himself or herself to be the odd one, having a bad character among the family members, and not the contrasting literal interpretation or meaning of the utterance where he or she is actually a black sheep because black

sheep is an animal that do not possess a human ability, which is to speak. In this case of metaphors, it attempts to describe an action or object through words in speeches that are not taken literally; however, it helps in explaining various concepts or making comparisons in a creative way. There are various kinds of metaphors, and they are evident in several types of literature as they are functional in articulating various conceptual truths of reality. Since metaphors utilize figurative expressions where meanings are taken in a non-literal way, individuals are likely to interpret these expressions differently according to their own knowledge and their own linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

In the past decades, several studies have dealt with analyzing different forms of metaphors in different lenses and angles across diverse cultures and languages. Previous studies in metaphors have discussed the intercultural differences and similarities in both metaphorical expressions and conceptual metaphors in cognitive linguistics. Metaphorical expressions are defined as the most specific metaphor that is one of the related expressions which are classifiable within a metaphorical concept, whereas conceptual metaphors are identified to be the most schematic metaphor (Almirabi 2015).

In another study, comparing metaphors was made by Mashak, Pazhakh, and Hayati (2012), where they concluded that both the Persian and English-speaking cultures have practically indistinguishable concepts of emotion metaphors owing to the fact that either of these languages' metaphors is transferable to the other, maintaining the same functions and meanings attached to them. Moreover, Almirabi (2015) states that the borrowing of concepts made by the speakers from various languages, language contact, and or interlingual interpretations can be a cause of the similarities in metaphorical expressions found across cultures. Although speakers of two different languages do not have access to or direct contact with the other various languages, still there is a probability that such languages may be in contact with one another indirectly through the other languages, wherein the transfer of metaphors may occur between these two distinct languages once the contributing factors of conceptual metaphors are identical enough for the speakers of these two different languages (Almirabi 2015). According to this study, the differences, and similarities in metaphors across cultures are determined by some factors such as speakers' feelings, beliefs, values, mental concepts, thinking modes, worldviews, human relationships, and geographic environment.

### **Studies on Conceptual Blending Theory**

Fauconnier's Conceptual Blending Theory (CBT) has been employed in extensive fields of research. It is known as a methodological framework for several studies in the past. According to Kovalyuk (2019), in his study on cognitive analysis of idioms, he concluded that the Blending Theory (BT) provides a more multifaceted and convincing tool in analyzing idioms for several reasons in accordance with his conclusions. First, the BT is a theory that is metaphorically based. Second, BT contains two or more mental spaces for meaning creation. Fauconnier and Turner (2007) described mental spaces as "small conceptual packets constructed as we think and talk, for the purposes of local understanding and action" (363). Third, BT relies on context. Fourth, in online idiomatic creativity, BT has proven to be essential in its analysis. In a similar vein, a study on using CBT in the analysis of catchwords on the Internet was done by Li and Gao (2011). They concluded that CBT is

applicable in capturing the unrestrictedness of online cognitive processing and the internet catchwords' indefiniteness.

The application and theoretical development of CBT were primarily examined in some studies in China. In the field of analyzing translations of metaphorical expressions, a study done by Zhuang (2019), where he analyzed the translation of metaphors in three different selected English versions of Mao Zedong's poems written originally in the Chinese language, he concluded that the translators have translated the metaphors in a literal way. They also commonly apply the strategies of conversion metaphors into sense metaphors when they are dealing with allusion photos from the distinctive history in China. In a similar study done by Dong and Feng (2005), they have used the lens of CBT in discussing the cognitive explanation in text translations of format and meaning, as well as that of the images and culture. Hu (2004) and Qi (2010), on the other hand, presume that the translation process agrees with the formation of the integration network's structure.

Furthermore, the utilization of CBT in China is also productive with regard to explaining the present cultural and linguistic phenomena. According to Li and Gao (2011), CBT has been proven to be able to give detailed explanations and descriptions of psychological mechanisms in the comprehension of both linguistic and cultural phenomena. In regard to the linguistic phenomenon, Zhou and Bai (2006) and Wang (2007) have examined how to understand the process of English word formation through the lens of CBT. As observed, these studies focus on exploring the application of CBT, and there is a limited scholarship towards employing CBT to explain the intersection of metaphor and mythology in local cultures, even more so, in campaign materials and public health crises. With this, the need to conduct another study in this field is deemed crucial to address such inadequacy in scholarships.

## METHODOLOGY AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The units of analysis in this study are an infographic material obtained from a Facebook page called Association of Philippine Medical Colleges – Student Network in partnership with Asia Society for Social Improvement and Sustainable Transformation. The infographic material was published on November 6, 2021, and can be considered as vaccination campaign material during the COVID-19 pandemic. The original infographic material is located in Figure 1, and the transcript versions are shown in Table 1.

### Conceptual Blending Theory

The study employed conceptual blending theory as a principal framework, and the analytical method used for the units of analysis is textual analysis. In 2010, conceptual blending theory was forwarded by scholars Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner and gained prominence in the study of the cognitive engagements of humans. They defined the theory as a profound cognitive activity that paved the way for the creation of *"new meanings out of old ones."* The definition was simplified by Nordquist (2019), where he defined the theory as "... a set of cognitive operations for combining (or blending) words, images, and ideas in a network of "mental spaces" to create meaning." Synonymous to the definition of Fauconnier and Turner, the theory postulates that the construction of meanings is attained through combining or blending conceptual elements that make up the

entire process of cognitive integration. Oftentimes, conceptual blending theory can be mistaken for the same as conceptual metaphor theory (although conceptual blending theory is influenced by benchmark works of mental space theory and conceptual metaphor theory itself (Nordquist 2019). However, to account for their distinction, Murphy and Koskela (2010) argued that the main difference, of course, is context, but to be specific enough, conceptual blending theory specializes in the “dynamic construction of meaning” whereas conceptual metaphor theory is expert in conventionalities, often on the structural knowledge in people’s cognitive side and mapping schemes.



Figure 1. Infographic Material from the aforementioned Facebook page.

Source: Saved via Facebook on December 20, 2021.

As used in the study, conceptual blending theory is used to address the construction of meaning in the context of metaphorical expressions that do not require mapping schemes compared to

conceptual metaphor theory and the nature of this theory is more oriented in uncovering perspectives based on real-life phenomena (as in this study, the COVID-19 pandemic) as embedded in the units of analysis (infographic material).

| COVID-19 as Mythical Creatures |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Manananggal                    | <p><i>If you knew there was a manananggal lurking outside your house, you wouldn't leave your house undefended. Myths recommend you bring salt or garlic to defend yourself with in case you encounter a manananggal.</i></p> <p><i>A similar practice applies to staying safe from COVID-19. Let's continue to wear masks and practice proper hand hygiene. The best way to protect ourselves is to get vaccinated against the virus.</i></p>      |
| Multo                          | <p><i>Even if you don't see them, that doesn't mean that they're not there.</i></p> <p><i>Just like multo, we can't see COVID-19 spreading. Our best defense is to take all the precautions available to us – and receiving the vaccine is one of the best ways to do this.</i></p>                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Dwende                         | <p><i>Myths guide us to show respect to dwendes by alerting them to our presence and chanting, "tabi-tabi po," whenever we step on anthills or termite mounds, so they move aside.</i></p> <p><i>Similar to COVID-19, we must maintain our distance from other people and avoid close contact. Our protection against the virus improves further once we are vaccinated.</i></p> <p><i>Encourage your friends and family to get vaccinated!</i></p> |

**Table 1. Transcript from the infographic material. Source: infographic material.**

### Textual Analysis

The analytical method for this paper is textual analysis, which serves as a tool to examine the units of analysis. According to McKee (2001), textual analysis is a methodology used to explain how cultures and subcultures understand their way of life and existence, as well as making sense of the world they live in. This analytical method is ideal for scholars pursuing cultural studies, media studies, and mass communication, which extends to broad areas of sociology and philosophy. Textual analysis is often applied to films, television, programs, magazines, advertisements, clothes, graffiti art, etc., and it can be used to interpret how cultures in a particular time and situation express sensibility of what is happening to the world around them. Likewise, by interpreting sense-making practices from diverse cultures, textual analysis will also allow us to understand our own culture and discover the merits and depictions from sense-making processes and practices (McKee 2001). In accordance with Fürsich (2014), one of the goals of textual analysis is to arrive at certain or possible readings of the examined material to provide an understanding of the cultural and ideological presumptions established at a specific point in time that allowed the "text" in the examined material to be acceptable or means for consumption to make an even common sense. Simply, the famous French scholar Roland Barthes stated that textual analysis stays true to its features by giving the significance that is present in the text (Rabaté 1997).

In applying textual analysis to the study, it is important to narrow down which approach will be used. Upon a series of extensive readings, rhetorical criticism as one of the four main approaches in textual analysis will be employed. According to Frey, Botan, and Kreps (1999), the terms rhetoric and criticism invoke interesting images. Andrews (1983) pointed out that rhetoric is attributed to Aristotle's definition, believing that it is an act or means for persuasion. Andrews (1993) himself also stated that criticism is a process that illuminates and assesses the outcomes that emerged from a particular human activity. Ultimately, rhetorical criticism as an approach to textual analysis is a systematic method for describing, analyzing, interpreting, and evaluating persuasive intentions entrenched in a text (Frey, Botan, and Kreps 1999). Finally, the process or functions of the approach chosen. The process of rhetorical analysis generally involves five essential functions, which begin with shedding light on the intentions of establishing a specific persuasive message. Second, it can bridge the understanding related to historical, social, and cultural contexts. Third, to be used as a form of social criticism essential for the evaluation of societies. Fourth, it can be the foundational element for creating theories by arguing how specific theories can be applied to the discourse of persuasive acts and intentionality. Lastly, it can serve as a pedagogical framework for inculcating the nature of persuasive discourse and the qualities of what makes an effective persuasion (Andrews 1983).

The use of conceptual blending theory and textual analysis appears to be complementary in foregrounding the analysis, as the former can be used to show how features of a certain concept, existence, knowledge, meanings, and ideas can be analyzed through the use of texts in an examined material. In the same vein, the blending of meanings or concepts can be interpreted as an attempt to reconstruct meanings and how these meanings make sense or describe society, individuals, and culture, whether or not it has created new meanings, rooted in the old ones. By using rhetorical criticism, it can potentially contribute to a new understanding of all of these processes produced by human activities.

## ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The discussion begins with acknowledging the integration of the local culture of the Philippines, which is based on mythologies from various cultures in the country. Hence, the use of mythical creatures such as *duwende* (a dwarf or goblin in Filipino folklore), *manananggal* (literally translates to remover; also considered as ghoul) and *multo* (translates to ghost in English) are present in the vaccination campaign material. Significantly, these mythical creatures are portrayed synonymously in the local culture of the Philippines. We begin with how viscous otherworldly creatures can induce the emotion of fear, responsible for emotional participation of consumers of the text when one hears or deals with narratives that are related to these mythical creatures. For instance, narratives pertaining to the *manananggal*, one of the most infamous and frightening creatures from the Visayan region of the Philippines. These narratives are what nightmares are made of. The *manananggal* resides in the mountainous regions and thick forests of the Philippines, appearing as an attractive woman to scope out prey and biding her time until the full moon. Similarly, such narratives is synonymous from a creature called *tiktik* which are believed to use their long proboscis-like tongue to feed on the blood and internal organs of humans and even unborn fetus

hearts while incidentally, a *tikbalang*—a tall, bony humanoid creature with the head and hooves of a horse and disproportionately long limbs that is said to lurk in the mountains and rainforests of the Philippines. The narratives of *duwendes* are also present in the material. These are creatures described as goblins, elves or dwarves, short of stature and often old or shriveled, with beards and hats of varying colors. A way of preventing their wrath is by saying “*tabi, tabi po*,” which some people say until now. *Duwendes* have evolved into a less frightening incarnation over many years, but according to old tales, some *duwendes* would steal children and eat their bowels. What this means is that the country’s indigenous lore has endured to this day, despite the Spanish religious invasion and American cultural dominance.

Eglin (2014) forwarded that language is like the air that we breathe; it may come and go unnoticed, and the creative use of language penetrates a common schema on our personal or collective emotions about certain circumstances. In relation to this early conviction, we arrive at a certain notion of how we relate the integration of archaic and thriving culture in the worldwide health crisis, how the intersection of language and local culture depicted realities to allow us to understand cultural and social conditions related to the crisis, where local culture became a ground for using language in this context. We must also acknowledge that culture is the driving force of language and context, where both of them are grounded by culture and, in return, they carry culture with them, which is why it is complementary in describing and reflecting on culture in many ways.

Uncovering intentions also plays a major part in this discussion, where we emphasized the question that concerns the intentions of the producer embedded in the text. However, we must touch a bit on the social implications of vaccine hesitancy, which, according to Butler (2015), is an act of refusal or the delay of acceptance, although vaccination services are made available. This collective dilemma, during the global pandemic, especially in the Philippines, is influenced by religious, moral, social, and medical factors that contribute to the perception of people and from this, we seek answers to the question, are these infographic materials intended to reach out to primitive cultures? The answer lies on the inseparable nature of language and context as it tends to capture what is being accepted by many as a common reality, which in this case including primitive culture that settles only to their common schema, their way of living, what is only known to a specific culture and or population, say refusing to acknowledge COVID-19 pandemic as a public health crisis or perceiving it as only a phase or another product of human apathy. Therefore, some primitive cultures or those who were raised in one can be argued as the most vulnerable in terms of disinformation and eventually from the virus itself because they rely mainly on their traditions, which shape their consciousness on the existence of this real and devastating public health crisis.

I posit that apart from traditions and cultural backgrounds, such an act of refusal is highly influenced by humans’ innate capability to feel emotions. I argue that when people are coming from a place of fear, it makes us feel resolute in what we believe. Interestingly, emotions can be manifested through metaphors. Metaphors of emotion are an interesting part of this discussion, where I position metaphors as an integral part of our beliefs as a person, and it propels and or dictates what to and not to do. In the study of Chen (2010) which dealt with metaphors of emotions, specifically the anger metaphor in his study in which he introduced some differences and similarities of this kind of emotion metaphor. In his study, he argued that the world’s languages

share the same root metaphors that are caused by shared common human experiences. Additionally, he argued that the indication of humans being able to learn new things through the means of those root metaphors that are universal conceptually and not linguistically is when new metaphorical expressions are presented in a particular language. Chen (2010) also identified in his study the differences between two cultures' worldviews, namely English culture and Chinese culture, in which he argued that the English-speaking cultures regarded water as the universe's main source, whereas in Chinese-speaking cultures, air is their universe's source. These differences in metaphorical expressions were caused by some factors such as differing individual concepts and personalities, geographical environment, values, worldviews, and mode of thinking (Chen 2010). In a similar vein, Liu and Zhao (2013) stated in their study that it was due to the heavy influence of cultures that caused distinction in metaphors, where language plays a vital role in culture. From this line of thinking, intentions were established, rooted in the problems of vaccine hesitancy, as well as for those who do not acknowledge it. The proliferation of these public materials may serve as a supplemental underpinning of vaccination campaigns by creatively embedding local culture.

There is a general assumption from the text regarding the use of mythical creatures as a metaphor for the pandemic, where implications from cultural contexts can be inferred. This assumption is seen in the blending techniques used in the vaccination campaign material, and through this being established in the mental spaces of consumers at this point, would enable us to see that the mythical creatures mentioned are used as a metaphor for this health crisis. Let us examine how conceptual blending is applied to the textual units below.

| Textual Units                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| A. <i>"Myths recommend you bring salt or garlic to defend yourself with, in case you encounter a manananggal."</i><br><i>"A similar practice applies to staying safe from COVID-19. Let's continue to wear masks and practice proper hand hygiene. The best way to protect ourselves is to get vaccinated against the virus."</i> |
| B. <i>"Even if you don't see them, that doesn't mean that they're not there."</i><br><i>Just like multo, we can't see COVID-19 spreading.</i>                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| C. <i>"... show respect to dwendes by alerting them to our presence and chanting, "tabi-tabi po,"</i><br><i>"...we must maintain our distance from other people and avoid close contact."</i>                                                                                                                                     |

**Table 2. Mythical creatures present in the vaccination campaign material. Source: infographic material.**

The textual examples indicated above show consistency in metaphorically using mythical creatures from Philippine mythology and folklore to implicate the existence of the COVID-19 pandemic and plausible ways to counter the health crisis through vaccination. In statement A, the creature *manananggal* conceptualizes the virus on the sole basis of Filipino myths; the use of garlic or salt conceptualizes the available vaccines to counter the pandemic. Doty (1980) identified that mythological corpus such as this may consist of metaphoric and symbolic diction. In this case, the expression of metaphorical exemplification and symbols innate to a certain culture is communicated. Statement B expresses meanings through the concept of an "unseen enemy"

referred to as the COVID-19 pandemic, which is tantamount to the general perception of ghosts or *mulito* in the local culture of the Philippines.

Subsequently, this adds to our structural knowledge of how we make inferences about the narrative relation between the virus and ghosts that both share the same characteristics: being invisible and unpredictable to human beings. It is also important to note that this particular statement (B) serves as an effective counter argument if one may refuse to acknowledge the existence of COVID-19 pandemic (mostly from primitive cultures), therefore finding the narrative relations of old local culture and this pandemic and stitching them altogether is an effective strategy to employ in order to make a good exemplification using narrative relations. For the last statement in row C, the ever-famous chant to *duwendes* as it is known in almost every local culture in the Philippines, "*tabi-tabi po*" (*tabi-tabi po* is a chant used to alert *duwendes* or goblins on human presence. Although the phrase may vary based on the different local languages in the country, the meaning entails the same) expresses the contemporary ways on how we deal with the global pandemic. The phrase entails two important things. First, it describes the practice of social distancing to synonymously describe how we interact with goblins in the Filipino local culture – keep your distance from one another to avoid catching the virus or the risk of getting infected. Second, the phrase tells us that the only safe way to interact with goblins is by expressing respect, and the safest way to do this is to get ourselves vaccinated for the common good. Simply, we can only interact safely with goblins by alerting them with our presence using the phrase *tabi-tabi po* and in the human world, we can only interact with each other if we take our vaccination shots to help mitigate the rapidly increasing deaths and cases. This creative viewpoint illustrates how consistent the text appears to be in integrating the local culture of the Philippines.

The discussion on the discourse of persuasion and intentionality was made possible through rhetorical criticism. As an approach to textual analysis, it allowed the authors to disclose how the text intends to persuade the public on the notion of vaccination. The text expresses the involvement of humanistic experiences and roles, a plausible way to discuss the healthcare reality and within our healthcare ecosystem. Myth and rhetoric are two different elements that amplified the need to establish a safe space for the already vulnerable population by getting vaccinated. The intentions here are clear; it aspires to promote the reality of the pandemic into the consciousness of those who refuse to acknowledge the severity of the health crisis. In this context, the discourse of persuasion is realized through the strategic use of metaphorical language, which proves effective as it embeds elements of a resonant local culture and expressions drawn from local traditions. By doing so, this allows traditional communities to interpret the health crisis in relation to their own belief systems and narrative norms. Consequently, this method bridges the gap between late modernity and traditional perspectives, facilitating a dialogue in transmitting knowledge without alienating these communities through overly complex or technical language. Hence, the discernment of when and how language should be employed becomes a vital component in achieving effective communication.

## CONCLUSION

Campaign materials are critical, especially when facing global health crises. The research affirms this conviction rooted in framing the intersectionalities between metaphor and mythology. Such intersectional perspectives assist in understanding its effectiveness in vaccination campaigns during the COVID-19 pandemic in order to articulate the inclusion of local to primitive cultures as an attempt in localizing the context of the health crisis. Employing metaphor and mythology as primary elements of a vaccination campaign, as this study demonstrates, builds a stronger substratum to be consumed by the audience as text across media domains.

The study also indicates that the use of our local contexts signifies a similar notion in reframing public health policies and campaigns in multilingual countries like the Philippines. This means that local and national agencies shall not depend on a one-size-fits-all approach in strategizing vaccination campaigns, should any pandemic happen in the future. Even more so, multilingual countries should strive to harness the potential of metaphor and mythology in any communication campaign. Here, the use of such elements addresses the issue of using a unified language and linguistic ideology that does not reflect the realities of the multilingual Philippines. This also extends to policymaking initiatives in the country about a pandemic preparedness bill in the future, to include indigenous worldviews and belief systems. Policies concerning a pandemic or an epidemic will influence local agencies and offices in reframing public health awareness and campaign strategies. While it is not deemed necessary to focus on the visibility of such vaccination campaign materials in a particular online platform in the present research, the study however suggests that organizations or institutions under the National Commission for Culture and the Arts should initiate and administer the production of campaign materials towards indigenous groups and communities in the Philippines, especially if it concerns public health or a pandemic.

Late modernity enabled so many people to continuously integrate technology and its powerful tools to propagate health concerns and global issues in general. What makes the contemporary increasingly advanced is the fact that it allows us to develop proactive approaches to communicate realities caused by a crisis. This means that protecting traditional and local worldviews includes them in this rapidly changing world. The use of mythical creatures to characterize the virus in the unit of analysis of the study underscores the intricate relationship between culture and language in advancing the realities made by the COVID-19 pandemic. In a similar vein, employing local culture as a departure point for recalibrating collective, and often traditional, perspectives proves to be an effective approach. This indicates that using this strategy minimizes the perception of intrusion or disrespect while remaining faithful to the cultural frameworks in which such perspectives were formed. As nations across the globe once collectively held hope of returning to our normal lives, devising a culturally grounded framework to engage individuals, groups, and communities in a crisis affirms the shared objective towards a world free from the morbid fear of the virus.

In learning how to critically educate the public amid a pandemic, we must pay special attention to the principles of persuasive discourse, as it describes how language may be effectively mobilized. Persuasive competence is also essential to ensure that communicative intentions are sustained and that messages are conveyed with precision and sensitivity. As demonstrated in this study, the metaphorical use of mythical creatures drawn from local culture serves as a powerful rhetorical

device to frame the worldwide health crisis and encourage vaccination. Ultimately, as the world continues to grapple with the enduring legacies of the pandemic, it is imperative to recognize where culture and language intersect—and to understand their significant role during a particular time of crisis.

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