



Material Processes in Philippine Department of Health's English Press Releases on COVID-19: A Transitivity Concordancing Analysis

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Abstract: The COVID-19 pandemic might be considered as a disruptive moment in history. This small-scale study was motivated by the preponderance of this pandemic. It attempted to determine the roles and goals of the Philippine DOH as reflected in its complete set of 30 official press releases published during the peak of the pandemic from February 2020 to March 2020. The relatively short and early period of the COVID-19 pandemic could largely speak about crisis management of the Philippine's Department of Health (DOH). The study employed the theoretical and analytical grounding of Material Processes and transitivity concordancing under Systemic Functional Linguistics and Critical Discourse Analysis. With the aid of AntConc and UAM Corpus Tool, results showed that the Philippine DOH painted itself as the Ensurer, the Monitorer and the Receiver. Its goals focused on the 'Strategic Moves' in combatting the pandemic. The foreground of these 'Strategic Moves' and the 'Person/Public-Related' goals might mean that it intentionally painted and privileged itself as a pro-people department. Such linguistic choices might have significantly mitigated public anxiety during the height of the crisis. I offer recommendations in terms of comparative studies of crisis management within the different spheres of world Englishes. The paper hopes to provide readers with the insights into how a government uses its linguistic resources in crisis management.

Keywords: CDA, COVID-19 pandemic, material process, SFL, transitivity

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Introduction

The unprecedented diffusion of the COVID-19 pandemic became a global health crisis, which might be characterized as a "disruptive moment in history" (Wodak & Krzyzanowski, 2008, p. 6). It precipitated local and international flight cancellations; travel bans; community lockdown; community quarantine; personal quarantine; financial, trade, and economic punches; class

suspensions; and an overall disruption of world social order (Baldwin & Tomiura, 2020; Voth, 2020). In response to this global health crisis, different government officials around the globe updated the masses with travel ban bulletins, health bulletins, press releases, media interviews, among others. The government officials are social actors (Fairclough, 2003) and producers of these texts, who are the products of social intercontexts (Meurer, 2004). They connected the public with various social practices and actions (e.g., informing the public of the COVID-19 pandemic status). These public announcements qualify for the 'public sphere' discourse (Habermas, 1989). Political declarations, news reports, academic papers, including these official public announcements of COVID-19 also qualify for the "practices of discourse production" (Herzog, 2016, p. 81). Because the public sphere is "made up of private people gathered together as a public and articulating the needs of society with the state" (Habermas, 1989, p. 176), the government officials' public discourses during any community crisis are of prime importance for investigation.

The English press releases of the Philippine's Department of Health (DOH) within the first two months of the COVID-19 pandemic provided the focus for a much-needed linguistic inquiry of this current study. Crisis-related linguistic studies have been a burgeoning research terrain among the household scholars (e.g., Lean, Don, & Fernandez, 2013; Matus-Mendoza & de Rycker, 2013; Royce, 2013; de Rycker & Don, 2013). These studies looked at the critical aspects of organizational discourses, political discourses and media discourse with crisis-relevant language use.

I argue that the government officials do not only wish to express the unvarnished truth with their epistemicity of the health crisis situations, but also use affective symmetry when controlling and downplaying public anxiety amid the menace of any health crisis. The texts reflect the real political will and power in terms of "permissibility" and "sayability" (Kay & Williams, 2009, p. 4). In fact, the linguistic choices associated with the COVID-19 press releases embodied a range of intentions, which could significantly mitigate, escalate, or heighten public disruption and anxiety; and/or conceal the real status of the COVID-19, or any other social actions, resulting in the shaping and re-shaping of public opinions and sentiments. Crisis management is largely and enthusiastically dependent on language use, communication, and discourses, as crisis remains a lived experience, a socially constructed phenomenon and an object of consciousness (de Rycker & Don, 2013).

This study was motivated by the preponderance of COVID-19 pandemic. It means that this paper is probably first of its kind, which attempts to delineate how the Philippine DOH managed this health crisis during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. This current study is particularly interested in the analysis of the DOH's roles and goals during the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic or within the first two months of the pandemic. The relatively short and early period of the COVID-19 pandemic, between February 2020 and to March 2020, could largely speak about crisis management of the Philippine's Department of Health (DOH).

Meanwhile, messages are a form of *distillation* (van Leeuwen, 1995), which connects social actors (e.g., the DOH and its government officials) to various social practices (e.g., informing the public of COVID-19 pandemic status). Hence, doing such an analysis is of prime importance because they could bestow important insights into how the powerful government addresses the public in terms of the public health crisis that matters to all. I also assert that this study comes at the price of illuminating issues of political power. This assertion is banked on Habermas (1989) who states that the "texts produced during a crisis may reveal more about the way other nations see themselves and other nations than the carefully thought-out pronouncements of a more stable period" (p. 62). De Rycker and Don (2013) also asserted that "in many crisis situations, the socially constitutive and socially conditioned nature of discourse is poorly understood, denied or ignored" (p. 58).

Review of Literature

SFL's transitivity and (critical) discourse analysis have been an established analytical tool in depicting social realities as exhibited in the wealth of local and international studies using different corpora as units of analysis. Amjad and Hashmi (2023) made use of transitivity analysis to analyze linguistically the Character "Mr. Bhutto" in "The Mercurial Mr. Bhutto and other stories." Results showed that the characters were noted as authoritative, splendid yet un-ideal characters. Within the relational processes, Rahmadanty and Subianto (2021) characterized the character in the novel "Eleanor Oliphant Is Completely Fine" by Fail Honeyman. As reported, the character in the novel, Eleonor, experienced childhood trauma, which led to addictive alcoholism.

Choudhry and Chaudhary (2020) analyzed gender roles in Disney's Zootopia by using the constructs of transitive analysis. Women were treated as fragile, sensitive and meek while men were seen as versatile. Fortunately, the positive ideologies of women empowerment were analyzed by Abdallah and Abdulkareem (2022) in the documentary film entitled, "Girl Rising" using Halliday's (1994) systemic functional linguistics model. Munalim, Tuttle, and Genuino (2021) analyzed how the Filipino English teachers and Korean students attempted to represent themselves using first-person pronouns. Results showed that the teachers and students dominantly made use of the mental processes when teaching and learning English online. Likewise, Christians were considered as the Enthusiast, Materialistic, Double-Minded and Stressed based on the patterns of transitivity in the Parable of the Sower from the Modern English Version of Mark 4: 1-20 of the Holy Bible (Atta-Asamoah, 2023).

SFL's transitivity has been prolific in political discourse. Ahmad, Bukhari, Khan, Ashraf, and Kanwal (2023), using the combination of transitivity and discourse analysis, reported the war memories, experiences and sufferings of the war. Sayed (2023) examined the 2017 political speech of Donald Trump using transitivity. Trump's persuasive ideologies, stances and the overall discourses were achieved through the use of material processes and relational processes. Trump stood for the Americans within the discourse of building a wall or cutting taxes, including his attempt to connect with the American using the relational processes. Following the verbal processes, Sofyaningrat, Yuwono, and Suhardijanto(2023) reported that the Ulama/ Islamic Scholars were attributed as a sayar. The verbiage was about appeals and giving of advice. The Sayers were responsible for the provisions of the appeals, declaration, and calls for the support of certain political and government figures.

Purpose of the Study

Within the context of the first two months of the COVID-19 pandemic, this present paper attempted to answer the following questions:

1. What did the Philippine Department of Health (DOH) do during the COVID-19 crisis?
2. What Roles did the DOH play during this crisis?
3. What were the Goals of the DOH during this crisis?

Framework

To achieve the purpose of the study, I used the theoretical grounding of transitivity and transitivity concordancing under Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). SFL is capable of analyzing language into systems of options, which constitute the potentials of meaning in the creation of texts. Meaning is realized through grammatical sequencing (Eggs, 2004). As a proponent of the SFL, Halliday (1985) shares three-fold meta-functions in a language such as

ideational, textual and interpersonal systems. The textual information signifies discourse, which includes thematic (theme and rheme), and information (new and given). On the one hand, the interpersonal function is used to maintain social relations using mood and residue. This study zeroes in on the ideational function of English language, as it is utilized to express content and communication information. At the ideational meanings, reality is represented in language, which involves two main systems, namely: transitivity and ergativity, the former as the main focus of analysis in this current study. In capsule, ergativity, which plays a role in approximately 25 percent of world's languages, is used to "describe a grammatical pattern in which the subject of an intransitive clause is treated in the same way as the object of a transitive clause, and differently from transitive subject" (Dixon, 1994, p. 1).

Transitivity operates in the clause, which is considered as the most significant grammatical unit in the deconstructing representation through the processes of Material, Mental, Relational, Behavioral, Verbal and Existential Processes (Halliday, 1985). Mental Processes can capture the entity's internal process of sensing such as seeing, feeling, thinking, among others. These involve two major participants: the Senser and the Phenomenon. The Senser does the mental state of beings while the Phenomenon is the something being perceived, thought of, appreciated, needed, among others by the Senser (Halliday, 1994; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004). Relational Processes are those that express characterization, identification and description of an entity. Halliday and Matthiessen (2004) divided the Relational Processes into two major types: identifying relational process and attributive relational process. The identifying mode is when something has an identity assigned to it. It means that one entity is being used to identify another, for example: 'X is identified by A' or 'A serves to define the identity of X.'

Behavioral Processes operate between the material and mental processes. Meanwhile, Verbal Processes are those related to saying and reporting such as tell, talk, conclude, among others. They are constructed linguistically through the three participants: the sayer, the receiver, and the verbiage. They are the least used processing when representing realities among the types of processes (Halliday, 1985). Lastly, Existential Processes revolve around the processes of existing and occurring as in the expression: "There is/are + noun phrase/s." Existent can be individuals, substance, event, institution, or occurrence (Halliday, 1994). Overall, transitivity is represented by the verbal group, the participants in the nominal groups, and circumstances conveyed by an adjunct.

In this study, I only focused on the Material Processes (MaPs). The choice of MaPs is based on its recurring domination among the processes. The MaPs are considered as the default processes (Halliday, 1985; Munalim, 2017). Channeling Halliday (1985), Munalim (2017) claimed that "human beings who are reflective in nature begin first with the superficial phenomena before the inner worlds are explored. They cannot go 'mentally' without passing 'materially.'" (p. 160). Lean, Don, and Fernandez (2013) studied the polarization in the media representation of terrorism crises using transitivity and lexical choices in Malaysia's leading English dailies. They found that these daily headlines used the dominant material processes that involved political, spiritual leaders, police, emergency services, victims and people in general affected by terrorism. Jamal and Manan (2016) found that a marginalized community was portrayed in a negative, stereotypical, pejorative and discriminatory fashion in a national newspaper in Malaysia. Overall, the MaPs can be used by the text producers in painting what they do under certain circumstances. In this study, the circumstance is the COVID-19 pandemic.

The MaPs describe the processes of 'doing.' The entity does something or undertakes some actions. This can be simplified into a question: "What does X do?" (Eggins, 2004). At the syntagmatic

structure, MaPs contain the Actor/Participant, the Verb in transitive, and the Goal. The Actor is the one who does the action, and the Goal is the one who is affected by the action.

Table 1

Basic Participants of MaPs

Actor	Process	Goal
DOH	helps	145 foreigners.

In a traditional grammar nomenclature, Material Processes follow the sentence pattern of *Subject + Transitive Verb + Direct Object* for the active sentence. For the passive voice, the pattern is *Subject/Direct Object/Not the Doer + Verb Phrase (Be + Past Participle) + Doer in the by-phrase*. The Goal in the passive voice becomes the subject. The movement of the Doer in the passivized construction makes the Doer become irrelevant, unimportant, given, or obvious, thus can be intentionally deleted (Munalim, 2023; Munalim & Gonong, 2019). Table 1 explicates the default syntagmatic structure of the Material Processes. At the semantic level, the process such as “help” can be converted into a nominalized form of ‘helper,’ thus ‘DOH is a helper’. In this study, the predetermined social actor is the DOH. It is inanimate, but is personified with human actions (van Leeuwen, 1996). Matus-Mendoza and de Rycker (2013) did a study on representation of the H1N1 virus, but the social actors under analysis were not the real person, but of the “Mexico City” as an inanimate object.

SFL seeks to see recurrent discourses in social conditions (O’Donnell, 2011). Compatible with SFL, the overall aim of CDA is to reveal the explicit and implicit ideology, power, struggles, and other social pressures. Representation is one of the indispensable tenets of CDA, where it analyzes, interprets, and explains the significance of the relationship (Fairclough, 2003) between what the social actors do and how the intended social groups are able to understand what these social actors are talking about, thereby providing a crucial unifying and homogenizing force (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). Wodak, de Cillia, Reisigl, and Liebhart (2009) asserted that it is “through discourses, social actors constitute objects of knowledge, situations and social roles as well as identities and interpersonal relations between different social groups and those who interact with them” (p. 8).

Methodology

This present study is rather small-scale. There has been a considerable move toward employing a small-scale corpus-based/driven approach due to the inherent time-consuming, if not unfeasible nature of large corpus-based studies. The merit of small-scale studies is favored by eminent scholars like Sinclair (2001). Potter and Wetherell (1987) assured that “a large number of linguistic patterns are likely to emerge from a few people, small samples... and are generally quite adequate for investigating an interesting and practically important range of phenomena” (p. 161). Anthony (2009) also reminded that a set of small corpora is consequential to the analysis of unique properties to glean from the texts. He continued that the detailed information, not the size of the corpus is what matters. In terms of the nature of transitivity, Tang (2018) asserted that transitivity is complex in nature and further maintained that “transitivity, a meaning-based grammar, is ideally suited for detailed analysis of a small number of texts” (p. 5). The use of small-scale corpus was a prudent decision because this study was interested in looking at the Roles and Goals of the DOH during the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic. The height of the pandemic could speak volume about crisis management. Likewise, looking at the linguistic resources of the press releases in just one month of the pandemic could offer a focused analysis, making the findings much more precise and detailed (e.g., Tonkiss, 1998).

The corpus consisted of an in-tact number of 30 press releases published from February 2020 to March 2020 on www.doh.gov.ph which is an official website of DOH. It was during these months when the curve of COVID-19 cases was on its peak. The corpus exemplified the socially constitutive and socially shaped nature of language (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997). All hits of the 'DOH' and the possible use of pronouns in the corpus were first identified using AntConc (Anthony, 2014), which is called transitivity concordancing. It is conducted by collecting the "clauses in which each entity or group of entities in the text is represented in a particular participant role" (Thompson, 2008, p. 18), which is capable of highlighting the key patterns of the DOH as a social actor. The identified concordancing lines were then fed onto the UAM Corpus Tool (O'Donnell, 2015) for automatic segregation of the Material Processes. From the Material Processes, the verb phrases and the Goals were then identified accordingly. The different verb phrases were also sorted according to frequency.

The Goals were also classified into bigger thematic themes. I assigned these themes without assistance of any external coders, as the volume of data was manageable. Herzog's (2016) two stages of analysis such as a descriptive and interpretative analysis were followed through. The descriptive analysis includes quantitative data analysis, while the interpretative domain is "...closely connected to the descriptive analysis..." (p. 166). Eggins (2004) holds that the SFL is descriptive and interpretative in nature. Potter and Wetherell (1987) also suggest that any discourse analysts should focus on asking how a discourse is put together, and what is gleaned from construction and function of the language. The overall analysis involved "precarious process of interpretation" (Herzog, 2016, p. 78), as an analyst can interpret what he or she perceives in the phenomenon. It should be well noted that (critical) discourse analysis is always dependent on the subjectivity or biases of the analysts. Fortunately, the generation of the rather positive themes did not pose too much challenge because as presented in Table 2, these verbs in the Material Processes are all positively loaded. These positive verb phrases were not cherry-picked and were highly corpus driven. While a native of the Philippines, I acknowledged that I am not in any way connected with the DOH nor a government employee of the Philippines (e.g., Holmes, 2020).

Results and Discussion

Table 2 shows that the DOH of the Philippines represented itself in its official press releases using different verb phrases. The overall sentiment analysis of these verbs was obviously optimistic. These positively loaded verbs echoed Kaur and Mutty's (2016) findings that the Halal cosmetic producers use positive lexical items and lexicons in order to attract and persuade female Muslim customers. Its goal is to glocalize marketing strategy in the commodification of Islam. Denti and Fodde (2013) analyzed financial discourse in the EU Financial Stability Reviews. They tried to detect the changes in the concordancy process of certain lexical items. They reported that the financial crisis report was peppered with highly occurring lexical items such as *risk/s*, *debt/s*, *default/s*, and *volatility/ies*. In the same case, the DOH in this present study attempted to convince the society that the DOH's efforts were rather commendable. When these verbs were converted into nominal forms, what seemed clear is that the DOH of the Philippines touted itself heavily as The Ensurer (5 hits), The Monitorer (4 hits) and The Receiver (4 hits). In the unfolding of the patterns, the DOH also painted itself as The Conductor (3 hits), The Contuinor (3 hits), The Urger (3 hits), The Worker (3 hits), The Issuer (3 hits) and the Repatriator (3 hits).

Table 2

DOH's Processes

Verb	F	Verb	F	Verb	f	Verb	f
ensure	5	improve	2	explore	1	raise	1
monitor	4	investigate	2	express	1	recommend	1
receive	4	provide	2	follow	1	record	1
conduct	3	accelerate	1	gather	1	release	1
continue	3	adapt	1	head	1	remind	1
urge	3	adopt	1	identify	1	scale	1
work	3	assist	1	include	1	screen	1
issue	3	balance	1	isolate	1	send off	1
repatriate	3	certify	1	laud	1	shift	1
assess	2	clarify	1	launch	1	strengthen	1
contain	2	commit	1	maximize	1	submit	1
coordinate	2	confirm	1	place	1	take	1
exhaust	2	convey	1	proceed	1	update	1
held	2	deploy	1	procure	1	verify	1
implement	2	exercise	1	protect	1	welcome	1
		expand	1			Total	92

These social roles are demonstrated in the following sample clauses:

- (1) **ensures** a seamless repatriation process for our fellow Filipinos
- (2) **is monitoring** every development on the 2019-nCoV very closely
- (3) **received** several proposals of rapid testing kits
- (4) **is conducting** extensive information-gathering and contact tracing activities
- (5) **continues** our preparations for the possibility of local transmission
- (6) **urges** all individuals to fully cooperate in our investigation and contact tracing activities
- (7) **is issuing** guidelines for the health and safety of all Filipinos
- (8) **repatriated** 445 Overseas Filipinos

These roles are similar to previous studies. Tang (2018) examined the image of China in the three US mainstream newspapers published between 2008 and 2010. Employing the tools of transitivity, it turned out that China was represented as the Persuaded, the Criticized, the Labeled, the Contained, the Punished, the Helped, and the Praised. Yujie and Fengjie (2018) studied Donald Trump's inaugural speech using the transitivity analysis. The results revealed that the relational processes dominated in the discourse to perpetuate the concept of American First in the agenda of Trump. Vladimir Putin's ideological stances in the 2019 Financial Times newspaper were analyzed by Motumona and Megah (2022). Findings showed that Putin characterized himself as a hardworking president based on the domination of material processes with action-related verbs. The president also made use of mental processes to let the audience with him. Similarly, Suryono and Nasir (2022) also reported that President Susilo Yudhoyono (SBY) used material processes to

represent social realities of “doing” in his speeches. SBY represented himself as a law-enforcer while Jokowi was more of a goal-oriented person.

Table 3 shows that the Goals mainly fall under the big theme of ‘Strategic Moves’ performed and planned by the DOH, which is followed by ‘Person/public-related,’ ‘Facility/medicine-related,’ ‘COVID-19-related,’ ‘Document/information-related,’ ‘People’s Possession-related,’ and ‘Group-based.’

Table 3

The Goals of the DOH

Themes from Goals	F	%
Strategic moves	35	38.04
Person/public-related	14	15.22
Facility/medicine-related	11	11.96
COVID-19-related	11	11.96
Document/information-related	9	9.78
People’s possession-related	8	8.70
Group-based	4	4.35
<i>Total</i>	92	100.00

These themes are observed in the following sample Material Processes:

- (1) Strategic move: **is placing expansion of testing centers** as its topmost priority
- (2) Person/public-related: **will protect Filipinos** against COVID-19
- (3) Facility/medicine-related: **includes 122 additional medicines**
- (4) COVID-19-related: **contains the spread of this virus** in our country
- (5) Document/information-related: **is verifying data** on the exact figures
- (6) People’s possession-related: **will monitor the condition of our repatriates**
- (7) Group-based: **deployed surveillance teams** to expedite contact tracing

These patterns assembled above articulated the Goals, which were the immediate receivers of the actions of the DOH. This act of “discursive infrastructure” (Herzog, 106, p. 84) was not impossible given that the DOH representatives crafted the press releases to inform the public of the COVID-19 state and even to mitigate public anxiety. A political discourse intentionally enacts, reproduces and legitimizes power and domination in the public sphere. Fairclough (1992, p. 89) maintained that “ideology is located both in the structures which constitute the outcome of past events, and the conditions for current events, and in events themselves as they reproduce and transform their conditioning structures.” The findings of this current study may relate to Ndambuki’s (2013) study, which reported the themes that women were interested in money, poverty, formal education, and leadership with little interest in corruption and domestic violence, as shared by ten local leaders in Makueni District, Eastern Province of Kenya. Such a report depicted the leaders’ hegemonic power to conceal some concerns related to women’s agency in society. O’Rourke and Hogan (2013) also used a critical analysis of Ireland’s 1987 economic crisis and found that the social actors in the interview painted the 1987 Irish economic crisis as an important event over 20 years later, as they featured them prominently in the talk of the interviews.

Likewise, the American and Spanish parliamentary debate by President Obama and PM Rajoy was investigated to look into the use of evaluation and transitivity processes (Cabrejas-Peñuelas. 2023). The findings illustrated that in the promotion of their ideologies, President Obama was more interested in the expression of desires, achieved using mental desiderative mental processing. PM Rajoy, on the other hand, attempted to use relational processes, verbal processes and existential processes to promote his ideologies. My study, on the one hand, showed that foregrounding the *Strategic Moves* and the *Person/public-Related* Objects in the press releases for two months meant that the DOH of the Philippines strategically painted and privileged itself as a pro-people department with strategic plans in combating the COVID-19 pandemic.

Conclusion

The study showed that the Philippine DOH painted itself as the Ensurer, the Monitorer and the Receiver. Its goals focused on the ‘Strategic Moves’ in combatting the pandemic. The foregrounding of these ‘Strategic Moves’ and the ‘Person/Public-Related’ Goals might mean that it intentionally painted and privileged itself as a pro-people department. The Philippine Department of Health (DOH), which is the focal social actor in the Material Processes of English press releases, was the choice of this study. It is considered as *personal authority legitimation* or *personal authorization* (van Leeuwen, 2007) because of the authority vested in it during the COVID-19 health crisis. The results provided us with a valuable resource for understanding how the health crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic in the Philippines shaped, and was shaped by the formulation of discourse, and how the DOH as a legitimate government social actor represented itself in public. How the DOH represented itself in public meant that there were deliberate attempts to assuage the anxiety and fear of the masses during the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The curation of the different transitivity processes in government materials for public consumption can be considered part and parcel of ESP or English for Specific Purposes (Anthony, 2018; Benesch, 2001; Brown, 2016). In his article on “Technology and ESP,” Bloch (2013) maintained that technology has become the “space for creating new forms of communicating” (p. 387). Hence, students as future professionals deserve the chance to learn, teach and research materials for public consumption. It should be clearly highlighted, however, that all students regardless of their academic backgrounds need to be cognizant of the linguistic constructions in public announcements because public national and global concerns affect everyone. In the context of headline knowledge, Tuttle and Munalim (2022) posited that ESL/ESP/TESOL teachers should continue educating students how to discriminate grammaticality regardless of students’ academic disciplines. This assertion fits the need for students’ tacit understanding of how government materials are constructed linguistically, which are deliberately aimed at representing the social actors or any entities during any health crisis of global interest.

Reflection conjectures that it would be insufficient to conclude that the way any social actor is painted in press releases remains constant every time any crisis disrupts a given society. It is also important to provide a niggling caveat that the findings from this study cannot simply be used to generalize to some other health crises locally and globally. Different government officials who make public announcements constitute the specific groups, whose text production depends on the severity of any health crisis. Political discourse is changeable (Fairclough, 1992) given the “constructed and constructive” (Potter & Wetherell, 1987, p. 35) nature of texts. Herzog (2016, p. 81) mentioned that “discourses and practices are often not fully conscious and are a social—instead of an individual – product.” In like manner, the idea that the way these government officials represented the DOH was personally motivated cannot be neglected as it may result in the creative tension between their personal motives and their political duties as enshrined in their oath of office.

This study is reminiscent of the stacking problem for proving and probing the linguistic choices in political discourse and in diachronic studies as “discourses differ in their degree of repetition, commonality, stability over time...” (Fairclough, 2003, p. 124). There is much clearing of the brush to be done, which is far from being settled in this study. To reiterate, the study is specifically interested in looking at the linguistic resources of the press releases of the DOH during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, resulting only in the analysis of 30 press releases. While the study has employed and revealed a focused analysis, it is understood that the results impinged on the generalizability of the findings. These specific findings should be complemented and supplemented with larger datasets in order to provide clearer patterns of representations of the social actors in crisis management during the onset or early stage of any public health crisis.

Likewise, this paper asserted that the linguistic choices in the press release were meant to mitigate and assuage public anxiety. Because this paper did not cover any further analysis, future studies should provide empirical evidence on the impact of the linguistic choices via the Material Processes on the actual human subjects' perception and behavior during any public health crisis. To still align within the linguistic investigation, perception and behavior may be analyzed through the perlocutionary facets or the immediate effects under the speech act theory (Austin, 1962; Munalim, forthcoming). Analyzing the actual perception and behavior will be helpful in accepting or rejecting the positive representations made by the DOH in their press releases. It could explore criticisms or negative representations, thereby providing a balanced view of the discourses.

A track of helpful research is to compare other government announcements from the three spheres of world Englishes (Munalim, 2019a; Munalim, 2019b) during and after this apocalyptic COVID-19 crisis. The varieties of the linguistic constructions in the press releases and other government documents will have inherent effects on the audience comprehension, reception and acceptance of representations. The analysis of the different constructions and representations in press releases and other government materials will provide a nuanced understanding of cross-cultural communication strategies during a global health crisis like the COVID-19 pandemic. During the onslaught of the COVID-19 pandemic, people stayed home and kept themselves abreast with the online materials of local and international government and private agencies. As of writing in September 2024, there is a growing threat of the monkeypox. Still within the linguistic leanings, the press releases might have been written by different government officials. Their different language proficiency can surely affect the preferences of the transitivity processes, hence worthy of further stretching in future studies.

To close, while the Material Processes in this current study are not enough to capture the whole linguistic resources of the DOH during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is hoped that this paper has initially provided us with the insights into how a government uses the power of language in government announcements like the press releases in crisis management (de Rycker & Don, 2013), especially in its deliberate attempts to tout itself as a people's savior, at least in the socio-political remit of the Philippines.

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