

# Localizing and Theorizing Speech/ Rhetoric Studies in the Philippine University

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## ABSTRACT

This essay aims to provide a roadmap for the speech communication discipline, as I offer recommendations that apply not only to the speech communication track of the University of the Philippines Baguio, the context in which I operate, but also more generally to the contemporary state of the speech communication discipline in the Philippines.

The first part of the essay discusses four arguments to approach the study of speech (used interchangeably with rhetoric here): (1) anchor speech through interdisciplinary perspectives, (2) reconceptualize speech as a theoretical subject and not just a practical one, (3) reimagine and situate speech in the socio-cultural tradition in Robert Craig's paradigms of communication theory, and (4) employ a mixed-methods approach to studying speech/rhetoric.

For the latter part of the essay, I propose the thesis as a concrete project where students, with the guidance of their faculty advisers, may explore the possibilities and recommendations for speech/rhetoric studies. I provide concrete examples of topics that can be pursued and, where necessary, I cite some of my own publications and the work of other scholars not as models of scholarship but as starting points for what can be done when theorizing speech/rhetoric. While some of the suggestions in this essay are not entirely novel, they aim to study speech from a more nuanced, locally grounded, and theoretically informed position which I believe is the challenge of 21st century speech/rhetoric education.

**Keywords:** localizing, rhetoric, speech, theorizing

Communication as a field is characterized by the diversity of the disciplines it houses: rhetoric and speech, theater and performance studies, interpersonal and organizational communication, mass communication, journalism, public relations, and media (history, broadcast, new media, production, and criticism) (Calhoun 1481). This diversity and breadth can also be seen as a source of incoherence in communication. For Calhoun, communication “suffers from weak connections among lines of research, and to some extent, among researchers themselves” (1488). Among researchers, disciplinary conversations are needed to connect and integrate what we do in the various areas of study in communication.

This essay is an attempt to chart research directions in speech and rhetoric as a sub-discipline of communication. On a more macro and long-term level, my discussion hopefully inspires reflection on the need for interdisciplinarity within the communication discipline. That is, it hopes to encourage the pursuit of conceptual and theoretical moves that will draw the integration and connection of speech/rhetoric to other subdisciplines such as journalism, broadcast communication, and media criticism.

At the micro and short-term level, I advocate for localizing and theorizing speech/rhetoric studies in the university. I use speech and rhetoric interchangeably

the way that Calhoun has lumped the category as a subdiscipline of communication (1481). More importantly, Craig recognizes that rhetoric is an ancient discipline in communication theory, positing that the rhetorical tradition defines communication as the “practical art of discourse” (133) that remains to be a fundamental concern in speech communication.

I also have no hesitation using speech and rhetoric interchangeably because of my own disciplinary background. I majored in speech communication as an undergraduate student at the University of the Philippines Baguio and has since published scholarly work on political rhetoric. My view of speech has indeed expanded from verbal discourse to its contemporary and nonverbal instantiations.

Finally, and to orient the reader, I deem it important to first disclose my positionality. As a speech communication faculty member since 2012 and as chair of the Department of Communication at the University of the Philippines Baguio from 2022-2024, I have engaged in activities such as curriculum review, research agenda conceptualization, and thesis mentoring. I therefore wrote this essay with the interest of academic improvement in mind, aiming to offer a voice in the speech communication discipline and to hopefully enrich the substantive areas of speech/rhetoric.

While I believe that some of my recommendations here may already be in place or practiced in the university, I still think that it is worth reflecting on speech/rhetoric studies if only to sustain the conversations and debates essential to any discipline’s growth. I then offer my recommendations in this essay not as novel arguments but as hopefully thoughtful reflections on what we can do with speech/rhetoric studies through research.

### **Speech Communication in the BA Communication Program**

Table 1 below shows that at least at UP Baguio, the BA Communication program within the Department of Communication remains to be a popular major. BA Communication is the third most highly subscribed major in the academic years 2022-2023 (University of the Philippines Baguio Registrar, 15 October 2023) and 2023-2024 (University of the Philippines Baguio Registrar, 27 June 2024). The data is based on the latest available graduation figures provided by the university registrar (see Table 1).

The BA Communication program offers three tracks of specialization or concentration: speech communication, broadcast communication, and journalism. This set-up was made possible by faculty expertise and the institutionalization of previous programs and courses such as speech, theatre, and mass communication.

Today, BA Communication students can choose a major and minor among the three specializations. They can major in speech and minor in journalism, major in broadcast communication and minor in speech, and so on. Broadcast communication is by far the most preferred specialization in the program, followed by speech communication, then journalism. The reasons for this include the multimedia literacy of the current generation or the enjoyment they experience in production courses, as they are skilled in broadcasting and social media platforms.

Broadcast communication can also be said to encompass the domains of journalism

**Table 1**

Number of UP Baguio Graduates, Second Semester of Academic Year 2022-2023 and 2023-2024

<b>Undergraduate Degree in UP Baguio</b>	<b>AY 2022-2023</b>	<b>AY 2023-2024</b>
BS Biology	112	90
BA Social Sciences	93	89
BA Communication	64	70
BS Mathematics	23	34
BA Language and Literature	22	27
BS Management Economics	21	26
BS Computer Science	20	24
BA Fine Arts	12	9
BS Physics	5	21

and speech communication. Today, journalists would also refer to themselves as broadcasters, as speech is perceived as a skill set instrumental to the broadcast industry.

I would hazard to say that while speech as a skill set remains important, it can also be dismissed when its applications are perceived as irrelevant to public life. In polarized and partisan environments, for example, debate and argumentation are seen as divisive, and rhetoric is seen as untrustworthy and antithetical to action. The era of orators, where elocution was highly prized, appears to have faded. Arguably, we may now live in an age of ineloquence where professional and political advancement no longer depend on how well one wields rhetoric.

Despite these, the Department of Communication at UP Baguio continues to offer speech communication as a concentration not only because faculty members have specialized in it but also since the discipline has not been phased out in the decades after its institutionalization.

So, the aim of this essay is not to relate how speech communication as a major can be more popular because students and faculty will always be there to sustain it. My argument is that the substantive content of speech communication can be enriched when we (1) anchor speech through interdisciplinary perspectives, (2) reconceptualize speech as a theoretical subject and not just a practical one, (3) reimagine and situate speech in the sociocultural tradition in Robert Craig's paradigms of communication theory, and (4) employ a mixed methods approach to studying speech/rhetoric. I will explain each of these points, but I will first relate them to the qualities and characteristics that we wish to develop among the speech and communication majors of the program.

### **The Ideal UPB BA Communication Graduate**

Based on the academic catalogue of UP Baguio, speech communication courses include intrapersonal and interpersonal communication, bases of speech communication, culture and speech communication, rhetoric and forms of public address, group

communication, introduction to organizational communication, speech communication planning, and special topics for the major subjects (University of the Philippines Baguio Academic Catalogue). The electives include nonverbal communication, listening, oral interpretation, and argumentation.

The three areas of concentration in the BA Communication program of UP Baguio (i.e., speech, broadcast communication, and journalism) share a core curriculum comprised of subjects like communication theory, ethics, methods, thesis proposal writing, and thesis. Together, these courses mix opportunities for developing skills and learning theory. Some courses, however, are more skills-oriented, while others are decidedly research-driven. Together, these courses hope to achieve the following expected learning outcomes (ELOs) for the graduates of the BA Communication program of UP Baguio (University of the Philippines Baguio Department of Communication, 13 October 2023):

- Apply effective oral, written, and multimedia skills
- Demonstrate analytical and critical skills in communication research and practice
- Create innovative and democratic forms of communication
- Adopt interdisciplinary perspectives with socio-cultural rootedness, accountability, and civic responsibility

The first ELO—applying effective, oral, written, and multimedia skills—is the most common expectation for all BA Communication or speech graduates, as the undergraduate program is designed to develop these competencies. Oral and written skills are imperative for communication competence, while multimedia skills are developed to adapt to the fast-changing and evolving demands of mainstream and social media industries today.

The second outcome—demonstrate analytical and critical skills in communication research and practice—aims to instill the value of research among communication or speech majors. Research skills are important especially in contexts where disinformation is pervasive and in political environments where polarization can make facts and information secondary to partisanship. As this essay underscores the need to theorize speech/rhetoric, its latter part is devoted to topics, areas, and directions for speech/rhetoric studies through the thesis project.

The third ELO—create innovative and democratic forms of communication—relates speech to 21st-century learning by stressing the role of innovation and democratic forms of communication to public and political life. The last ELO—adopt interdisciplinary perspectives with socio-cultural rootedness, accountability, and civic responsibility—is where I provide implications for studying speech in rhetoric with attention to sociocultural considerations. Given the foregoing, how can speech/rhetoric studies be revitalized with the mentioned ELOs in mind?

## **A Roadmap for Speech Communication in the University**

### *Anchoring Speech/Rhetoric through Interdisciplinary Perspectives*

Earlier, I mentioned that the BA Communication program of UP Baguio offers three specializations where students choose a major and a minor. Granted an effective marriage between at least two of these disciplines, an interdisciplinary perspective

may be achieved, especially given Calhoun's assertion that communication is a "wildly heterogeneous" discipline (1480). Given the breadth of the areas of study in the field of communication, it is important for students to expose themselves to the different subdisciplines in communication to achieve interdisciplinarity (i.e., in UP Baguio, students can major in speech and minor in journalism).

I am reminded of one speech communication class where our topic focused on televised presidential debates. While most of my students discussed the content of the said debates and their function in democracies, one student mentioned that we should also pay attention to the camera work involved during these debates. The student said that angles, frames, and exposure have an impact on the production of spectacles in debates. This rather basic illustration shows that when a speech major has knowledge of other fields like broadcast communication, better insights can be gleaned from the discussion. More importantly, interdisciplinarity also means allowing our speech majors to minor or take cognates in fields like political science, history, sociology, and others, so their perspectives may broaden significantly.

It is also worth considering whether the boundaries we set for ourselves because of turf issues—such as the notion that mass communication focuses on mediated forms of communication, while speech communication centers on human or face-to-face interactions—are still tenable, especially today. Our realities encompass both human/face-to-face and mediated experiences, and we experience these realities simultaneously. Hence, interdisciplinarity means marrying speech communication to social science disciplines externally and connecting it internally to the different aspects of the communication discipline.

#### *Speech as an Act of Thinking (Not Only Doing)*

A research-intensive speech program, coupled with a strong commitment to faculty development, could serve as a source of renewal for the discipline. Indeed, speech is not only practical; it is also theoretical, and a vision of speech that recognizes this will benefit both students and faculty.

While we can commend the discipline for producing great public speakers and for teaching precepts for discourse-making from the time of Aristotle to the present, we should also devote attention to how we can contribute to the theories and frameworks of rhetoric. For example, we could delve deeper into audience theories in rhetoric, studying the receivers of speech rather than the senders or messages. Historical perspective and approaches can also be used to study speech and speech acts.

When I did my PhD in the United States, I took a keen interest in political rhetoric, and I can note that our theories in rhetoric are dominated by the Western canon. While I acknowledge that the body of knowledge in speech has expanded—thanks to theorizations by scholars like Michael Calvin McGee on speech in postmodern times, Raymie McKerrow's introduction of critical rhetoric, James Carrey's perspective on communication and culture, and Raka Shome's postcolonial interventions in rhetoric—there remains a need to theorize speech or rhetoric through our local realities and perspectives. So, while the conceptual and theoretical horizons of rhetoric studies have indeed expanded, localizing theories on speech and rhetoric proves to be an important point of entry.

## *Reimagining and Situating Speech in the Sociocultural Tradition*

Craig theorizes communication from the sociocultural tradition as the “(re)production of social order” with associated vocabulary such as society, structure, practice, ritual, rule, socialization, culture, identity, and co-construction (133). Craig’s argument reminds us that the “individual is a product of society” and “every society has a distinct culture” (133).

The sociocultural tradition therefore complements rhetorical theory by emphasizing that rhetoric is culture-bound. It warns against an overemphasis on individual agency at the expense of social structure. In our studies of what makes speeches and speakers effective, we should therefore be more cognizant not just of the elements of effectiveness or the impact on the audiences but also of how meanings emerge in social interactions. It is crucial to consider how meanings are locally negotiated, even as theories may be abstract and general, and to explore how these local meanings lead to intersubjectivity.

Theorized from a sociocultural tradition, rhetoric and speech thus mobilize the sociological imagination by connecting individuals to society and interrogating the links of personal decisions to political, economic, and historical conditions. While rhetoric focuses on individual agency, the sociocultural tradition implores that we also pay attention to social structure. In other words, we can reframe the concept of the rhetorical situation—which identifies elements such as exigence, rhetorical audience, and constraints—into a more inductive rhetorical context. This conceptual framework recognizes that speeches are not created and delivered in a vacuum; rather, they are shaped by conditions inherent in local and even international realities.

### *A Mixed Methods Approach to Speech*

Finally, we can enhance our understanding of rhetoric by using a mixed methods approach where our preferred methods of textual analysis are combined, for example, with ethnographic techniques. The benefit here is that we can theorize about rhetoric inductively, from the ground up, by also looking into the senders and receivers of messages and not just the messages themselves. Ethnography of speaking, ethnography of communication, speech communities, and ethnomethodology are all valuable tools if we want to contribute to theorizations of speech in the sociocultural tradition, where local meanings emerge, and social structures are given attention vis-à-vis individual agency.

What I am saying here is that rhetoric studies need not be limited to issues of representation or to work on rhetoric that is mainstream, popular, or central to public life, even though this trend will undoubtedly continue. Perhaps, more importantly, theorizing speech/rhetoric requires being attuned to local knowledge and community practices, being grounded on our own realities, and even exploring theories and discourse practices that were relegated to the margins. Indigenous rhetoric is a step in this direction.

In the following section, I sketch how my four arguments above can be concretized and realized through the thesis project. I regard the thesis, both at the undergraduate and graduate levels, as a starting point for producing theorizations and conceptualizations about speech/rhetoric.

## The Thesis: Theorizing Speech/Rhetoric

As a capstone course, the thesis project allows students to apply their cumulative knowledge to issues concerning contemporary Philippine society. Usually undertaken in the senior year, thesis writing allows students to integrate the different perspectives that they have learned in their menu of courses throughout the years. As a conventional final project, the thesis incorporates theories, methods, and analyses on a pre-approved topic or research proposal.

In UP Baguio, students from the BA Communication program can implement their thesis projects individually, in pairs, or in groups of three. Their thesis topics may relate to one or two of the said disciplines above. The thesis students are guided by an adviser, i.e., a faculty member chosen by the students to supervise, assess, and give feedback on the conduct of the latter's research writing and implementation.

As a course for students to integrate their cumulative or summative knowledge, the thesis project, with the guidance of qualified or specialist faculty members, represents not just a final project but a process. It benefits not only from the students' years of learning but also from the insights and expertise of faculty members/advisers who direct the research. I therefore do not subscribe to the notion that, at the undergraduate level, the thesis is an early or novice stage for theorizing about speech or rhetoric. On the contrary, the undergraduate thesis is one of the ripest opportunities for theorizing or conceptualizing about speech/rhetoric, because it is where both students and faculty members/advisers are able to test their ideas, which can be fully developed in graduate school or during the publication process.

The thesis is also prose in long-form writing, allowing the students to explain their ideas at length, construct a solid literature review, and critically examine their assumptions through research. The role of faculty members/advisers cannot be understated in thesis writing; for while the course expects students to produce original work, the advisers clearly have a say on what can and cannot be done in the process.

The comprehensive and extensive literature review in a thesis should provide interdisciplinary perspectives on a chosen topic. Second, writing as an activity encourages and requires critical thinking. A thesis topic may thus concern not only speech or public addresses but also their various theorizations. Finally, since a thesis needs a methodology for implementation, my recommendation of employing a mixed methods approach to speech can be applied within the project.

Table 2 below shows the theses topics undertaken by students from the BA Communication program at UP Baguio in the last two academic years (2022-2023 and 2023-2024). These topics serve as the springboard for my recommendations on what can be sustained and what additional avenues can be pursued in speech/rhetoric studies.

Of the 55 theses produced for the BA Communication program—26 theses for academic year 2022-2023 and 29 theses for academic year 2023-2024—two themes emerge: (1) topics that highlight the methods and frameworks used, and (2) topics based on the various areas of communication (Refer to Table 2).

The two clusters of the BA Communication theses topics in the last two academic years can be broken down into 10 general topics. For theses based on method and

**Table 2**

Most Recent BA Communication Theses Topics (Academic Years 2022-2023 and 2023-2024)

Based on Method and Framework Used	Based on the Area of Communication Engaged
Framing	Media
Critical discourse analysis	Rhetoric and performance
Semiotics	Culture
Political economy	Gender
Others	Academic performance

framework used, the topics include: (1) framing, (2) critical discourse analysis, (3) semiotics, (4) political economy, and (5) others. For topics based on the area of communication engaged, the topics are: (6) media, (7) rhetoric and performance, (8) culture, (9) gender, and (10) academic performance (Refer to Table 3).

Rhetoric and performance are the most common general topics in recent BA Communication theses. I have observed, however, that thesis topics in this area continue to focus on national public figures. While this is not bad per se, one of my recommendation in the succeeding section is to focus on more locally grounded or grassroots rhetorical issues, performances, and personalities.

Another observation is that most theses emphasize the methods used based on the titles. The most preferred methods are framing, semiotics, and critical discourse analysis. These methods reflect a dominantly qualitative preference among students and faculty advisers in the BA Communication program. There were only 5 out of the 55 theses that used quantitative methods in the last two academic years. The five theses measured communication variables such as communication apprehension and empathic listening in relation to academic performance.

As I raised and suggested before, speech/rhetoric studies can benefit from a mixed-methods approach. This would allow students to not only describe and interpret the features and characteristics of messages (i.e., signs and symbols in semiotics, texts in framing and content analysis) but also interview, survey, observe, and conduct ethnography to understand a phenomenon better.

Another common general topic among BA Communication theses also has to do with gender and media. Here, issues of gender are studied as they are represented in the media or performed in relationships. Even in the past, issues about gender and sexuality were popular among BA Communication students of UP Baguio despite the program lacking a course on gender, media, and sexuality. Perhaps this is an opportunity for the program to conceptualize and institute such a course. Consistent with my suggestion before, the study of gender and sexuality needs a more interdisciplinary approach, integrating historical, sociological, and political lenses to analyze gender, media, and communication.



**Table 3**

Most Common BA Communication Theses Topics (Academic Year 2022-2023 and 2023-2024)

General topic	Frequency	Thesis Title (Example)
Rhetoric and performance	9	Denial, Distraction, and Deception: A Pentadic Analysis of the Rhetorical Motives of the Marcos Family Regarding the Marcos Regime (Andrada et al.)
Semiotics and semiotic analysis	8	A Semiotic Analysis of the Body Positivity Trends and Videos on TikTok (Gambaloza and Pacatang)
Gender in relationships and the media	7	Negotiating the Tensions of Online Relationship on Grindr Among Queer UP Baguio Students: An Application of the Relational Dialectics Theory (Clauna and Mendoza)
Critical discourse analysis and other forms of content analysis	6	Unmasking the Bakla: A Critical Discourse Analysis on Changing Representations of Kabaklaan in Original Pilipino Music (Bermudez and Lescano)
Framing of events and personalities, including agenda-setting	5	News Framing of the Online Media Coverage of the Charter Change Initiatives (Agacer et al.)
Media and technology use	5	Swipe (Me) Right: Curating the Self of Filipino Tinder Users in Baguio City (Balanon et al.)
Measuring communication variables and academic performance	5	Measuring the Relationship of Communication Apprehension and Academic Performance of U.P. Baguio Students (Minimo et al.)
Cultural spaces and experiences	4	Empowering Igorot Culture: A Culture-Centered Approach in Studying Popular Cordillera Facebook Groups (Añosa et al.)
Political economy	2	A Political Economy Approach to the Boys Love (BL) Series Production in the Philippines (Javate et al.)
Others	4	(theses that used a method or framework distinct from the other nine general topics)

Finally, it can be noted that cultural studies such as those dealing with indigenous cultures are a minority. Of the four theses tackling the “cultural spaces and experiences” general topic, only one dealt with the Igorot culture explicitly (see Añosa et al.). The other theses reference fandom and consumer cultures as well as phenomenology in relation to cultural roles. Meanwhile, the theses that included “political economy” in its title used a critical lens. However, some theses that claimed to apply “critical discourse analysis” lack the discursive qualities and elements, as well as detailed and incisive analysis and writing to convey a genuinely critical flavor.

There is therefore a need not only for students, but more so for the faculty members to bolster the significance of the theses they advise. As UP Baguio is in the northern Philippines, issues relevant to immediate communities can be prioritized. More fundamentally, faculty advisers must ensure that the research objectives and promises made in the theses are accomplished. That is, if the theses claim to be “cultural” or “critical,” then the tenets of these types of studies must be observed in the writing style, analysis, and data-gathering methods and not just in the thesis titles.

Given the foregoing, I now go back to my suggestions before to further enrich the

speech communication discipline through thesis writing. I detail my recommendations below based on the following: (1) localizing speech/rhetoric studies, (2) investigating interdisciplinary perspectives, (3) theorizing speech/rhetoric, and (4) shifting the discussion of representation to locales and prosumers.

### *Localizing Speech/Rhetoric Studies*

Decidedly, I am advocating for thesis topics that are locally relevant and deal with the various facets and issues of Philippine society. In relation to the BA Communication theses of UP Baguio, there is no concern here. However, I am still raising this suggestion for other universities or contexts outside of UP Baguio. It is necessary that the studies of students of speech prioritize specific local contexts not to be parochial but to be relevant to the attendant issues in their immediate communities. Hence, my suggestions below do not include topics like studying the rhetoric of Taylor Swift in her songs or some other international celebrity or politician. These topics may already be overstudied in their own contexts. As Filipinos, we should discuss our own people, products, and processes.

I must clarify, however, that, should an international aspect be applied to a study, it must be done through a comparative approach. That is, the international aspect (whether person, product, or process) is always studied in relation to something local. An example of this is Navera's rhetorical study on Duterte's use of the war metaphor in his war on drugs. The war metaphors in international politicians' rhetorics in the war on terror and poverty were discussed only after an explication of the local context of the war on drugs ("Belligerence as Argument"). In other words, international issues can be studied if they provide global perspectives as they relate to local realities.

Some thesis topics that can be undertaken by speech majors include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Problematicizing the different models of communication introduced in basic courses (see Berlo; Lasswell; Schramm; for Shannon and Weaver, see Ritchie). Mapping these different models and examining their provenance. How do these models apply to non-Western contexts? Are there issues and challenges when these models are used to explain communication processes in local speech communities? What are these issues and challenges? Can these models be considered universal in that they apply to different contexts? If so, how are these models appropriated, even unwittingly, by a speech community?
2. Zooming in on a speech community to evaluate whether their voices are silenced or amplified in policymaking or decisions that affect them. A concrete example would be the voices of indigenous cultural communities in relation to their right to Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) or the Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act of 1997 (IPRA). UP Baguio's niche is Cordillera studies, so speech majors may contribute to the area by studying the sociolinguistic and ethnolinguistic groups in the Cordillera region and how they exercise their right through the instruments of speech or communication.

While her study did not deal with policymaking per se, Zapata's use of the culture-centered approach exemplifies how technology affects an ethnolinguistic group and speech community. Specifically, Zapata studied how "mobile phones has [sic] affected, mediated, manifested and

complicated the indigeneity of the Igorot” (1333). The Igorots have now embraced modern technology such as mobile phones and are thus affected by social, new, and digital media technologies, so understanding them in their contemporary element is a worthwhile undertaking.

3. Examining the various definitions of rhetoric, clustering these definitions, and delving into speech or rhetoric-related vocabulary of different Philippine languages. An example here is Jocelyn Martin’s study of the vernacular terms and concepts for memory in the Filipino language. The author, however, not only focuses on language but also on culture through her analysis of the literature of memory studies and how memory is inscribed within broader societal issues such as the disappeared or the *desaparecidos*.

#### *Speech and Interdisciplinary Formations*

4. Looking closely at the disciplinary formation of rhetoric: How did the field emerge? What is its history in relation to communication as a discipline and area of scholarship? Which universities in the country offer speech as a major? What are the subjects in primary or secondary education related to rhetoric? What assessments can be made about the curriculum of speech programs, the courses offered, or the materials used? How interdisciplinary are speech programs? What is the focus of speech communication programs vis-à-vis mass communication, journalism, broadcast communication, theater, and other disciplines subsumed under “communication”?
5. Extending beyond speech/rhetoric. In relation to disciplinary formations, a thesis project can also look at the relationship between rhetoric/speech and other disciplines like political science, history, sociology, and psychology, among others.

An illustrative case is James Martin’s book *Politics and Rhetoric: A Critical Introduction*. Martin’s book contains theoretical and conceptual lenses and insights from political science on the relationship between rhetoric and politics. Indeed, the book is an interdisciplinary exploration of the ways in which social scientific and humanistic frameworks converge, as theories and methods are interrelated.

Also, historicizing the texts we analyze like speeches and metaphors used therein (see Navera, “Metaphorizing Martial Law”) is a worthwhile exercise to show that rhetoric does not operate in a vacuum; instead, it is shaped and, in turn, shapes the social context it exists in. A historically grounded approach to rhetoric expands the view of speech/rhetoric as something that is merely concerned with message production and criticism to something that compels the use of other perspectives towards interdisciplinarity.

#### *Theorizing Speech/Rhetoric: Perspectives and Methods*

6. Theorizing the perspectives on speech/rhetoric: What are the contemporary theories of rhetoric (i.e., 21st century) and how might we move away from classical theories of rhetoric such as Aristotle’s rhetorical appeals? Since I proposed the reimagining and situating of speech in the sociocultural

tradition (Craig, “Communication Theory”), another set of questions would be: Which theories of rhetoric relate to issues of relationality, ritual, and socialization apart from embodiment and performativity? What frameworks of rhetoric are used in relation to gender, race, ethnicity, nationality, class, and other positionalities?

Raka Shome’s *Postcolonial Interventions in the Rhetorical Canon* comes to mind when challenging the legacies of rhetoric’s Western provenance. A thesis may start by deductively applying Shome’s arguments to a case or context, then move towards conversing with or even debating the same arguments. In the Philippines, for instance, what would Shome’s arguments on “borderland territories” (52) and discursive colonization (42) look like? From these concepts, how might we decolonize or even indigenize the study of speech or rhetoric, first barring assumptions on the existence of indigenous rhetoric or forms of communication?

To relate, I conducted a study years ago on the Northern Luzon Debate Community (NLDC) based in Baguio City, the urban center of the Cordillera region (Tatcho, “Debating as Ritual”). While this study is not a model for what should be done in indigenizing the study of speech or rhetoric and its processes, I offer it as a possible starting point for students who wish to explore the ways in which rhetoric can be more relevant to their immediate communities. Using the framework of culture and communication proposed by James Carrey, I recommended ways in which argumentation and debating can be more inclusive and expansive in the region.

To clarify, I do not agree that Western theories are incompatible to our own realities. I only recommend that we reflect on or be self-reflexive about the theories and methods we use.

7. Reflecting on the method or methodologies used in rhetoric and speech communication studies. Take textual analysis as an example. Is it really an “easy” method? Who says so, and why? What are the different forms of textual analysis, and which ones are the most hospitable to rhetorical criticism or analysis? Are there new ways of analyzing a text? What are the assumptions of these methods? What are their strengths and weaknesses? What are the ethical considerations in doing rhetorical criticism? Consider rhetorical political analysis as a method, for example (Finlayson; Nelson). Who developed it, and what are its similarities with or convergences from earlier methods of textual analysis or criticism? What are the biases of the research community towards certain methods and methodologies? What methods are privileged in speech/rhetoric academic journals and books?

In Table 2 and Table 3 above, I mentioned that the general topics of UP Baguio BA Communication theses include the use of semiotics and semiotic analysis, critical discourse analysis and other forms of content analysis, and framing. Potential thesis topics can then be more methodologically oriented. That is, they may opt to study the methods of research and data analysis rather than merely use these methods for data-gathering or generation. It is not just the methods of content and textual analysis that can be studied but also other strategies such as interviews, participant observation, ethnography, surveys, and historical methods. When using the said methods, how do these advance our research goals in communication and media studies, for instance? What are the ethical considerations

in employing these methods?

8. Using a mixed-methods approach in studying rhetoric. Textual analysis, for example, can be coupled with interviews. Ethnography may also be employed as it includes multiple methods such as participant observation, focus groups, and even surveys. Historical analysis is also welcome to combine expert interviews with document analysis, and quantitative and qualitative methods for data-gathering/generation may ensure robust processes and richer findings.

In my publication on the representation of Igorots on social media, particularly on Facebook (Tatcho, "Igorot Self-Representation"), I supplemented my use of rhetorical political analysis with interviews. I surmised that my interpretations of the texts (i.e., Facebook posts) are better understood within the meanings and statements of the Facebook users themselves. Hence, I conducted interviews to add layers of meaning to my claims and arguments about the Facebook posts. There is a tendency in rhetorical criticism or textual analysis in general to isolate the texts or artifacts under study from the processes of their creation and interpretation. However, texts are not merely products but also processes. Interviews recover the processes of textual production and interpretation by asking the participants the meanings they ascribe to or infer from the texts or artifacts.

*Issues of Representation: Locales and Prosumers*

9. Continuing the conversation on issues of representation, broadly defined. Philippine speech/rhetoric studies have long centered on prominent, national, and public figures in its scholarship. The studies on presidential inauguration speeches and state of the nation addresses (Navera, "The Rhetoric", "War"), national campaigns (Serquiña), presidential debates and political television advertising (Tatcho, " Duterte", "Narratives"), all of which spotlight political figures of national significance (i.e., Philippine presidents or presidential candidates).

Prominent political figures will continue to be the focus of much of the analysis in speech/rhetoric because they are imbued with semiotic resources that shape and affect the national consciousness. However, it is worth noting that local personalities can also be the focus of rhetorical analysis. For instance, how do local politicians use rhetoric and rhetorical strategies to win votes? Do they use the vernacular or the language of the cities, provinces, or regions that they represent? What is or are the effect/s of this language use on the voters? Arguments about regionalism and ethno-linguistic cleavages can then be related to the study about the rhetorical moves and styles of local politicians and figures.

Perhaps a more important angle for representation is looking at the audience or the public as active participants in the meaning-making process. Evident in the examples I gave above is the agency accorded to figures and personalities, whether local or national, but not the agency of the public that the politicians activate. The suggestion here is to refocus our points of analysis from the senders of messages like politicians to the audience or the receivers of their messages. The audience can even produce their own messages, making themselves senders or members of the public, which arguably has a more active connotation compared to the passive audience (Pertierra).

Two publications can serve as references in studying local contexts, issues, and personalities vis-à-vis emphasizing the role of the public in the meaning-making process. Tindaan's study "Imaging the Igorot in vernacular films produced in the Cordillera" deals with the issues of representation of Igorots but shifts the focus away from the mainstream media's portrayal of Igorots to the ways that Igorots represent themselves in their self-produced films. The novelty here is that Igorots' agency and rhetorical moves in their productions are recognized. What is more interesting, however, is the argument in the essay that even the Igorot's representation of themselves may not be free from stereotypes, encouraging a critical, if not self-reflexive, view of the politics of representation and rhetorical maneuvers.

Another study by Castillo and Gonzales titled "Remediation at seksuwalisasyon ng halalan sa #RP69FanFic" is also noteworthy here. Written in Filipino, the paper deployed Michel De Certeau's concept of "'textual poaching', or the practice of appropriating and reworking textual material by citizens/audiences/spectators as their tactical response to dominant narratives" (Castillo and Gonzales 1). The study read "fan-generated homosexual narratives" on Twitter about Sandro Marcos and Baste Duterte, then vice-presidential sons in the 2016 national elections (Castillo and Gonzales 1). What the authors spotlight is the public that was no longer just textual consumers but prosumers, both producers and consumers in the meaning-making process. Digital ethnography as a method may thus be used, along with textual analysis, to better understand the dynamics between meaning, message, and messengers.

## Conclusion

The arguments presented in this essay amplify two issues: the need to localize and theorize speech/rhetoric studies in the university. I offered the following ways to approach speech/rhetoric studies: (1) anchor speech through interdisciplinary perspectives, (2) reconceptualize speech as a theoretical subject and not just a practical one, (3) reimagine and situate speech in the sociocultural tradition in Craig's paradigms of communication theory, and (4) employ a mixed methods approach to studying speech/rhetoric. In making the argument for localizing and theorizing speech/rhetoric studies, I do not propose that we shun all theories of Western origin and divest speech of its skills-based orientation. Instead, I call for a more locally attuned, intentional prioritization of our own contexts, issues, and realities, while we engage speech/rhetoric as a more cerebral or conceptual activity.

Through the thesis project, I also clustered the following areas, topics, or directions to concretize and realize my arguments for localizing and theorizing speech: focus on our own contexts, issues, realities, and speech communities and consider whether this focus leads to decolonizing or indigenizing speech/rhetoric studies; reflect on the theories and methods we use in speech/rhetoric as a way to forge interdisciplinary thinking and perspectives; and, focus on the audience and prosumers when dealing or engaging with the popular topic of representation. I believe these arguments are a mix of reminders (i.e., what we already know) and directions (i.e., what we already know but rarely undertake). These may not be novel, but these hopefully provoke us to reimagine, resituate, and rethink speech/rhetoric studies as a way of revitalizing the discipline and ensuring its longevity.

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