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Article

Beliefs, Traditions and Cultural Practices in Folklores of Bula, Camarines Sur, Philippines: Basis for Contextualizing Instructional Materials in Teaching Language and Literature

Jerald Alpe Bermas
Faculty, Universidad de Sta. Isabel

Abstract

The study characterized folklores in Bula in the context of their beliefs, traditions, and cultural practices through responsive narrative interview and narrative analysis design. Qualitative content analysis and coding frames were employed to interpret and analyze the data. The folkloric narratives, gathered from four barangays, were classified into tales of fishers, legends of women warriors, and myths of supernatural beings. Furthermore, eleven folkloric narratives showed eight manifestations of beliefs, traditions, and cultural practices. Bula, one of the oldest towns in the Bicol Region, has rich arrays of beliefs, traits, customs, and cultural practices that have existed since time immemorial and are still present. The owing beliefs are the presence of lost souls, miraculous deeds of Patron Saints, after death, curses, and misfortune for graduating students attending excursions, a celebration of the Feast of Saints; and saying "tabi apo, di makaigo" when passing by a river and a huge tree. In addition, there were six positive traits- patience, bravery, friendliness, generosity, religiosity, and assertiveness. And six negative traits- envy, impulsiveness, possessiveness, sentimental, greed, and fear. Lastly, this recommends integrating folkloric narratives into the literature subjects of Camarines Sur School Division. These reveal the value system of the locale, an essential aspect of progress and development.

Keywords
Beliefs, Bula, Cultural Practices, Folklores, Traditions

Corresponding Author:
Jerald Bermas, Universidad de Sta. Isabel, 4400 Elias Angeles, Naga, Camarines Sur. **Email**: jeraldalpebermas@gmail.com

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Introduction

Education must give incessant vivid accounts of a country's cultural evolution and progression through historical documents and spreading, conserving, and cultivating its people's oral and unrecorded local traditions and practices in a highly globalized world.

The Department of Education (DepEd) released Order No. 51. S. 2014 promoting cultural sensitivity, respect for cultural diversity, and a deeper understanding of the different cultural expressions of the ethnic and indigenous groups in the Philippines. The DepEd Order adheres to the principle of contextualization, localization, and indigenization of the K-12 curriculum. It calls for more the inclusion of local materials in Philippine education.

The call for contextualization in the teaching-learning process is crucial to provide meaningful learning for the students to see its importance and function in their everyday lives. Additionally, in the Republic Act No. 33, known as the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013 (D.O.No.43 s. 2013), under section 10, the production and development of locally produced teaching and learning materials shall be encouraged by the regional and division education unit following national policies and standards. However, the learning materials such as local literary books, magazines, and journals available for classroom use to concretize and support contextualization are limited, thus making learning minimal (Mateo, 2019).

Folklore ensures the longevity and immortality of our cultural heritage (Velez, 2017). When students understand their customs and local traditions, it will be easy to mingle with other people regardless of their race, gender, and cultural differences.

However, it is a poignant reality that despite the rich folkloric genres in Bicol, only little to no focus is being given to these lores, specifically in Bula. Moreover, very few studies transcoded the said oral literature to preserve and pass on to the next generations. Therefore, we need to understand that folklore is the living language of the majority. Now, suppose we want to teach language and literature to our students. In that case, we must strive to bring the folklores to the mother tongue of a particular society, closer to the lives of our students, because if not, the language that we teach will be artificial, unreal, and of little use in the practical life.

Considering this background, it is apparent from the preceding discussion how important for Filipino students, specifically the Bulaeños, to know their cultural roots to become genuine natives of the pearl of the orient seas. Thus, the present study explored and discovered the unwritten folkloric treasure of the local tongues of Bula and eventually conceptualized culture-based instructional materials that would aid in the contextualization of teaching language and literature. Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions: What are the folklores in Bula? What beliefs and cultural norms in Bula are being reflected and affirmed by these folklores? Moreover, what culture-based instructional materials can be developed from the gathered folklores in contextualizing the teaching of literature?

Theoretical Background

This study considered several theories. These are Functional Theory, as the primary theory, Sapir-Whorf Theory (1984), and Theory of Community Practice (1991) as complementing principles to the theory above of Functional folklore. According to Boas, folklore is the autobiography of a people. The theory means that folklore and culture are coexistent and interdependent. William Bascom (1954) defines folklore as a mirror to a culture that validates aspects of culture. It is a means of education and works to maintain conformity to accepted patterns of behavior. Thus, the collected folkloric narratives are essential tools in analyzing and depicting the kind of culture in Bula. It also means that Bulaeños have access to the kind of life that their ancestors have had since they can uncover their autobiographies through the collected narratives.

The Sapir-Whorf Theory (1984) states that the language that people are using determines their perspective on the different facets of our material world. With this, culture is a collective motion picture in which people serve as the characters that experience the world and develop shared meaning. Thus, the language used by people shapes their reality. Hence, the elders of Bula and their narratives of folklores are part of the Rinconada literature and Bikolano culture. The society depicted by the different gathered folk stories created a shared meaning in myths, legends, and tales.

The Community of Practice by Eitenne Wenger (1991) discusses that the people who share the same domain of interest build an identity that distinguishes them from others. Thus, the researcher sought these folkloric narratives, considered local treasures, to share and utilize in crafting Bulaeño that is not just a man of knowledge but a man of heritage.

Methodology

This study used a narrative study analysis design to interpret the folkloric stories that the informants shared. These stories, gathered through a responsive narrative interview, comprise a short questionnaire for the personal demographic profile of the respondents, the interview guide, the tape recording, and the postscript or an interview protocol. Results were transcribed and translated results using a qualitative content analysis patterned after Schreier (2014).

Moreover, to get the relevance of the folklores to the culture and traditions of Bulaeños, qualitative data analysis was employed. Qualitative data analysis is the classification and interpretation of linguistic (or visual) material to make statements about implicit and explicit dimensions and structures of meaning, leading to the making of the material represented by it, referring to subjective or social meanings.

The following were part of the methods: (1) selection of material; (2) structuring, which involves developing its main categories; (3) generating, which involved creating the subcategories or specifics for each main category; (4) assessing the category system against the theories and the collected materials; and (5) interpreting the collected narratives according to the main research questions. The researcher adopted these procedures to derive instructional materials for teaching language and literature in Bula anchored on the shared meanings of the Bulaeños.

Results and Discussions

Folkloric Narratives and their Interpretations

Tales of Fisherfolk
These folk narratives talk about the different personal encounters of fisherfolks with the water nymphs and deities, and mythical water creatures. In addition, these narratives depicted the colorful relationship of man to the water nymphs, something like blessings and curses that they receive from them. The following stories are *Ludab sa Ranow; Dakulong Isura na Ataman Ko Diyosa; Parusa sa Usad na Paraisura; and Pag-tao*.

Legends of Women Warriors
Commonly, men always come out as heroes in typical legendary stories. However, the folkloric narratives on women's heroism proved that heroes are not defined by their genders but by their significant contributions to creating their society. These narratives are about the woman warrior who had saved Bula from pirates and bandits' invasion and the bravery of a lady who saved the barangay of Sta. Elena from the massive burning of its neighboring barangay. These are: Paulibngan; Babaying Agko Kapot Espada; and Babaying Nagligtas sa Pagkasulo ko Sta. Elena.

The Myths of Supernatural Beings
In folkloric narratives, stories about the feared supernatural beings are common. Therefore, the researcher collected those narratives which the participants' ancestors believed to have experienced. These beliefs centered on the idea of a guy turned into a crocodile, the story of the evil spirits in the Bula River, specifically under the bridge, and the poignant story of a girl who was drowned and became a water monster that victimizes couples, students, and excursionists. These are: Pagsumpa sa Bula ko Usad na Kura Paruko; Buaya sa Irarum ku Simbahan kin San Jose; Mga Kalag sa Salog and Babaying Nag-aanap Kaibanan sa Burabod nira Ballester.

Beliefs, Cultural Practices, Traits, Values, and Traditions Reflected in Folklores
According to Maramba, (as cited by Gilbas, 2015), literature is one of the vehicles of a people's culture. Thus, the value of ancient literature manifested as part of the expression of a people before or at least at the inception of acculturative processes; it is a pure expression of the indigenous culture.

The researcher divided the discussion into two. The first discussion is about beliefs, traditions, and cultural practices, and the second is on traits and values discernable from the narratives. In addition, the three theories mentioned in the theoretical framework are integrated into the discussion.

Beliefs, Traditions, and Cultural Practices
Being one of the oldest towns in the Bicol region, Bula is rich in beliefs, traits, positive and negative values, traditions, and cultural practices that are discernible from the folklores and are observable to the present.

- Belief in the presence of lost souls. From the tale of the lost souls dwelling in the river of Bula, particularly in barangay San Jose and in Ballester Spring located in barangay Casugad. Folks believe that people drowned in these bodies of water, and their struggle to go to heaven made them become lost souls. These lost souls are accused of "killing" other people by drowning them. Some believe that these lost souls are lonely, and they are looking for people who can accompany

them. However, some believe that these lost souls are avenging their unfortunate deaths. The death of many students who are just crossing the river through boats became the unlucky tributes. The recent deaths are associated with this belief.

- Belief in the miraculous deeds of Patron Saints. From the Legend of St. Magdalene, the Woman Warrior, and The Legend of St. Elizabeth. People believed that there was a woman who always defended the Bulaeños against the pirates during ancient times. St. Mary Magdalene, the patron saint of the parish of Bula, bravely slew the greedy pirates who attempted to enter the perimeters of the said town. Also, the story of St. Elizabeth, the patron saint of barangay Sta. Elena, who is said to have saved Brgy. Sta. Elena from being burned to ashes during the cruel massive scorching of its neighboring barangay, Brgy. Agdangan, during the post-colonial era.

- Belief in Supernatural beings. This belief is from the Alay, a tale told by the fishermen of barangay San Jose. Fishers usually give food to the spirits in Bula Lake. They believe that certain water spirits take good care of their harvest. The appearance of the flying fish and the giant snake in the lake believed as the magical pets of the feared water spirits reinforced this belief.

- Belief in After Death. The belief is from the tale of Santelmo. People believe that Santelmo, a floating fire, was part of a memory of someone who cannot let go of their possession, especially their lands. It was a never-ending quest for power, land entitlement, and freedom. The story of the fisherman from barangay San Jose, who saw floating fires during his night fishing, affirms this belief. In addition, the folks believed that the Santelmos, appear to people who share the same blood lineage as someone who did wrongdoing to them when they were still alive.

  Belief in Curses. The belief is from the legend of the priest whom a crocodile ate. People believed that the first purebred Bulaeño priest, whom his church members bullied because of his speech defect, cursed the town of Bula not to have a purebred, someone whose parents are both natives of Bula, Bulaeño priest ever again. Since then, Bula did not have a purebred priest until the present. Some also believed that this is the main reason why Bula has a prolonged economic growth, if there is any, compared to Baao, which in the past was just one of the barangays in Bula, but now is remarkably prospering.

- The belief is that graduating students who attend excursions will meet an unfortunate fate. The belief is from the tale of the Lost Souls. It was said that most of the victims of the lost souls were graduating students from the various elementary and high school students in Bula. It almost became a systematic killing because of the yearly drowning of a graduating student that remains a mystery to all of the Bulaeños.

- The Celebration of the Feast of Saints. From the Tale of the Lady Warrior, believed to be St. Mary Magdalene. The salvation of the whole town was associated with the miraculous and brave acts of the said saint. With this belief, the whole town of Bula celebrates its feast day every 22nd of July, which denotes the same town fiesta celebration just three months after its founding anniversary, in honor of their patroness saint, St. Mary Magdalene.

- The practice of saying "tabi apo, di makaigo" when passing by a river and a huge tree. The belief is that supernatural beings lived in some vast trees and bodies of water mentioned in the various lake tales such as the "Parusa Sa Usad na Paraisura" and "Dakulong Isura na Ataman ko Diyosa." As a sign of respect, the folk people were saying "tabi apo, di makaigo" which means asking permission to pass by that area, an act acknowledging that there are unknown forces, spirits, and other supernatural creatures that are beyond our common senses.

Traits and Values

The different traits and values of the people from the community where the said folklores originated were also considered. The discussion of these traits and values was divided into two categories, negative and positive values, and traits.

There were six (6) positive traits: bravery, friendliness, generosity, religiosity, assertiveness, and patience. (1) Bravery/courage was affirmed by the Tale of the 'Lady Warrior' who bravely fought the pirates who wanted to invade the town of Bula during the colonial period; (2) Friendliness appeared in the narratives of the fisherfolks wherein it showcased the story of Bayanihan when the local fishermen went to go fishing together as brothers and one unified villagers; (3) Generosity was established in the story of the fishermen who are giving alays to the water deities even if they were not sure if they exist; (4) Religiosity were very obvious in the folkloric narratives centered on the miraculous deeds of saints Mary Magdelene and Helen; (5) Assertiveness, reflected in the story of Paulibngan, and showed how townfolks conquered their enemies because of their confidence and faith in their capabilities and in the white magic of St. Mary Magdalene; and (6) Patience was reflected in the stories of fishermen and their fishing expeditions such as waking up very early and waiting unwearyingly in the middle of the Bula Lake to have a good catch.

On the other hand, the researcher extracted six (6) negative traits and values of Bulaeños from the gathered folkloric narratives: envy, impulsiveness, possessiveness, sentimentalism, greed, and fear. (1) Envy or the feeling of wanting to have what someone else has appeared in two narratives which are Ludab sa Ranow and Paulibngan; (2) Impulsiveness reflected in the narratives concerning the priest who committed suicide, an impulsive decision because of an unfavourable environment and the story about the lightning that struck a fisherman because of his reckless actions attempting to steal one of the precious possessions of the water goddess; (3) Possessiveness is also one of the natures of Bulaeños that the researcher uncovered through the Ludab sa Ranow and the tales about evil spirits in Bula River and Ballester Spring;

(4) getting Sentimental, the feeling of not being able to let go of their memories that remind them of their old lives, is also one of the characteristics of the Bulaeños that the researcher was able to generate from the folkloric narratives of Mga Kalag sa Salog and Babaying Nag-aanap Kaibanan sa Burabod nira Ballester; (5) Greed was one of the most negative values that the researcher identified through the stories of Ludab sa Ranow, Parusa sa Usad na Paraisura, Pagsumpa sa Bula ko usad na Kura Paruko and Buaya sa Irarum ka Simbahan kin Bula; and (6) Fear of the unknown, a negative value that delimits the Bulaeños to take risk and stay out of mediocrity, is very evident in the stories of Dakulong Isura na Ataman Ko Diyosa and Parusa sa Usad na Paraisura.

Instructional Materials Integrating the Folklores

According to Maramba (as cited in the study of Velez, 2017), folklore serves as a tool to validate the existing cultures in the society. The statement means that it reflects the traditions and the unique identity of the people at some high level for them to have a concept of who they are in the present time. Thus, for the Bulaenos to constantly reference where they are and heading, they should know who they were first. Furthermore, this is where the concept of teaching these folklores to the younger generations will come in. Therefore, the best way to teach and inculcate these archaic stories that mirror their culture is by creating instructional materials that vividly represent the different folklores.

As authentic folkloric items, the Bula folklores will be excellent classroom materials that could be used as springboard selections for teaching grammar lessons and analyzing and appreciating folklores as part of vast literary selections. In addition, because of the contextualized materials, it will be easier for the students to understand the complex English grammar context by creating modules and acquiring knowledge on different literary elements by creating big books and literary folios.

Conclusions

Based on the presented findings, the researcher was able to find out that Bula has a very vast collection of folklores that are still circulating in that community. These folklores vary according to the specific geographic location of the local villagers. For example, Bulaeños residing near Lake Bula, Ballester Spring, and Bula River have stories about the people's relationship to their water nymphs and deities and other existing spirits. They believe that these creatures grant blessings, abundance, and, at some point, curses.

Those residing in places significantly affected by unfavorable circumstances because of their unstrategic geographic location, making them vulnerable to foreign invaders such as pirates, bandits, and rebels, all cling to white magics or miracles from their patron saints in the barangays of Sta. Elena and San Roque. Moreover, the researcher was also able to notice that majority of the folkloric narratives merely consisted of characters that are not visible to our naked eyes, like the stories of supernatural creatures such as the evil spirits, the water goddess, and the Santelmo.

The folkloric narratives also revealed eight (8) unique beliefs, traditions, and community practices influenced by their geographic location from the different barangays. Even if each story reveals different shared meanings, the researcher could still see that the beliefs, traditions, and practices in a particular barangay are evident in other barangays. Thus, it seems that one culture commutes to other places by trading shared experiences.

In these beliefs, there are six (6) positive and six (6) negative values that the Bulaeños possess, as revealed in the folkloric narratives. However, the negative characteristics of the Bulaeños received more attention since almost all of the folkloric narratives talk about the dark side and unbecoming of the local villagers.

The researcher concludes that the folkloric narratives gathered are similar to the existing literary texts in the Philippines in terms of their complete literary elements. Also, what is more, outstanding and compelling with the gathered folkloric materials is its direct touch on the culture and belief

system of the local people, thus making them more critical. Furthermore, the quest to sustain the culture and the oral traditions of the Bulaeños does not stop from making it known to natives. The challenge is to make sure that the culture will be shared to other places, especially to the entire Bicol region, adding it to the vast folkloric collection of Bikolanos.

Recommendations

The folkloric materials that the researcher gathered were very limited to a few barangays in Bula. The initial findings show that the focus of folkloric narratives varies from one barangay to another because of their unique natural features. This study recommends the Local Government Unit of Bula and the educational institutions to conduct further research and retrieved folkloric narratives in all the 27 barangays of Bula.

Also, the folkloric narratives gathered must be intensively integrated into the curriculum of the Camarines Sur division literature subjects, particularly in the different schools in Bula since these narratives reveal the values system of the locale. It was emphasized in the previous discussion that culture, values, beliefs, and traditions are fundamental aspects of the development and progress of a particular place, and there is no best medium to inculcate these values but through literary discussions.

Lastly, since a lady warrior became the champion of Bulaeños during pirates and bandit invasions, the researcher highly recommends that the Local Government Unit of Bula must already change their local hero. The latter is just patterned from the story of Maganda and Malakas from the Katagalogan region. Since narratives support the claim, it is high time for the government to redefine and redirect their festivity to their own identity, not borrowed and copied from other places, especially since activities like these define the culture of a particular community.

Moreover, different educational institutions, both public secondary and elementary schools in Bula, should be required by the DepEd to promote the proliferation and use of local folklores in Bula to respond to the need for contextualization of education here in our country. Therefore, the schools and the government should be held responsible for passing on these oral traditions and stories to the younger generation of Bulaeños.

It should be collected and written to immortalize the richness of our culture and have groundings on the changes that occurred in that place to understand the present context of the environment, including but not limited to the behavior, language, and political aspirations of the people living in Bula.

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Author's Bionote

Jerald graduated Cum Laude with a bachelor's degree in Secondary Education-English and is the most outstanding of Class 2018 at Universidad de Sta. Isabel. He was also recognized as one of the ten outstanding students in the Philippines at the regional level. He tirelessly works as an English teacher at Universidad de Sta. Isabel-Basic Education Department and has been recently receiving commendations and training in the field of academic research. He is currently a Master of Arts in English student at the University of Nueva Caceres.