

The Memoranda and Orders of the Department of Education on Learning Continuity Plan: A Critical Discourse Analysis

Cherry May D. Macabodbod and Danilo G. Baradillo²

² University of the Immaculate Conception

ABSTRACT

In the Department of Education, the releasing of numerous monthly memoranda and orders have caused confusion among readers. Studies have reported that they present unclear and ambiguous statements which is crucial since it affects one's interpretation. This qualitative study, utilizing Van Dijk's Critical Discourse Analysis framework aimed to find out the linguistic features, the discourse flow, and the ideological framing embedded in the 30 memoranda and orders on Learning Continuity Plan. The said corpora were gathered from March to December 2020, which were extracted from the DepEd's official website. Analysis revealed that most of the corpora were mandative directives, issued as department order. Results also revealed that the transitivity, active and passive voice, modality, thematic structure, and cohesive device were the linguistic aspects present in the corpora. In the analysis of the discourse flow, writers employed topic and topic navigation in shaping the flow of thoughts. Further, legitimation, unification, and reification were embedded ideological framing in the memoranda and orders. These ideologies carefully attended to the interplay of meaning and power in the actual circumstances of social life. The findings of this study would be an avenue for the readers to contemplate the powerful influence of language in social settings.

KEYWORDS: Education, applied linguistics, critical discourse analysis, learning continuity plan, memoranda and orders, Philippines

INTRODUCTION

Memoranda and orders are generally used for communicating policies, procedures, or related official business within an organization. It is often written from a one-to-all perspective, broadcasting a message to an audience on the activities, events, actions, or observances (Lewis, 2019). However, numerous monthly memoranda and orders are issued in the Department of Education. Instead of becoming an influencing armory in the field of communication being evaluated by the group of policymakers, the clarity of thoughts and expressions are not evident, mixed messages, confusing signals, and murky meanings also happened to result in ambiguity and leading to multiple interpretations (Viennet & Pont, 2017; Warren, 2019).

Globally, confusing directives leave people many questions unanswered and misunderstanding. One of which is the report of Minsk (2020) on Trump's executive memorandum towards the extension of student loan relief for millions of Americans due to the COVID-19 crisis. It was unclear as to the months of extension for the memorandum, and it only provides for a short three-month extension up to December 31, 2020. However, he said that the student payments and interest would be suspended during his released public statements until further notice, perhaps indefinitely. Also, Americans found the issued memorandum vague, for it is not stipulated clearly as to the coverage of student loan order, possible requirements to qualify the extension, and impact on borrowers who are in default on government-held federal student loans. Accordingly, this memorandum provides the borrower with little insight into their rights, options, or obligations.

Sad to note that the Philippines has also experienced ambiguity of directives. This can be seen in the subsequent change of President Duterte from rejecting the idea of opening classes to approving distance and blended learning while the world awaits a cure or vaccine for COVID-19. He approved having limited face-to-face classes in low-risk areas starting January 2021, provided that the schools should meet conditions set by the government, including strict observance of physical distancing and hygiene measures. His conflicting directives issued lead to confusion for everybody, especially the parents and the learners, as to the realization of it and

the readiness of the schools to respond to the current health crisis experience (Tupas, 2020).

In Davao City, a conflict of understanding with the directive is also observed. It can be seen in the statement of the Department of Education Davao City on homeschooling as not advisable as one of the teaching-learning delivery modalities in the present situation. It creates various interpretations and turns misleading among parents regarding where and how to proceed with their children's education, knowing that learners are not allowed to go to school, and not all have gadgets and access to an internet connection (Manila Bulletin, 2020).

The memoranda mentioned above and orders of the Department of Education in line with the Learning Continuity Plan that is issued to the schools and school learning centers have caught my attention. These are social concerns, for these discuss issues concerning our educational system. Nevertheless, there are no current studies published in this field. Mashuri (2016) has only been conducted genre analysis on English memorandum of understanding, while Nelson (2015) has studied the memorandum of understanding of the Jamaican government and trade unions. In these trying times where memorandum and order are means to connect people in the department, I hope to fill in this gap to provide adequate information and quench my curiosity about people's eagerness to harmonize to societies standard. Moreover, for people, specifically the learners, teaching and non-teaching personnel be aware of the language of the directives in the department; this study would be presented at the research conference and published in the online journal. For these reasons, this study was purposively and rigorously conducted.

Purpose of the Study

The present study focused on the Department of Education's memoranda and orders in line with Learning Continuity Plan, purposively selected and identified from the DepEd's official website. Upon working on the ideological framework of power in these directives, the aim of this study revealed the embedded ideological framing found in the memoranda and orders through the examination of the language and its flow of discourse. Therefore, Van Dijk's Critical Discourse Analysis was utilized to perform the textual, discourse flow, and ideological framing to carry out the analyses.

Theoretical Underpinnings

This study is based on the central notion of Van Dijk's (1993) Critical Discourse Analysis, which articulated within a conceptual triangle that connects society, discourse, and social cognition. CDA sets up the relationship between discourse and power investigating the way in which authority, dominance, and social inequality are constructed, sustained, reproduced, and resisted in the discourse of written texts and spoken words, according to Kazemian and Hashemi (2014). In the first level of analysis, that is the identification of the linguistic features, the researcher anchored it on the theory of Halliday's (1985) Systemic Functional Grammar. This theory investigates the structure and content of the text and the relationship between language and its functions in social settings such as the transitivity, active and passive voice, modality, thematic structure, and cohesive device. Looking into the discursive practice, as the second level of analysis, the researcher anchored it to Chafe's (2001) analysis of discourse flow such as the topic and topic navigation. The phrase *discourse flow* in Chafe's theory identifies the forces that give direction to the flow of thoughts in a written discourse. Finally, in the third level of analysis, that is the identification of the ideology, the researcher anchored it to Thompson's (1990) mode of operation of ideology. Ideology includes legitimation, unification, and reification. This theory establishes and sustains relations of domination and analyzes the relationship between symbolic forms of society and relations of power. This is congruent with the argument of Brasier (2002) who claimed that ideology is the way meaning is mobilized in the social world and supports and sustains those in positions of power.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design. This study made use of a qualitative research method, utilizing a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach to identify the memoranda and orders linguistic features, flow of discourse, and its embedded ideological framing. Qualitative research was utilized by the researcher as key instrument in gathering the data by examining the documents gathered; analyzed multiple sources of data which are reviewed and organized into themes and categories; involves inductive and deductive analyses in examining the corpora diligently as to the making of themes and gather evidences

that would support each theme; allowed emergent themes/patterns/designs subject for changes during the initial, actual, or final phase of the analysis through a coding system; and attempted the researcher to develop a complex picture of the problem or issue being studied (Creswell, 2013; Bhandari, 2020).

Research Materials. The materials in this study were memoranda and orders issued by Department of Education for both public primary and secondary schools from March 2020 to December 2020. Those memoranda and orders containing rationale were retrieved and downloaded in the official website, *deped.gov.ph*. The retrieved memoranda and orders were all written in English and discussed Learning Continuity Plan. A total of 30 memoranda and orders served as the corpora that were analyzed using Van Dijk's Critical Discourse Analysis framework. For Braun and Clarke (2013), a range of 10 to 100 corpora would be allowed in thematic analysis; thus, the total sample of 30 corpora was acceptable number of corpora in the study. The memoranda and orders were coded. Coding is the process of condensing the text data (Creswell, 2015) using labels in assigning symbolic meaning to the descriptive or inferential information found in the study (Miles, et al., 2014). In coding the corpora, the memoranda and orders were numbered based on its directive's issuance number (i.e., DO 002 for Corpora 002 followed by a sequence number).

Data Analysis. In the first level of analysis, the corpora were examined as to their directives subclasses and linguistic features. Tsui's (1995) directives subclasses were utilized in categorizing the memoranda and orders, into mandates or advisives. To achieve this, each was investigated as to the purpose of its issuance, whether it gives instructions, threat, advice, or warning. Looking into its linguistic features, Halliday's (1994) Systemic Functional Linguistics was used. Each memorandum and order's rationale were carefully studied into its lexical choice such as the patterns of transitivity, the use of active and passive voice, the choices of modality or polarity, the thematic structure of the text, and the cohesive devices. On the other hand, the flow of the discourse was determined using Chafe's (2001) analysis of discourse flow. For him, the topic, topic navigation, navigation by schema, navigation by interaction, and the text helped in identifying the forces that give direction to the flow of thoughts in

the rationales of the memoranda and orders of the Department of Education. In the analysis of its ideological framing, Thompson's (1990) modes of operation of ideology was utilized. The five modes of ideological operation were considered: legitimation; dissimulation; unification; fragmentation; and reification. After thorough analyses, the findings were then categorized and tabulated to provide clearer discussion of the findings and to draw conclusions based on the research questions posted.

Trustworthiness. To demonstrate the reliability of this qualitative content analysis, using concepts like credibility, confirmability, transferability, and dependability—adopted from Lincoln and Guba's (1985) model, which provides four criteria—was used. The goal of credibility is to bolster the claim that the investigation's results are important enough to pay attention to.

RESULTS

Profile of Research Materials

Presented in Table 1 is the profile of the research materials used in the study. These are the memoranda and orders of the Department of Education that discussed the Basic Education Learning Continuity Plan. The 30 corpora were coded, with their corresponding title and classification. During the analysis, 25 corpora were classified as mandative directives, issued as DepEd orders and 5 corpora were classified as advisory directives, issued as DepEd memoranda. As observed, 25 of the 30 memoranda and orders are mandative directives. These directives are employed to get the addressee performs the action. The issuance of these department orders is an indicative of the urgency to respond with the situation in this time of pandemic.

Table 1
Profile of Research Materials

Type of memoranda/ order	Frequenc y	Codes
Mandative	25	Corpora 002_1, Corpora 006_2, Corpora 007_3, Corpora 008_4, Corpora 009_5, Corpora 014_6, Corpora 015_7, Corpora 016_8, Corpora 018_9, Corpora 021_10, Corpora 023_11, Corpora 024_12, Corpora 025_13, Corpora 026_14, Corpora 027_15, Corpora 028_16, Corpora 029_17, Corpora 031_18, Corpora 032_19, Corpora 033_20, Corpora 035_21, Corpora 036_22, Corpora 038_23, Corpora 040_24, Corpora 041_25
Advisive	5	Corpora 061_26, Corpora 002_27, Corpora 055_28, Corpora 053_29, Corpora 075_30

Shown in the table, there are 25 mandative memoranda/order that were classified during the analysis, while there were only five advisives. There were 30 total of memoranda/order included as the corpora of the study.

Linguistic Features of the Department of Education Memoranda and Orders on Learning Continuity Plan

The data in Table 2 pertains to the linguistic features employed in the memoranda and orders of the Department of Education on Learning Continuity Plan. These linguistic features can be found in the content and structure of the corpora, which include the transitivity, active and passive voice, modality, thematic structure, and cohesive device.

Table 2
Linguistic Features of the Department of Educations
Memoranda and Orders on Learning Continuity Plan

Linguistic Features	Subclasses	Sample Statement from the corpora
Transitivity	Material	The Department of Education issues the enclosed Policy Guidelines on the Adoption of the K to 12 Transition Curriculum Framework for Learners with Disabilities (<i>Corpora 021_10</i>)
	Verbal	The Learning Support Aides communicate with and explain to the learners the learning tasks or activities indicated
	Relational	The JDVP-TVL is a tuition fee assistance (<i>Corpora 035_21</i>)
Voice	Active	DepEd developed the Basic Education Learning Continuity Plan to ensure that learning opportunities are provided to our learners. (<i>Corpora 018_9</i>)
	Passive Agent Specified	The training modality to be adopted by the Regional Offices shall depend on the existing level of community quarantine in the area (<i>Corpora 033_20</i>)
	Passive Agentless	This policy is hereby issued to provide the implementing guidelines which define the purpose, coverage, eligibility criteria, and procedures on the grant o WTDIB (<i>Corpora 029_17</i>)
Modality	shall	This order <i>shall</i> take effect immediately upon its approval and shall remain in force and in effect for the duration of the K to 12 Basic Education Program ... (<i>Corpora 002_1</i>)
	must	According to the Universal Declaration of the Rights of Disabled Persons (1975), education <i>must</i> enable learners with disabilities to develop their capabilities and skills to the maximum (<i>Corpora 021_10</i>)
	may	The structure <i>may</i> change as DepEd responds to new conditions (<i>Corpora 006_2</i>)

Thematic Structure	Simple Theme	The <i>COVID-19 pandemic</i> posed many challenges in the implementation and delivery of basic education in the country (<i>Corpora 033_20</i>)
	Textual Theme	<i>Moreover</i> , this policy institutionalizes the PPSS as a public statement of professional accountability for supervisors (<i>Corpora 025_13</i>)
	Clausal Theme	<i>With the lifting of ECQ in some areas</i> , the government allows the resumption of construction works, taking into consideration construction safety protocols (<i>Corpora 009_5</i>)
Cohesive Device	Additive	<i>Further</i> , the learners and households profile, access, and readiness, as well as the context and situation of the area where the school are located shall be taken into consideration (<i>Corpora 032_19</i>)
	Adversative	Schools are encouraged to integrate such celebrations or observances in curricular activities as reasonable and appropriate, <i>but</i> the schools may plan on the celebrations or observances they will highlight for the year (<i>Corpora 007_3</i>)
	Causal	Recordings of these webinars are also intended to be shown through different platforms on the internet and broadcasted via television as part of the TV education of DepEd. <i>Thus</i> , the webinars and their broadcast will provide a rare opportunity to promote child rights and child protection in basic education (<i>Corpora 061_26</i>)

Transitivity. This grammatical feature is presented in the corpora to analyze the meaning of clause in the text asking who the actors are, the acted upon, and the processes involved in that action. Through this, it can make a clause more understandable because the reader would know the specific process used in the clause.

Voice. In this study, these grammatical constructions communicate certain information about an action which shows the

relationships between the verb and the subject or the object. In this sense, the memoranda and orders need to be intentional about the voice to ensure clarity, making it explicit to the reader who is acting or what had been done in the discourse.

Modality. It is presented in the memoranda and orders as a phenomenon whereby language is used to discuss possible situations. It can express obligation, advice, permission, and possibility. *Shall* is a modal verb example that is found in the corpora. It is used to suggest or ask someone's willingness to do something. In the sample statement, the writers persuade the DepEd Implementing and Non-implementing Units to prudently manage their financial and human resources in this time of pandemic. It is a conscious desire of the writers, asking the addressee to positively respond to this call to suffice the needs and to support the implementation of the Basic Education Learning Continuity Plan.

Thematic Structure. In this study, this linguistic feature organizes the message and enhances connectivity between ideas in the memoranda and orders. It unifies around an initiating topic, which makes the statements coherent and easy to comprehend.

Cohesive Device. In the memoranda and orders of the Department of Education, this helps achieve a well-constructed and understandable writing. Moreover, this signals the relationship between the different clauses, sentences, and paragraphs.

Discourse Flow Employed in the Rationales of the Department of Education Memoranda and Orders

The second part of the analysis probed how the rationales of the memoranda and orders on Learning Continuity Plan help shape the flow of the discourse. Hence, it has been found out that the department uses topic and topic navigation in shaping the discourse flow, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3
Flow of the Discourse in the Rationales of the Memoranda and Orders

Discourse Flow	Subject	Sample lines of Rationale from the Corpora
Topic	Massive Shifts in the Functioning of All Sectors and behavior of Societies Around the World due to COVID-19	The Coronavirus Disease pandemic has posed significant shifts in the functioning and behavior of societies in many parts of the world (<i>Corpora 040_24</i>)
	Safety and Development of the DepEd Personnel	School heads, as stewards of schools, play a crucial role in ensuring an enabling and supportive environment for effective teaching and learning (<i>Corpora 024_12</i>)
	The Implementation of Learning Continuity Plan	<i>As response</i> , the Department of Education through DepEd Order No. 12, s. 2020 has adopted the Basic Education Learning Continuity Plan, a package of education interventions that will respond to the basic education challenges brought about by COVID-19 .. (<i>Corpora 015_7</i>)
Topic Navigation	Students Protection and Program of Assistance	<i>In this regard</i> , DepEd developed the Senior High School Voucher Program, a program of financial assistance ..(<i>Corpora 016_8</i>)

Topic. It is the subject of the written discourse, introduced by the DepEd writers. The utilization of topic, as a discourse flow, orients the readers on the entirety of the directives. Hence, two subjects are observed in the rationales gathered such as the *massive shifts in the functioning of all sectors and behavior of societies around the world due to COVID-19* and the *safety and development of the De Ed personnel*, which are identified as the topics of the memoranda and orders on Learning Continuity Plan.

Topic Navigation. This is another discourse flow evident in the rationales of the memoranda and orders on Learning Continuity Plan in which the utilization of this is an introduction of a new topic in the flow of the conversation. Here, the previous topic had just been closed, and to continue the discourse, another topic will be introduced. In its introduction, the utilization of linguistic markers is employed. As observed, the writers expose two general contents of the corpora navigating to a new topic, that is, *the implementation of the Learning Continuity Plan* and the *students' protection and program of assistance*.

Ideological Framing in the Memoranda and Orders of the Department of Education

Legitimation. This illustrates how systematic relations of power can be established and maintained in the corpora by being represented as legitimate. In this regard, the legal systems are presented to guide both the system and the individuals. Hence, the DepEd writers employed rationalization strategy in the memoranda and orders to show the legitimation ideology.

Unification. It is shown in the memoranda and orders on Learning Continuity Plan by bringing people and agencies together with no material ties to help each other in facing the current problem. Here, collaboration is the strategy employed by the writers to signify unification ideology

Reification. This ideology is embedded in the corpora stating that the transitory historical situations are natural and would continue infinitely. The writers communicate it to the readers using the naturalization strategy.

DISCUSSION

Five linguistic features have transpired in the study of the memoranda and orders of the Department of Education in line with Learning Continuity Plan. These are the transitivity, active and passive voice, modality, thematic structure, and cohesive device. The identification and the interpretation of these linguistic aspects in a

discourse is an important part of the conceptual triangle, according to Van Dijk (2006).

Transitivity. It is the transmission of ideas which represents the processes or experiences like actions, events, processes of consciousness, and relations that covers all phenomena and anything that can be expressed by a verb, according to Halliday (1994). Based on the analysis, three transitivity processes such as the material, verbal, and relational processes are evident in the corpora. Hence, Obiero (2017) posits that writers normally make decisions on the types of processes they involve based on the kind of reality they intend to portray.

Active and Passive Voice. The employed voice phenomena in the memoranda and orders are the active voice, passive agent specified, and passive agentless. As to Sogut (2018), these have been becoming important component among the variety of linguistic devices to convey writers position in the reported event, foreground or backgrounding the agent and action in a specific directive. Correspondingly, this linguistic feature makes it impossible to report the events in a neutral way because such choices, which the language system both enables and forces the writers to make in every utterance, are precisely the points at which the operation of ideology can and does occur. Therefore, writers have to make choice among the active voice or passive voice because it is not possible to use them together in an utterance, according to Xie (2013).

Modality. Halliday (1994) asserts that it is the speaker's judgment of the probabilities or the obligations involved in what he is saying. It can be inferred that its usage is to establish the judgment and the opinion of the writers towards his topic and readers, which relates the validity of what is being predicated, stated, questioned, commanded, or offered, according to Obiero (2017). Further, for Halliday and Matthiessen (2014), this may also refer to social relationship within the clause, in which Olaniyan and Adeniji (2015) claim that it is signified in clauses in a range of linguistic forms, namely, modal auxiliary verbs, sentence adverbs, adjectives, and in some verbs and nominalizations.

Thematic Structure. The structuring of language as a message is realized in the thematic structure of the constituent clauses of a text. It plays an important role to the reader's comprehension as it facilitates the coherence and cohesiveness of the text, according to To (2018). Pengsun and Yushan (2014) added that it is concerned with the organization of information within clauses, and through this, with the organization of larger text.

Cohesive Device. Almutairi (2017) notes that it shows the relation between clauses and connects ideas together, which contributes to the semantic organization of the text, thus, standing on its own as a category covering the usage of adjunct-like elements in the sentences. Moreover, it enables the process of text analysis to spot and examine the cohesive components of its texture. These ties connect the meaning of items within the text to each other, to the context, and the world outside the text.

This study has proven that the examination of the rationales subject in the memoranda and orders helped shape the flow of the discourse. Hence, these thoughts drive the language forward and is constrained by limits on the amount and duration of information that can appear in a focus of active consciousness. This flow of thoughts is then guided by the manipulation of discourse topics at various levels, according to Chafe (1994) and Tannen, et al. (2015). The gathered rationales of the memoranda and orders from the DepEd official website revealed that Chafe's (2001) two of the flow of discourses are found in the corpora. These are the topic and topic navigation.

Topic. According to Tannen, et al., (2015), this refers to the discourse topic or the topic of the paragraph. It is a coherent aggregate of thoughts that may be introduced by a participant in a conversation and by another, or by several participants jointly. Typically, these have clear beginnings, although not always, and their endings may be well-defined.

Topic Navigation. According to Tannen, et al., (2015), once a topic has been introduced, the more limited focus of active consciousness navigates through it, activating first one included idea and then another until the topic is judged to have been adequately

covered and closure is judged appropriate. This navigation, as to Chafe (2001) may be guided by a schema, some familiar pattern that provides a path for a writer to follow. Consequently, according to Yang, et al., (2013), when encountering a topic shift, readers navigate to build a new substructure for the new topic and once the foundation for the new topic is laid, the mapping stage begins when readers gradually develop the representation by mapping on new information.

What can be drawn from the findings are the different ideologies embedded in the memoranda and orders on Learning Continuity Plan. These are the legitimization, unification, and reification ideologies. According to Lukin (2017), ideology is formed through repeated manifestations of a pattern of meanings. It is the basis of the social representation of groups, as to Van Dijk (1998). Moreover, for Nescolarde-Selva, et al. (2017), it sees the relations between ideologies and discourse. It emphasizes on its four qualities such as a) the way ideas have; b) power; c) guiding evaluations; and d) guiding actions.

Legitimation. It is the functioning of ideology in which meaning serves to establish and sustain relations of domination, which is regarded as integral part of a broader concern with the characteristics of action and interaction, the forms of power and dominion, the nature of social structure, social reproduction and social change, the features of symbolic forms and their roles in social life, according to Thompson (1990).

Unification. According to Barnes (2014), it collectivizes members of a society who share similar beliefs and sets up oppositions between differing ideologies. Here, the writers inform the readers that collaboration exists amidst pandemic, showing people's unit and willingness to help each other.

Reification. As to Kazaz and Gulnar (2014), these transitory historical situations are claimed to be natural, and are emphasized that these will continue infinitely. Consequently, this ideology used to describe a form of social consciousness in which human relations come to be identified with the physical properties

of things, thereby acquiring an appearance of naturalness and inevitability, according to Thompson (1990).

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