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“PERPETUAL STATE OF DISREPAIR”: A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF A SPEECH ON THE WORST HIGHWAYS IN THE PHILIPPINES

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This study utilizes Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework to examine a legislative speech in the Philippine House of Representatives concerning the severe state of rural road infrastructure. Through textual analysis, this research identifies the strategic use of rhetorical devices—including hyperbole, metaphor, and verdictive speech acts—that influence audience perception and garner support for infrastructure projects. Rhetorical appeals such as ethos, logos, and pathos are highlighted as instrumental in establishing credibility, constructing logical arguments, and evoking emotional responses. The speech style, tone, and delivery reflect formal legislative discourse, while revealing the speaker's power dynamics through non-decision-making and ideological influence. By focusing on sociocultural dimensions of discourse, this study uncovers the role of language in shaping socio-political agendas and influencing public discourse on infrastructure. The findings contribute to the global understanding of political language as a tool for mobilizing action on socio-economic issues, illustrating how discourse analysis can unveil power structures and ideological forces at play in policy-making.

Keywords: critical discourse analysis, Fairclough's CDA, speech analysis, infrastructure deprivation, road infrastructure

Трані Гатіль. "Вічний стан аварійності": Критичний дискурс-аналіз промови про найгірші дороги на Філіппінах. У дослідженні використано методологію критичного дискурсивного аналізу (КДА) Ферклофа для вивчення законодавчих промов у Палаті представників Філіппін, виголошених з приводу критичного стану сільської дорожньої інфраструктури. За допомогою текстового аналізу це дослідження

визначає стратегічне використання риторичних прийомів, включаючи гіперболу, метафору та вирокові мовленнєві акти, які впливають на сприйняття аудиторією та забезпечують підтримку інфраструктурних проєктів. Риторичні "апелятиви", такі як етос, логос та пафос, виділяються як інструменти для встановлення довіри, побудови логічних аргументів та викликання емоційних реакцій. Стиль, тон та подача мовлення відображають формальний законодавчий дискурс, водночас розкриваючи динаміку влади оратора через неприйняття рішень та ідеологічний вплив. Зосереджуючись на соціокультурному вимірі дискурсу, стаття розкриває роль мови у формуванні соціально-політичних програм та впливі на публічний дискурс щодо інфраструктури. Результати сприяють глобальному розумінню політичної мови як інструменту мобілізації дій у царині соціально-економічних питань та демонструє, як дискурс аналіз може викрити владні структури та ідеологічні сили, що формують політику.

Ключові слова: критичний дискурс аналіз, КДА Ферклофа, аналіз мовлення, інфраструктурна депривація, дорожня інфраструктура

Introduction. Road infrastructure is fundamental to economic development, serving as a critical channel for connectivity, commerce, and social interaction across regions (Muneer & Garcia, 2017). Globally, robust road networks enhance the flow of goods, services, and people, directly impacting productivity and quality of life (Gunasekara et al., 2008; Ding, 2013; Ng et al., 2018). However, substantial disparities in infrastructure persist, especially in developing countries. The island of Samar in the Philippines is a notable example, where poor road conditions hinder economic growth and perpetuate socio-economic inequalities.

Samar, the third-largest and seventh-most populous island in the Philippines, is served by a 205-kilometer national road known for its dangerously deteriorated state, earning titles like "killer road" and "hellish road" (Leyte-Samar Daily Express, 2023; Rappler, 2022). This infrastructure crisis, which poses safety risks and hampers local economic development, mirrors challenges faced in other underserved regions worldwide (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2023; Aggarwal, 2018). Addressing these issues requires not only technical solutions but also a deep understanding of the socio-political processes that shape public infrastructure discourse.

In this context, the language used by political figures becomes a powerful tool for framing issues, mobilizing support, and influencing policy. Representative Michael Tan's recent address to the Philippine House of Representative exemplifies how strategic rhetoric can shape socio-economic agendas. His call for increased funding and expedited repairs on Samar's roads highlights the influential role of language in bringing urgent local issues to the forefront of national policy debates. This approach resonates with global examples, such as Greta Thunberg's advocacy for climate action (Sabherwal et al., 2021) and other prominent campaigns where discourse shapes public consciousness and policy action.

Building on the recognition that discourse influences socio-economic development, this study applies Fairclough's CDA framework to examine how Representative Tan's speech constructs and promotes an agenda for road infrastructure improvements. As argued by Wodak and Meyer (2009), discourse not only reflects social realities but also helps construct them, embedding socio-political values and priorities within language. This study thus contributes to the body of knowledge on discourse analysis in socio-political contexts, providing insights into how rhetorical strategies can impact public perceptions and policy priorities.

This research addresses the following questions:

1. What are the key discursive strategies used in Representative Tan's speech?
2. How do these strategies shape public perception and interpretation among citizens of Samar, Philippines?

The language of politics.

Representative Michael Tan, in his address to the House of Representatives, emphasized the imperative of prioritizing road repairs in Samar and advocated for increased funding and immediate action to rectify the situation. His speech exemplifies the influential role of language in shaping policy agendas and driving socio-economic change, echoing global examples such as Greta Thunberg's advocacy for climate action (Sabherwal et al., 2021) and former President Rodrigo Duterte's prioritization of anti-drug initiatives (Jetter & Molina, 2022).

Oftentimes, talks about economic development are detached from language, despite the fact that economic development agenda is crafted, informed and understood through it. Walsh (2006) saw this understudied positive role of language towards socio-economic development. His paper asserts that all languages can have roles and be integrated socio-economic development. He further highlights that no language is anti-development. In his published book, he investigated how the Irish language 'effects social and economic change through its influence on factors such as identity, self-confidence, self-sufficiency, character, cohesion, and innovation' (Walsh, 2010, p. 69). One notable literature he mentioned was De Freine (1965), which holds that language is not just a system of communication, but it is an inseparable fragment of social behaviour. 'Language plays a key psychological role in any social group, is the strongest bond uniting the group, and is the symbol and safeguard of their common life' (p. 89).

Similarly, Fairclough (1995) highlights that language is a kind of social practice. It is an eternal intervening force of social order. It reflects reality from all

angles and manipulates and influences social process by reproducing ideology. In the social and cultural environment, there is an interactive relationship between language and values, religious beliefs and power relations.

Language is an agent of economic development. When delivered with the right purpose, syntax, backed with data and convincing rhetoric, speeches have the power to shape policy-making and action.

Recognizing the power of discourse in shaping collective consciousness and informing policy decisions, this study employs Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to delve into the linguistic features and discursive structures of Representative Tan's speech. As posited by Wodak and Meyer (2009), discourse not only reflects societal realities but also constructs and perpetuates them, making it crucial to decipher the underlying meanings and implications embedded within language. Specifically, this study seeks to elucidate the discourse surrounding economic development in Samar Province and its implications for local residents, shedding light on the socio-political dynamics at play.

With this backdrop, the study addressed the following research questions:

1. What is the discourse?
2. How is this discourse perceived and interpreted by the citizens of Samar, Philippines?

Theoretical background

1. This research is premised on *Critical Discourse Analysis* (CDA) to analyze the language of the speech. Specifically, we adopt the framework developed by Norman Fairclough (2003) to understand how language, power, and social structures interact within the speech.

Fairclough's framework proposes three interconnected levels of analysis (Fairclough, 2003): (1) Text Analysis: This level focuses on the micro-structures of the text, examining vocabulary choices, grammar, sentence structure, and cohesion; (2) Discursive Practice: This level delves into the processes of production and interpretation of the speech. We consider factors such as the speaker's background, intended audience, and the historical and social context (Wodak, 2001); (3) Social Practice: This level broadens the analysis to explore the wider social, political, and economic structures that shape the discourse (Fairclough, 2013).

By employing Fairclough's framework, this research aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of the language used in the speech to potentially influence

the audience (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002), revealing the hidden meanings, power dynamics (Wodak & Meyer, 2009), and social implications embedded within the speaker's message.

2. The concept of *Systemic Functional Linguistics* (SFL) was first introduced by Halliday in the 1960s in the United Kingdom, and later in Australia. It is made as a grammar model that sees language as a set of semantic choices (Bloor and Bloor, 2004), which means people use language choices to produce meanings. The choice of different words and other syntactic or grammatical features will also have different meanings.

One of the metafunctions in SFL is the interpersonal metafunction. It is related to the social world, especially the relationship between the speaker and the listener (Halliday, 2014). Interpersonal metafunction regards clauses as exchanges. It can be described by explaining the semantics of interaction and the metalanguage that correlate with language as interaction (exchange) and modality. In this regard, this current study will bench on the FLS to understand how the speakers/writers are able to use language in such a way as to position themselves before their audience/readers. Hence, this will be useful in the analysis of the interpersonal meaning implied in a speech to see how the speaker uses his speech to persuade the audience because persuasion is closely related to the relationship between the speaker/- writer and the audience/readers.

Literature review. Scholars like Chilton (2003) argue that speech acts are inseparable from social and political interaction, highlighting their entwinement with social conventions and institutions. *Political discourse analysis* (PDA) emerged in the latter part of the 20th century, emphasizing discourse's role in shaping social formations, power dynamics, and political practices (Luke, 2002; Dunmire, 2012). Drawing from diverse conceptual frameworks and methodologies, PDA explores how discourse constructs and perpetuates political ideologies, practices, and systems. Kenzhekanova (2015) adopts a pragmatic approach to analyze linguistic features of political discourse, including intentionality, emotiveness, and intertextuality. This pragmatic analysis delves into how political discourse constructs meaning, shapes perceptions, and influences political behavior. Critical discourse analysis (CDA) further enriches our understanding by examining the linguistic character of social and political discourse and its implications for broader social issues and power dynamics (Fairclough, 1992).

Carreon and Svetanant (2017) scrutinized the political speeches of the Thai Prime Minister, Gen Prayuth Chan-ocha, highlighting the absence of traditional rhetorical strategies found in speeches of other democratic world leaders like Barack Obama (Kazemian & Hashemi, 2014). Similarly, Hassan et al. (2019) analyzed an Australian Senator's speech, revealing discriminatory language and hatred towards Islam. Ramanathan et al. (2020) examined the lexical and speech act strategies used in election tweets to establish power dynamics between political figures and citizens. Berowa (2019) explored the pragmatic functions of swearing in President Duterte's speeches, revealing its role in building speaker-audience connections. Medriano and De Vera (2019) identified consistent illocutionary acts and rhetorical strategies, particularly Ethos, in Duterte's monologic discourses. Rubic-Remorosa (2018) and Harnos and Gergi-Horgos (2022) employed CDA to uncover linguistic features and metaphors in political speeches, shedding light on underlying discursive patterns and ideologies.

These studies collectively demonstrate the significance of CDA in revealing implicit social structures, power relations, and ideologies embedded within political discourse. They underscore the importance of context and linguistic analysis in understanding the nuanced meanings and impacts of political language. By adopting Fairclough's socio-critical approach and Van Dijk's socio-cognitive approach, the current research aims to build on these findings to elucidate the language of economic development and its effects on grassroots communities.

Methods. Research design. This study utilizes a qualitative approach grounded in Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to examine the language used in political discourse surrounding infrastructure issues in the Philippines. CDA, particularly Fairclough's (2003) three-dimensional framework, is widely recognized for its capacity to go beyond surface meanings to uncover the deeper social, political, and ideological forces embedded within language (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002; Wodak & Meyer, 2009). This framework's flexibility allows researchers to apply it across varied contexts, making it an ideal tool for analyzing Representative Michael Tan's speech, which addresses complex socio-economic issues tied to road infrastructure in Samar Province. The study's design aims to reveal how language reflects and shapes public consciousness around infrastructure development, offering a model for international researchers examining similar political discourses in other developing regions.

Data collection procedure. The primary data for this analysis is a recorded speech delivered by Representative Michael Tan on the topic of road infrastructure

in Samar Province, extracted from the 19th Congress Regular Session Budget Briefing video on the official YouTube channel of the Philippine House of Representatives. The recording, titled "FY 2023 Budget Briefings (Committee): DPWH, NCIP," serves as an authentic source of discourse, allowing for direct engagement with the speaker's rhetorical strategies.

To enhance the analysis, this study also includes audience interpretation through semi-structured interviews, a method aligned with Aghagolzadeh and Bahrami-Khorsid (2009), who advocate for understanding discourse as shaped not only by language but by its interaction with people, institutions, and social contexts. Four distinct participant groups were recruited: provincial directors/executives, private sector representatives, public sector employees, and local residents. These interviews, audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim, capture varied perspectives on the speech and the broader issue of infrastructure, lending depth to the analysis of public interpretation and response.

Mode of Analysis.

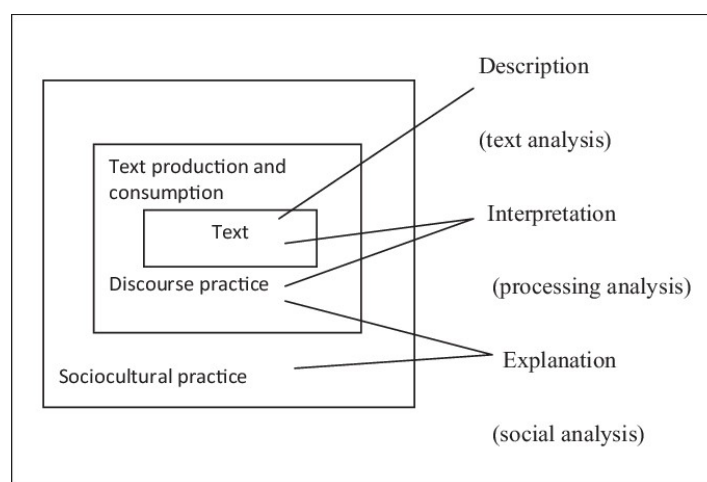


Figure 1. Fairclough's three-dimensional framework for analysis of discourse

Representative Tan's speech was analyzed using Fairclough's three-dimensional framework, examining textual, discursive, and sociocultural practices within the discourse. The analysis unfolds across three levels:

1. **Textual Analysis (Micro-level):** This level focuses on micro-linguistic elements—vocabulary, grammar, and rhetorical devices used in the speech. Emphasis is placed on identifying rhetorical strategies, such as hyperbole and

metaphor, to understand how they contribute to the speaker's appeal and credibility (logos, ethos, pathos) (Fairclough, 1989; Van Dijk, 1995).

2. Discursive Practice (Meso-level): At this level, the analysis explores how the speech is produced and interpreted within its socio-political context, drawing on Halliday's (1994) Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) to understand interpersonal meanings conveyed by language choices. The study examines how Representative Tan establishes authority and rapport with his audience, both explicitly (through declarative statements) and implicitly (through respectful address).

3. Sociocultural Practice (Macro-level): This level situates the discourse within broader social and political structures, focusing on the implicit power dynamics and ideologies that shape the speech. Drawing from Lukes' (2014) theory of power, the analysis examines how Tan exercises non-decision-making power by guiding the discourse and influencing perceptions without direct authority.

Findings. Textual analysis

The ethos of the speaker – trustworthiness, and respect – is observed when the speaker greeted the legislators present during the DPWH Budget Hearing. The speaker proceeded with actor description (Van Dijk, 2006) of an in-group member, DPWH Secretary Manuel Bunuan, of whom he ideologically described as, “an experienced technocrat”. These opening and beginning statements follow a pre-determined format of opening part of speech. This is used to catch the attention and create goodwill among the audience.

“Madam chair, secretary Manuel Bonoan and officials of the Department of Public Works and Highways, good morning. First of all, I wish to congratulate Secretary Bonoan on being appointed as the Secretary of DPWH. I am pleased to see that the president chose an experienced technocrat to lead one of the most important agencies in the government.”

Through comparison and use of numbers and statistics (Van Dijk, 1995; 2006; Kadim, 2022), the speaker established the context of the Maharlika highway. The points of comparison and use of numbers in the speech may have been strategically used by the speaker to better connect with the in-groups who have no prior knowledge of the Samar segment of the Maharlika highway. Notably, use of numbers, figures and statistics further add credibility and reason to the speech, an appeal to reason (logos).

“To provide some context the province of Samar has roughly the same population as La Union. In terms of land area however it has same land area as Cavite, Laguna, Pampanga and Metro Manila combined. Data from the department shows that about 205 kilometers of the Maharlika Highway turns through the province of Samar. This accounts to 52 percent of the whole Eastern Visayas segment of the highway. Specifically, the segment in the first district is 96 kilometers and the segment in the second district is 109.7 kilometers long.” (Michael Reynolds Tan. September 16, 2022. FY 2023 Budget Briefings (Committee): DPWH, NCIP)

A verdictive speech act (Austin, 1961; Searle, 1969) in which the speaker makes a judgment of about the specific segment of the highway, labeling it as ‘worst’ not only in the region but in the entire country. However, with the use of the epistemic adverb ‘probably’, it can be taken that the expressed claim lacks in certainty. To support this, the speaker proceeded with descriptives. The use of the lexicon ‘heavily damaged and riddled with potholes’ can infer the severity of the condition of the highway in question.

“Despite all of this, the Samar segment of the Maharlika Highway is the worst highway in the Eastern Visayas and probably the worst in entire country. Large areas of the highway are heavily damaged and riddled with potholes in certain areas only one lane is passable.” (Michael Reynolds Tan. September 16, 2022. FY 2023 Budget Briefings (Committee): DPWH, NCIP)

Metaphor is employed by the speaker, describing the highway as the "key artery" of the economy. This metaphor highlights the crucial role of the highway in transporting goods and services across the country, similar to how arteries deliver blood throughout the body (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). The use of the "key artery" metaphor carries an implicature (Grice, 1975). The speaker suggests that a disrepair in this vital artery would lead to hindered economic flow, potentially implying negative consequences like slow transportation of goods. This implicature strengthens the argument for immediate action. By emphasizing the highway's role as a vital part of the supply chain, the speaker strengthens their argument with logos (Van Dijk, 1988). Highlighting the economic importance adds a layer of reason to the plea for repairs.

“Maharlika highway is the key artery that connects Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao. This doesn’t just affect Samar. the Maharlika highway is the key artery that connects Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao. The vehicles that pass through some are segment of the highway are not just locals in fact most of the vehicles that use the highway are a large transport trucks that carry essential goods from Luzon to Visayas and Mindanao and vice versa.”
(Michael Reynolds Tan. September 16, 2022. FY 2023 Budget Briefings (Committee): DPWH, NCIP)

The speaker expressed three affirmative statements about the efforts of the department. He expresses awareness of the several projects undertaken in the past. This is an expression of the speaker’s pathos, wherein, he may have emotionally appealed to the positive side of the department through the affirmative statements, and further supported with the imperative, “I pray however, something can be done.” The use of the phrase ‘try to fix and rehabilitate’ in the sentence may have a presupposed message that the projects are still a work in progress, unfinished or partially successful. The speaker expresses gratitude towards the effort of the department.

The epistemic stance used by the speaker through the adverb ‘however’ can be interpreted as a declarative question (Bongelli et al., 2018). In the same sentence, the speaker used a hyperbole to describe the longstanding condition of the Samar segment of the Maharkila Highway. This technique is often used to emphasize something, to gain attention, to achieve a political aim (Van Dijk, 1995; Abbas, 2019; Cruse, 2006).

“I understand the department has had several projects in the last few years to try to fix and rehabilitate the highway. I laud the department. I thank you for its efforts. What I don’t understand however is in the last decade or so the Samar segment has remained in a perpetual state of disrepair. For next year’s proposed budget only 3 billion was allocated for the projects involving the Samar’s first and second district segment of the Maharlika highway. This is even less than half of the total amount necessary to really restore the highway. I understand Mr. Secretary that what happened in the past is out of your control. I pray however that moving forward something can be done.”
(Michael Reynolds Tan. September 16, 2022. FY 2023 Budget Briefings (Committee): DPWH, NCIP)

Discursive practice. Production and context.

Congressman Reynolds Michael Tan is the Samar 2nd District representative since 2022. He served as Governor and Vice Governor of Samar in the past. Apart from creating bills and resolutions, representatives review the budget proposed by the executive department and create the general appropriations. As a local of the Samar province, he has first hand experience of the bad road condition in the province. Evidently, the speech delivered by the speaker during the 19th Congress Regular Session: DPWH Budget Hearing is, in its form, style and delivery, is dedicated for some formal occasions and for an audience of intellectual institution – the House of Representatives. However, as Rubic-Remosora (2018) noted, this does not mean that the broader audience should not be considered in crafting speeches, as these speeches are often broadcasted by media, and transcripts are easily available on the internet.

On this level of analysis, the researcher, following, Halliday's (1994) SFL, analyzed the interpersonal meanings of language as it is used.

The speaker used declarative moods throughout his speech to provide information, to congratulate, to express pleasure and gratitude. Specifically, he made use of the following techniques: building speaker-audience goodwill, providing context, and asserting the issue. The first technique can be seen both at the beginning and the end of the speech, when he greeted the audience, particularly the DPWH secretary, further congratulating him on his appointment. Toward the end of the speech, he expressed his gratitude to the secretary for the answers to his questions and asserted expectation that the department would do well under his leadership. These declaratives may arouse the audience's positive feelings (i.e. cooperation and sympathy) (Fanani et al., 2019), as the Congressman pushes for an urgent and definite plan of action for the Samar segment of the Maharlika highway.

*“Madam chair, secretary Manuel Bonoan and officials of the Department of Public Works and highways, **good morning.**”*

*“First of all, **I wish to congratulate** Secretary Bonoan on being appointed as the Secretary of DPWH.”*

*“Thank you, Mr. Secretary for your insightful and candid answer. **I am certain that the department will do exceedingly well** under your leadership. Madame chair, I have no further questions. **Thank you.**”* (Michael Reynolds Tan. September 16, 2022. FY 2023 Budget Briefings (Committee): DPWH, NCIP)

The second technique was observed when the Congressman used declaratives to provide background information about the condition of the Maharlika highway. This shows his social awareness, considering majority of the audience appear to have little to no context about the Samar roads. The members of the House of Representatives come from different parts of the Philippines. There is a higher chance that the majority of the members do not have an in-depth background about the Samar province.

“To provide some context the province of Samar has roughly the same population as La Union.”

“Data from the department shows that about 205 kilometers of the Maharlika Highway turns through the province of Samar. “

“Large areas of the highway are heavily damaged and riddled with potholes in certain areas only one lane is passable. “(Michael Reynolds Tan. September 16, 2022. FY 2023 Budget Briefings (Committee): DPWH, NCIP)

The transcript below shows the third technique that the Congressman used with declaratives which is to assert the issue. He did this by building on the idea that the Samar road problem is a national concern.

*“I want to emphasize that **this issue isn’t just local**. This doesn’t just affect Samar. **the Maharlika highway is the key artery that connects Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao**. The vehicles that pass through some are segment of the highway are not just locals. **In fact most of the vehicles that use the highway are large transport trucks that carry essential goods from Luzon to Visayas and Mindanao and vice versa**. “ (Michael Reynolds Tan. September 16, 2022. FY 2023 Budget Briefings (Committee): DPWH, NCIP)*

Furthermore, he used declaratives for positive framing (acknowledgement and gratitude) to the efforts of the department and negative framing (hyperbole) of Samar road exaggerating the length of its bad condition as “*perpetual*” to assert that additional resources are needed to address the persistent issues with the Samar segment of the Maharlika Highway. Both techniques are effective as found in the study of Lagerwerf et al. (2015) wherein positive framing increases attention,

which means that audience tend to listen to the speaker the more they are framed positively, while negative framing increases immediate attention or action.

“I understand the department has had several projects in the last few years to try to fix and rehabilitate the highway. I laud the department. I thank you for its efforts. What I don’t understand however is in the last decade or so the Samar segment has remained in a perpetual state of disrepair.”(Michael Reynolds Tan. September 16, 2022. FY 2023 Budget Briefings (Committee): DPWH, NCIP)

Another prominent mood used by the Congressman is the interrogative mood. He used this when raising concerns about the Maharlika Highway. Questions are posed to Secretary Bonoan, asking about the department's projects, budget allocation, and the prioritization of road maintenance and repair projects. Furthermore, he used interrogative to seek clarifications on other road issues such as road widening, road right of way and traffic control. The use of interrogative mood seeks information and clarification (Halliday, 2014; Eggins, 2004).

“First, how does the department prioritize the distribution of road maintenance and repair projects?”

“Secretary, can you please enlighten us of the department’s plan to finally repairing and rehabilitating the highway?”

“Assuming that the highway can be rehabilitated, what is the department’s plan for ensuring that the highway does not return to its current condition now?”(Michael Reynolds Tan. September 16, 2022. FY 2023 Budget Briefings (Committee): DPWH, NCIP)

Reception. The speech delivered by Congressman Tan received responses from Secretary Manuel Bonoan. Secretary Bonoan acknowledged the problem and presented the government's commitment to improving the national road system, including the Maharlika Highway, as a priority project within this administration.

“I can rest assured the good congressman that the concern in Samar will be attended to within this administration...” (Manuel Bonoan. September 16, 2022. FY 2023 Budget Briefings (Committee): DPWH, NCIP)

While acknowledging budget constraints, Bonoan emphasized long-term plans for a full design review and potential international funding, demonstrating a comprehensive approach beyond immediate repairs.

“We need actually to...to review the initial design of the national highways of Maharlika so that we want to convert Daang Maharlika as a primary trunk line of unimpeded travel from Cagayan all the way to Mindanao.” (Manuel Bonoan. September 16, 2022. FY 2023 Budget Briefings (Committee): DPWH, NCIP)

Recognizing the need for sustainable solutions, Bonoan stressed the importance of consistent maintenance and stricter enforcement of vehicle overloading regulations. Secretary Bonoan acknowledges the problems, outlines a multi-pronged approach with long-term vision, and emphasizes the need for collaboration with local entities.

“There are two things. We have to continue with the maintenance requirements religiously to maintain the roads. Secondly, Mr. Chairman, I think we need to address also the overloading problems in the Philippines.”

“No matter how we are going to improve the roads, if we are not going to control overloading, Mr. Chairman, I think we will just end up again with more deteriorations of our roads. This is our plan, actually, to also coordinate with other entities, actually, to address the overloading problem...” (Manuel Bonoan. September 16, 2022. FY 2023 Budget Briefings (Committee): DPWH, NCIP)

Through the interview conducted after watching the speech, the researcher was able to draw out four relevant themes from 10 initial themes and 6 cluster themes: (1) Speech style and delivery; (2) Heightened hope; (3) Urgency for action; and (4) Linking infrastructure and economic development.

Speech style and delivery. Participant 1 appreciated the speech's straightforward approach, noting *“It's simple and direct...constructed simply to present the concerns regarding the problems with the under repaired highway.”* This is likely as audiences often favor simple and direct communication in persuasive messages (McCroskey & Teven, 1999). Participant 2 found the structure effective, stating *“He [congressman] started with...a*

backgrounder...followed by...the main issue...budget is insufficient...He ended with a compliment...This shows...it was a well-thought speech." A logical flow strengthens the persuasive case (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). ELM suggests that audiences can be persuaded through either central route processing (focusing on arguments) or peripheral route processing (focusing on presentation style). The organized structure caters to the central route by building a logical case for funding, while the simplicity and directness might also engage the peripheral route for some audience members. Speeches can be used strategically, oral or written to convince people and achieve specific goals (Kuypers, 2009; Janoschka, 2010).

Heightened Hope. Interviewees expressed a surge of hope regarding Samar's roads due to the national-level attention. Participant 2 commended Congressman Tan's bravery in raising the issue, while Participant 4 rejoiced that the long-ignored problem was finally being addressed. Others, like Participant 6 (Waray-waray dialect: "*Good that the mayors' roads are finally being noticed. I understand these are the ones with potholes.*"), echoed this sentiment. This collective optimism aligns with research on the contagious nature of hope, which can motivate people to work towards shared goals (Barsade, 2002; Karademas, 2006; Luthans et al., 2008; McAfee et al., 2019).

Urgency for Action. The interviews revealed a strong sense of urgency from participants regarding the long-standing problem of Samar's roads. This urgency might be a reaction to a sense of policy fatigue. This term describes public apathy or frustration stemming from a long-standing, unresolved issue. Participants seem to advocate for immediate action on repairs, even if it's a temporary solution: Participant 1 suggests "*patch[ing] up the potholes or repair[ing] the heavily damaged roads*" as a possible compromise (if full repairs aren't feasible). Participant 4 expresses frustration by comparing Samar's poor roads to Leyte's better ones, highlighting the need for national intervention. Their statement translates to: "*Yes sir, it's like Leyte has good roads, why are ours like this? It would be good if the national government helps us so our roads can improve.*" Participant 6 emphasizes the long-term neglect, mentioning that "*since way back, our roads haven't been good...good asphalt roads started in 2007 or so, but since then, they haven't been maintained and deteriorated again.*"

Linking Infrastructure to Economic Development. A strong belief that rehabilitating Samar's roads is synonymous with economic development is observable. Participants see improved roads as vital arteries for the province's economic health (cf. Meyer & Miller, 2001). Participants 2, 5 & 7 echoed this

sentiment, highlighting the crucial role of good roads in boosting provincial development (cf. Saunder et al., 2002; Aljoufie et al., 2013). Such attributions of road infrastructure and economic development (Aschauer, 2000; Banerjee & Duflo, 2000)) is heavily observed in China and Vietnam (World Bank, 2005; Calderón & Nguyen, 2013).

Sociocultural practice. CDA is not only the study of the structures of language and text but is the study of people, institutions, and organizations. The relation between form and content is not arbitrary; this relation is recognized by cultural, social, and political constraints (Aghagolzadeh & Bahrami-Khorshid, 2009).

Power is another concept that is central to CDA, as it often analyses the language used by those in power, who are responsible for the existence of inequalities (Skillington, 2003; Van Dijk 1998 & Breeze 2011).

At the macro level, the speech reflects broader power dynamics within the Philippine political landscape. According to Lukes' (2014) model, Tan exercises both non-decision-making and ideological power, shaping perceptions without holding direct decision-making authority. His respectful yet assertive language choices highlight his position within the legislative body, where he influences the agenda by subtly guiding the discourse. This approach echoes findings by Medriano and De Vera (2019) in their analysis of Philippine political rhetoric, which shows how non-decision-making power operates to shape discourse in public policy.

The speaker strategically uses epistemic modality through the adverbs 'probably' and 'perhaps' suggesting a degree of uncertainty and hedging phrases 'I understand' and 'to my knowledge' making the argument appear more reasonable and reflective of the speaker's awareness of these power dynamics and his attempt to be persuasive while maintaining a respectful tone. One aspect that might have been a good point for discussion is the involvement of the private sector in the road rehabilitation efforts.

Furthermore, Tan's references to accountability and the DPWH's responsibility suggest a political ideology that values transparency and infrastructure development. The emphasis on "perpetual disrepair" of the highway taps into a public sentiment of policy fatigue, a recurring theme among residents interviewed. The alignment of infrastructure issues with socio-economic development resonates with international discourse on the role of infrastructure in bridging economic disparities (Aggarwal, 2018; Aschauer, 2000).

Conclusion. Utilizing Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) this study purported to understand Representative Michael Tan's speech regarding road conditions in one of the worst highways in the Philippines, revealing its power and ideology. The analysis revealed the strategic use of language in the speech, highlighting the severity of the problem and linking it to economic development. Secretary Bonoan's response acknowledged these concerns, outlining a multi-pronged approach that included long-term planning and collaboration with local entities. Audience interpretations further emphasized the importance of addressing this issue swiftly, connecting road infrastructure improvements to economic growth within the province. Recognizing the power dynamics at play and the underlying ideologies of accountability and infrastructure development, this study demonstrates how CDA can illuminate the strategic use of language in political discourse, its reception by audiences, and the embedded social and cultural contexts. While the initial reception appears positive, further research is necessary to track the long-term effectiveness of these plans and address potential challenges, particularly regarding local government cooperation in infrastructure projects. Finally, the need to strengthen leadership communication of developments to the public is recommended.

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Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) rigorously analysed the interview data to understand the reception of the speech. This involved familiarization, initial coding, theme identification, theme review, definition and naming, and report production. This systematic approach ensured robust extraction of meaningful insights, providing valuable context for interpreting the speech's reception and broader thematic implications.

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