

Research Article

Patterns and Themes of Local Legends: Pedagogical Implications in Literature Education and EFL Teaching

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Abstract: Local legends handed down orally and informally over generations are cultural relics showing the social structures, principles, and ethnicities of a local community. This paper sightsees the patterns and thematic rudiments of the explored legends from the 24 barangays of Baleno, Masbate, accentuating their role in the conservation and reflection of community individuality. Leveraging qualitative study design on narration, it assesses the collected and narrated stories through systematic analysis of recurrent patterns and themes. The revealed patterns, in effect, imply substantial inferences such as miscommunication of locals with conquerors; making imageries of observable natural properties; and paranormal or supernatural conditions happened that shape their identification style noticeably. Crucial to the legends are themes linked to respect for nature, cultural resilience, spiritual beliefs, and the influence of historical events. Some of the vital inferences of the tales highlighted is the conservation of cultural heritage, cultivation of pride among communities by guaranteeing that they find a place within the educational programs as means to cultivate cognizance and appreciation of native culture. Instructionally, this study illuminates the fact that making the schoolroom as a more rounded, engaging, and ethnically-relevant place is crucial across all EFL teaching space.

Keywords: cultural inheritance; EFL teaching; legends; literature education; pedagogy

1. Introduction

Local legends in the site of interest have been a long and integral part of cultural identity as the keepers of the values and traditions of communities that cross over generations. In the Philippines, with oral traditions still alive and vibrant, these stories continue to mold cultural and historical awareness (Pastera, 2024). Most Filipino legends have deep roots in natural elements such as places, mountains, rivers, forests, and animals, showing a deep sense of respect for nature (Macaranas, 2021). Nature is frequently depicted not only as a physical landscape but as a living, spiritual entity that goes to the heart of Filipino experience.

Among the folklore-rich regions, the municipality of Baleno in Masbate Province is known for its rich legends that reflect its identity and shared values. It belongs to the Bicol Region (Region 5). The municipality of Baleno has 24 barangays: Cagpandan, Manoboc, Lahong Proper, Lahong Interior, Eastern Capsay, Baao, Docol, Tinapian, Potoson, Poblacion, Lipata, Polot, Madancalan, Magdalena, Ubungan-Diot, Canjonday, Cancahurao, Gangao, Lagta, Sogong, Cagara, Batuila, Gabi, and Banase. Each barangay weaves its own story into the tapestry of the municipality.

Acknowledging the core of these cultural resources, such research integrates folklore into the pedagogy, teaching-learning process. To this end, making the classroom as a more holistic engaging and culturally relevant place, adding to the academic excellence but also bridging into students' knowledge of and connection to cultures and pasts. Considering local myths is important so that learners can understand in detail some of the basic cultural, historical and societal values practiced in such a community.

These stories, consequently, retain indigenous knowledge and cultural traditions passed down from generation to generation, revealing deep insights into collective identity and worldview (Pastera, 2024; Macaranas, 2021). They bridge the generational gaps by ensuring that younger generations learn from the wisdom of elders and foster respect for cultural roots.

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Local legends also enhance regional diversity, with distinct customs, traditions, and shared values that promote unity in diversity. As these stories develop, they reflect the changes in the society, showing how people in communities have adapted to historical events, colonization, and modern influences. Through this perspective, legends facilitate critical thinking about societal values, moral lessons, and human behavior, which therefore creates cultural awareness and personal insight (Cruz, 2024).

The folklores of Baleno's barangays encapsulate the shared memory and lived experiences of their people and are invaluable insights into community social structures, beliefs, and traditions. However, the structural and thematic elements of these legends have been left un-explored. Understanding these aspects is important for appreciating their literary worth and preserving the cultural heritage that they represent in an increasingly modernized world (Philip et al., 2020).

This research envisions to fill this gap by methodically analyzing the narrative structures and thematic elements embedded in these legends. It attempts to contribute to the preservation and appreciation of Baleno's intangible cultural heritage and illuminates how these legends reflect barangay identities and foster community pride. The study focuses on legends gathered, transcribed, and translated from various barangays in Baleno to identify recurrent patterns, motifs, and themes characterizing the narratives. It contextualizes the legends within the cultural heritage and traditions of Baleno and answers the following research questions: (1) What recurring themes and patterns can be identified across these legends? and, (2) How do these structural elements reflect the cultural and social values of the communities in Baleno?

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Context and Sample

The site of interest of this exploration on legends primarily consists 24 barangays of Baleno, Masbate, situated in the Bicol Region of the Philippines. These barangays – Cagpandan, Manoboc, Lahong Proper, Lahong Interior, Eastern Capsay, Baa, Docol, Tinapian, Potoson, Poblacion, Lipata, Polot, Madancalan, Magdalena, Ubungan-Diot, Canjonday, Cancahorao, Gangao, Lagta, Sogong, Cagara, Batuila, Gabi, and Banase, serve as the cultural and geographical framework of the research. The folk tales were collected through oral storytelling from local informants who have either firsthand knowledge, natives of Baleno or were custodians of these. These individuals were purposively selected to ensure the authenticity and depth of the data collected. The stories were told in the local vernacular, recorded, and faithfully translated to preserve their original essence. By analyzing these narratives, the study seeks to contextualize the legends within Baleno's cultural heritage and explore how they reflect the community's shared identity, traditions, and values. This purposeful selection of both legends and informants ensures that the data accurately represents the intangible cultural heritage of the municipality. This exploration not only contributes to the field of folklore studies but also underscores the significance of oral traditions in maintaining cultural heritage in contemporary society (Padricelli and Punziano, 2023). According to the study of Morato and Besmonte (2023), such narratives serve essential functions in community bonding and cultural transmission, which are increasingly threatened by modern influences.

2.2 Research Design

This inquiry leverages qualitative narrative research as the primary research design. This method permits for an in-depth exploration of the rich, personal stories embedded within legends, facilitating a comprehensive understanding of the structural and thematic elements that define the barangay legends of Baleno. Detailed versions of the participants' experiences and interpretations of the legends were gathered through narrative interviews which were analyzed to identify recurrent narrative patterns and cultural themes. This method aligns with the notion that narratives serve as a means for individuals to make sense of their experiences and cultural identities (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Through this study, insights are uncovered into how legends reflect societal values and collective memory, contributing to the broader discourse on cultural storytelling practices (O'Toole, 2018).

2.3 Gathering Procedure

The spoken narratives were congregated through semi-structured interviews conducted in the vernacular language of the community. Informants were selected based on their

knowledge of local legends, ensuring a diverse representation of perspectives. The interviews were recorded with consent, transcribed verbatim, and translated into English to maintain the authenticity of the narratives (Jean-Pierre et al., 2025).

2.4 Data Processing

The collected narratives were organized and prepared for analysis. This study involved a systematic approach where transcriptions were characterized based on thematic rudiments and narrative structures. In fact, in order to obtain the local legends, researchers transcribed the responses shared by the narrators using a mobile phone from which translation into English and categorization as to themes and patterns were done. From these processing steps, pedagogical implications and inferences were made capturing the key concepts of this paper.

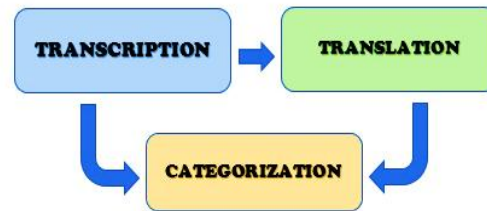


Figure 1. Data processing steps.

2.5 Data Analysis

The analysis stage employed both structural and thematic analysis procedures to classify recurrent narrative forms and dominant themes within the legends. Structural analysis focused on the components of each narrative – orientation, complication, resolution, and coda – while thematic analysis highlighted key themes such as connection to nature, supernatural beliefs, colonial influence, cultural heritage, and adaptation (Tua & Imoto, 2024). Triangulation was also employed to improve the validity and reliability of results by mixing multiple perspectives from different informants and associating narratives against historical accounts.

2.6 Ethical Considerations

This investigation accordingly adhered to ensuing ethical principles to ensure the veracity of the research progression and the respect for the rights and wellbeing of all participants. Informed consent was attained from all participants, guaranteeing they understood the purpose of the study and how their narratives would be used. Confidentiality was maintained by anonymizing informants’ identities in reporting findings. Additionally, researchers approached the study with cultural sensitivity, regarding local customs and traditions (Folklore Fellows, 2024). The ethical outline accentuated safeguarding human subjects and recognizing the responsibilities linked with collecting folklore materials (Jean-Pierre et al., 2025). This methodology not only aims to unveil meaningful insights into the legends but also ensures that the cultural integrity and ethical considerations are upheld throughout the research process.

3. Results

Table 1 hereunder highlights the exploration of legends surrounding the origins of place names in Baleno. It similarly provides a philosophical understanding of the cultural and social values embedded within these narratives. Through the analysis of twenty-four legends, this research identifies recurring themes and structural elements that reflect the historical context and cultural identity of the barangays. The influence of colonization, particularly by the Spaniards, alongside local customs and interactions, plays a crucial role in shaping these legends.

3.1 Recurrent Themes in Baleno’s Legends

3.1.1 Link to Nature, Paranormal Beliefs, and Colonial Trail

A significant theme across the legends is the connection to nature. Several tales highlight the relationship between the community and its environment, exemplifying how natural structures influenced place names. This theme reverberates with findings from other cultural studies, which highlight that folklore often reflects a community’s ecological awareness and respect for nature (Pekkarinen, 2025). The legends often depict local flora and fauna,

reinforcing a sense of stewardship towards the environment. This connection fosters a cultural value system that prioritizes harmony with nature, as seen in various folklore traditions globally (Mishra & Satpathy, 2020).

The paranormal beliefs embedded in these legends further illustrate the community's worldview. Many stories incorporate mystical elements, such as spirits or supernatural events, which serve to explain natural phenomena or historical occurrences. This theme underscores a cultural reliance on spiritual interpretations of life events, reinforcing communal bonds through shared beliefs and practices. As noted in Southeast Asian folklore studies, supernatural elements often play a crucial role in conveying cultural values and beliefs (Eslit, 2023). The integration of these elements into everyday life signifies a worldview where the sacred and mundane coexist.

Table 1. Patterns and themes of legends.

Legends	Themes	Patterns
Cagpandan	Connection to nature, cultural heritage	Orientation → Complication → Resolution → Coda
Manoboc	Supernatural beliefs, colonial influence	Orientation → Complication → Resolution
Lahong Proper	Cultural resilience, historical adaptation	Orientation → Resolution → Coda
Eastern Capsay	Mystical events, community identity	Orientation → Complication → Resolution → Coda
Baao	Adaptation and survival, respect for nature	Orientation → Coda
Docol	Spiritual beliefs, supernatural elements	Orientation → Complication
Tinapian	Colonial influence, cultural heritage	Orientation → Complication → Resolution
Potoson	Mystical and supernatural events	Orientation → Complication → Resolution → Coda
Poblacion	Cultural resilience, connection to nature	Orientation → Complication
Lipata	Historical influence, respect for traditions	Orientation → Resolution → Coda
Polot	Community identity, adaptation to change	Orientation → Complication → Resolution
Madancalan	Mystical events, spiritual beliefs	Orientation → Coda
Magdalena	Connection to nature, colonial encounters	Orientation → Complication → Resolution
Ubungan-Diot	Historical adaptation, respect for traditions	Orientation → Resolution → Coda
Canjonday	Supernatural beliefs, cultural identity	Orientation → Complication
Cancahurao	Respect for nature, mystical features	Orientation → Complication → Resolution → Coda
Gangao	Historical events, adaptation and survival	Orientation → Complication
Lagta	Community pride, spiritual beliefs	Orientation → Resolution → Coda
Sogong	Mystical features, respect for nature	Orientation → Complication
Cagara	Colonial influence, adaptation to modernization	Orientation → Complication → Resolution
Batuila	Supernatural beliefs, cultural resilience	Orientation → Coda
Gabi	Historical adaptation, community identity	Orientation → Complication → Resolution
Banase	Spiritual beliefs, cultural heritage	Orientation → Complication → Resolution → Coda

The colonial impact is another recurrent theme that forms the narratives. The interactions between colonizers and native inhabitants are often depicted through encounters that lead to misunderstandings or conflicts. These legends serve as historical accounts reflecting the complexities of colonialism, including language barriers and cultural exchanges that resulted in new place names. Such narratives align with broader observations that folklore often preserves traces of colonization, revealing its enduring impact on cultural identity and linguistic practices (Jocano, 1965; Gonzales, 2017). This theme highlights how colonization has left an indelible mark on local identity, shaping not only place names but also cultural practices and social structures (Jocano, 1965).

3.1.2 Cultural Inheritance, Community Individuality, and Adaptation to Survival

Legends also highlight cultural heritage and community individuality, showcasing how stories are vital for preserving collective memory. The narratives often convey moral lessons or historical accounts that underpin community pride and resilience. By linking place names to significant events or figures in their history, these legends foster a sense of belonging among community members. As demonstrated by studies on folklore's role in education, these narratives serve as tools for instilling values and reinforcing social norms (Mishra & Satpathy, 2020).

Essentially, the theme of adaptation and survival is apparent in many legends, reflecting how communities have circumnavigated challenges over time. Stories often recount how locals adapted to changing circumstances – be it environmental shifts or socio-political

upheavals – demonstrating resilience in preserving their identity. This theme resonates with con-temporary issues faced by communities in Baleno, emphasizing their ability to adapt while maintaining core cultural values.

The structural analysis of these legends reveals distinct narrative patterns that align with their thematic content. The traditional linear narrative structure – comprising orientation, complication, resolution, and coda – serves to convey complex cultural messages effectively.

3.2. Narrative Structure Patterns

The first pattern is orientation → complication → resolution → coda. This pattern is prevalent among many legends, providing a comprehensive framework for storytelling that encapsulates historical context (orientation), conflict (complication), resolution (explanation), and moral reflection (coda). It reinforces communal values by tying place names to significant events or lessons learned. Secondly, orientation → complication → resolution. In this pattern, the absence of a coda suggests a focus on the event's significance rather than moral implications, reflecting a pragmatic approach to storytelling where historical accuracy takes precedence. Moreover, as to orientation → complication pattern, this structure indicates an emphasis on conflict without resolution, possibly mirroring ongoing struggles within the community or unresolved historical tensions stemming from colonial encounters. Similarly, orientation → resolution → coda structure, in this pattern, resolution precedes moral reflection, suggesting that understanding historical context is essential before imparting lessons learned. The last pattern discovered is orientation → coda. This pattern signifies narratives that prioritize moral lessons over detailed storytelling, reflecting a community's desire to reinforce shared values succinctly.

Interestingly, each narrative element serves a distinct function within these structures, showcasing how storytelling practices are shaped by cultural priorities and social contexts. The analysis of legends from Baleno reveals rich thematic content intertwined with structural elements reflective of cultural values. Themes such as connection to nature, supernatural beliefs, colonial influence, cultural heritage, and adaptation underscore the community's identity while offering insights into their historical experiences. The narrative structures employed in these legends not only enhance storytelling but also serve as vehicles for preserving communal memory and values amidst changing times.

4. Discussion

The discoveries of the study bear considerable academic inferences. In fact, the explored legends with hidden structures and themes may be utilized by literature and EFL teachers to expand students' cognition of ethnic identity and culture (Deibl et al. 2024; Laviste & Valdez, 2025; Zakirova et al., 2023). To some degree, this will foster a multifaceted way of comprehending local legends, assisting students to value diverse ethnic features of local folklores. This paper likewise illuminates how traditional stories carry core principles, beliefs, and customs through shared stories which potentially can be incorporated into core curriculum to uphold folk consciousness and reverence. Moreover, reconnoitering narrative forms boosts creative thinking and abilities allowing learners to determine representational implications and socio-cultural frameworks of local legends. Significantly, leveraging legends as instructional tools promotes the conservation of intangible folk inheritance while improving learners' commitment with fiction thereby elevating their cultural experiences and raising a link to their personal and other's culture (Macaranas, 2021; Pastera, 2024).

Fundamentally, in the field of literature instruction, this academic piece highlights how scrutinizing the structure and discovered themes of folklores indispensable to developing learners' literary comprehension by introducing them with some narrative procedures such as plot astonishment, protagonist role, and theme relapse. This expands fictional scrutiny ability and recognition for storytelling artistry (Youpika et al. 2024; Mambu et al., 2025; Miravalles, 2025; Rañola, 2025). Likewise, the educational themes entrenched in traditional stories provide rich instructional source for reconnoitering varied global perspectives, principles, and ethnicities, thereby augmenting learners' intercultural capability and compassion. Infusing such folklores into programs encourages critical analysis as learners infer emblematic meanings and social frameworks. It similarly aids in the conservation of traditional tales as existing literary pieces, linking ancient and contemporary world (Cruz, 2024; Wiysahnyuy & Valentine, 2023).

As to EFL context, this study substantiates the fact that leveraging traditional stories in EFL teaching space engrosses students with ethnically rich tales that improve both linguistic

ability and social understanding (Estremera & Gonzales, 2025; Vu & Pham, 2022; Rozimela et al., 2025). Traditional stories offer L2 students reliable linguistic backgrounds, diverse terminology, and intricate sentence forms, gearing towards an improved interpretation of texts and story-telling skills. Thematic as well as structural study of folklores fosters critical acumen and interpretive ability vital for a successful linguistic assimilation. Furthermore, legends promote enthusiasm by linking linguistic learning to cultural inheritance, making concepts more ex-pressive and notable. Incorporating folk tales similarly supports multimodality of learning process involving graphic, spoken, and written fundamentals, positioning with functional and efficient EFL instruction approaches (Jocano, 1965; Gonzales, 2017). In total, this paper inspires instructors to leverage traditional stories as active teaching tools that combine linguistic progress with social instruction, elevating EFL education and nurturing profounder student involvement and intercultural capability.

This study accentuates the importance of legends as a tool for understanding and preserving cultural identity in the context of modernization. Recommendations are made to further explore comparative analyses of legends within neighboring municipalities or regions in search of broader cultural patterns and influences. Further research may also be done in understanding how these narratives evolve with time, reflecting the change in society and dynamics of cultural adaptation. Further explorations would continue to preserve and rejuvenate legends, as they become a source to help deepen the understanding of contemporary society. As to limitations, the study has slight emphasis on exact traditional stories or social backgrounds, which poses limitation as to the answers across various principles. Its dependence on forms and thematic scrutiny might have overlooked significant narrative features like formal or performative facets. Moreover, experiential justification in didactic backgrounds can evaluate real-world applications and efficiency. Reconnoitering digital and hypermedia storytelling set-ups could correspondingly provide understandings into developing narrative forms and social communication. In consideration of the foregoing limitations, the following are recommended by the authors.

Firstly, the barangay legends of Baleno should be included in the local school curriculum to foster cultural awareness and pride among students. These stories can be used as interesting texts for teaching literature, history, and values education. Teachers are challenged to develop innovative lesson plans that delve into the cultural, moral, and historical themes of the legends, thereby developing critical thinking and appreciation of heritage among students.

Secondly, to avoid the loss of these great cultural treasures, it is advised that local government units and cultural organizations work on projects to document and preserve systematically these legends. This can be done by publishing a written anthology of the legends, accompanied by audio recordings of the original narration in the vernacular language. Such efforts will ensure the survival of these oral traditions for future generations.

Thirdly, the barangay leaders and advocates of culture should take the initiative for community events-like storytelling festivals and heritage fairs-where those legends can again be shared in celebration. Helping the community or the youth gain a deeper personal connection with its cultural roots also inspires pride that they share something in common-a heritage.

Fourthly, there should be relative studies conducted by future researchers on legends in Baleno compared to other nearby municipalities or regions. These might look for deeper patterns, similarities, and differences that reveal aspects of regional cultural identities and influences. Another rich approach is interdisciplinarity through the combination of folklore, linguistics, and anthropology in enriching the knowledge on these stories.

Fifthly, to reach a broader audience of younger generations, the legends could be replicated and created in the short film, illustrated book, or in digital storytelling formats. This would allow local artists, writers, and content creators to bring the stories to life, retaining cultural authenticity. Such adaptations could be used for tourism promotions, with visitors being exposed to Baleno's rich heritage.

5. Conclusions

Local legends of the twenty-four (24) barangays of Baleno, Masbate, are valuable cultural relics that signifies the community's rich inheritance, shared values, and collective distinctiveness. Through the systematic exploration of their structural and thematic elements, this study revealed recurring narrative patterns, such as the interplay of miscommunication, natural observations, and mystical occurrences, which significantly influenced the naming of places. The analysis also reveals central themes of respect for nature, resilience of cultures,

spiritualism, and the impact of historical events, which portray the strong connection that has been built with the environment as well as with cultural heritage within the community. Such research findings suggest the need for preserving and integrating such stories into education contexts to increase cultural awareness, community pride, and appreciation for intangible heritage.

Supplementary Materials & Data availability statement: Upon proper communication to author 1, significant supplementary materials such as copy of the legends and transcriptions may be made available with strict adherence to the principles of copyright policy and other pertinent laws.

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Informed Consent Statement: This section was discussed under ethical considerations of the study.

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