

Research Article

English Contextualization Through Lexical And Syntactical Devices And Rhetorical Patterns

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Abstract

This paper is part of a dissertation that provides an in-depth analysis of the texts written by NVM Gonzales which crystallize the indigenized creative processes of the writer. It specifically looked into how the writer contextualized English through the use of lexical and syntactic devices and rhetorical patterns reviewing his thirty short stories. The paper has proven that nativization devices are not only identifiable and recognizable but also a silhouette of creative potential and adaptability of a living language essential in conveying a message. The stories of NVM Gonzales are rich in borrowings which facilitate understanding pictured by the vivid images created by the nativization devices. This becomes a response to the communicative needs of language-in-contact users such as articulating certain nuances of meaning for which there are no equivalents in the second language. Challenge is on the use of Philippine English in the development of basic reading materials considering the dearth of literary materials which when given primordial attention may foster interest in reading among learners.

Keywords: *nativization, contextualization, localized innovation*

Introduction

English has become the language of the global village, and it serves as an auxiliary language to people who come from different linguistic backgrounds. It has gained dominance over other languages and plays a crucial role in promoting globalization. With the increasing use of English different varieties of English have emerged around the world. Each English variety has adopted the local lexis to suit the needs of the people in a society. This has resulted in the nativization of English in various parts of the world.

The Philippines has developed its own “Philippinized English” with syntactic, lexical, and phonological features which have been viewed by critics as syllable-timed rather than stress-timed with the full pronunciation of the vowels. It is a variety of English that has earned its place among world Englishes; however, the number of those who do not understand what they read, has grown (FLEMMS) (Inquirer.net).

Reasons could be the quality of teachers whose grasp of English leaves much to be desired and English textbooks that are riddled with errors, the cause could be that most of the Filipino students have reading comprehension difficulties because of the culture load in the reading

materials. Students have been taught that one must learn not only the words in the English language but also the cultural background that gives those words meaning. Students also need to understand the context to aid comprehension.

In the local setting, experiences and observations have found out that the college students have difficulty in English specifically in the University of Eastern Philippines where the researcher is a part. The variety of English Filipinos use is not the American or British or any non-indigenous variety but the local or Philippine variety. Filipinos usually speak and write English flavored by their culture as they sound Filipino. It is therefore appropriate that Philippine English be made familiar to Filipino English users to convince them that Philippine English is a new English just like other varieties. Significantly, any move to recognize that a Filipino variety of English exists will mean the involvement of educational institutions, especially the English teachers in carrying out the task.

As both a student and a teacher of language and literature, the researcher explored the way English is nativized in the short stories written by NVM Gonzales who once said in a lecture that “[he] wrote in Tagalog using English” thus helping probe the claim that nativized English does help achieve understandability in reading materials.

The chosen short stories were written by a multi-awarded Filipino writer, a national artist internationally recognized. Critical reviews of his works here and abroad all helped raise his reputation as a writer. Moreover, these short stories were chosen based on their having won a literary award, having been anthologized, and having been compiled by the author. Gonzales's short stories capture the slow pace of life and the cadences of the Mindoro dialect of the Tagalog language. His first story collection, *Seven Hills Away*, won him a fellowship to Stanford and identified him as the first Filipino writer to appear on the post-World War II literary scene. Since the publication of *Seven Hills Away* (1947), a number of his stories have been anthology-hopping. Some short stories in *Mindoro and Beyond* like *Serenade* won the Philippine Press Award in 1964 and *The Tomato Game*, originally published in *Asia-Philippines Leader*, was a winner of the 1972 Carlos Palanca Memorial Award for Short Story in English. Gonzales published his stories in magazines in the United States, England, and Australia as well as in the country. These stories have been translated into Chinese, Indonesian, Malay, German, and Russian. Since his winning a Rockefeller Foundation fellowship in Creative Writing in 1948, N.V.M. Gonzales received other awards including the Philippine Republic Award of Merit for Literature in English, The Republic Cultural Heritage Award for Literature, and the Rizal Pro Patria Award. He was named National Artist for Literature in 1997 and was an International Writer-in-Residence at the University of the Philippines in the '90s.

Methodology

This descriptive qualitative research used close reading and in-depth analysis of the texts written by NVM Gonzales to determine the nativization devices that acculturate the short stories to Philippine realities. It hews closely to Morrison's (1989: 24) definition of qualitative descriptive which is employed for things that cannot be instrumentally measured, such as feelings, behavior, speech, thoughts, and culture. The research, therefore, entails an intricate and tabula rasa approach that works without any presumed outcomes.

The short stories were read several times over before they were analyzed and summarized. The devices were categorized into lexical and syntactic levels and rhetorical patterns. Lexical items that contextualize the Filipino culture were identified. From the words used, the study moved on to the sentence and paragraph levels. Culture-bound features were listed down by categories and were explained.

The present study adopts some of the concepts of Hermosa's and de la Rosa's studies like the investigation of the linguistic devices used by the creative writers in writing the short stories, the identification of Filipino cultural values, and the determination of socio-economic and socio-political realities of the country as reflected in the short stories. The steps that were taken were the following: a) close reading of and summarizing of the short stories; b) analysis of the text as to the linguistic devices used categorizing them into lexical and syntactic levels as well as rhetorical patterns.

For lexical level, it tried to find out if the following lexical devices were used in the short stories: acronym, blending, borrowing, calquing or loan translation, coinages (or neologisms), collocation, compounding, peculiar derivation, special meanings, normal expansion of a term, hybridized item, transfer.

For syntactic level, it determined if the following syntactical devices were used in the short stories: translation, transliteration, overgeneralization, omission, reduction, restructuring, nativized imagery, the translation of native proverbs, idioms, etc., the use of culturally dependent speech style, use of simile and metaphor

For rhetorical patterning, the sentence patterns were analyzed whether or not they imitate the mother tongue pattern such as the following: use of introductory phrases in sentences, use of questions at the end of the remarks, use of the coda-like phrase at the end of the sentence, use of the relative pronoun, coordination, and participial clauses to capture the breathless, continuous vernacular style, contextualization of rituals to drive away evil spirits and ensure a bountiful harvest.

Results and Discussion

The thirty short stories of NVM Gonzales which made use of nativization devices, ably reflected aspects of an indigenous way of life, particularly that of Mindoro. It gave a distinctive Filipino cultural identity to the texts. These short stories have shown how the writer has appropriated the English language to interpret his native sociolinguistic environment.

Socio-cultural and even historical features come into play in the creation of literary texts for the effective communication of their messages. A full appreciation of the use of words and their meanings in any literary text can come only if situated in the proper sociolinguistic context.

The domestication of the English language and its pragmatic use to mirror a unique culture show that Philippine English has entered the realm of world Englishes contributing to the dynamism of language as it confronts communication problems. The findings of the study revealed that the nativization devices are easily identifiable and recognizable in the texts. In the thirty short stories the most often used lexical devices were borrowing and hybridized items. For syntactical devices, simile and metaphor came out as the most popularly used. The short stories were also rich in nativized images. As to rhetorical patterning, the use of

introductory phrases in sentences, the use of questions at the end of remarks, and the use of the coda-like phrase at the end of the sentence were most often used in the short stories.

Filipino cultural values, practices, and other Philippine realities were clearly illustrated in the short stories. Of the 30 stories, 24 of which are rich in cultural values and the most cited value is hard work/industry. The most popular practices are the offering done to ward off evil spirits to produce a good harvest, the warm accommodation of visitors, and the celebration of feasts. Likewise, the pragmatic bases for localized innovations are expressed vividly in the texts most of which are usually found in stories set in the hinterlands.

Finally, a model lesson for ESL instruction was designed to illustrate how the use of nativization devices clarifies the cultural underpinnings of creative work and how they help foster understanding and interest in reading because of the local readers' identification with the story content, thus paving a painless way to learning English.

These findings are backed up by the related literature and studies reviewed.

One of the findings of this study revealed that the nativization devices are easily identifiable and recognizable in the texts. This finds support in Alo's study (1998) where he outlined some devices used by African writers to reflect local or indigenous nuances in their styles viz: coinages, borrowing, the use of native similes and metaphors, the transfer of rhetorical devices from native languages, the translation of native proverbs, idioms, etc., and the use of syntactic devices. These have also been found in Gonzales' stories.

This study is also supported by De la Rosa's study (1985) where she investigated the linguistic and rhetorical devices that a creative writer employed to portray an indigenous culture categorized into lexical levels such as borrowing, hybridized items, and calquing and syntactic levels such as the use of simile and metaphor, translation equivalence or Filipinisms, and nativized imagery as well as rhetorical patterning.

Likewise, Hermosa's study (1986) on the process of adaptation, labeled as contextualization, has involved the devices of lexico-grammatical transfers and other innovations at the lexico-grammatical such as those of hybridization, semantic shift, loan translations, and word formations or neologisms. It is important to note that, the foregoing devices are adopted, in varying degrees, by different writers to acculturate English to express indigenous meaning.

Why should Filipino writers in English be read?

Filipino literature in English serves as a model of good writing in English precisely because the culture and experience from which the literary works arise are the stories of the Filipino people, and because these works show how English as a medium of expression operates to shape the thoughts and feelings of the Filipinos. In this way, Filipino writers have created a clearing of the Filipino identity within that adopted language called English.

That General American English (GAE) as a transplanted language had indeed taken root but was in the process of being reshaped, acculturated, and redesigned as Philippine English was pointed out by Llamzon (1997). He describes three distinct sociolinguistic varieties of Philippine English: the acrolect variety, which closely approximates General American English, the mesolect variety, which shows deviations from the phonological structure of GAE, and the basilects variety, where "the speaker's ethnic tongue forms the substratum." Using a lectal approach, he underscores the fact that "...when educated Filipinos speak to their fellow Filipinos, they speak English the Filipino way. This way they retain something of their identity (Tayao 2008). It can be observed that English, as used by Filipinos, has become

colored by their peculiar experiences and surroundings in pronunciation, intonation, and syntactic patterns.

The context of Philippine English as a distinct variety is also where changes in the English language are most interesting, not only in lexicon but also in 'Filipinisms' (special loan translations from Filipino to English) and in the restructuring of English grammar which is part of the Asianization of the English language. This language situation has resulted in language and literature becoming the expression of a culture that now has ties with other English-using Asian societies (Gonzales 2008). Thus, this study attempts to investigate how Philippine English is expressed through the use of nativization devices to portray the Filipino culture.

Braj Kachru (1990) theorized that linguistic adaptations are induced by the cultural background of the L2 speakers. This verity emphasizes the role of culture in the formation of new Englishes. The concept of new Englishes presupposes that those territories where English is used as an L2 variety (e.g. West Africa, India) have a different cultural background from that of the L1 speakers in the "Western world". Terms like nativization, indigenization, contextualization, and acculturation used in the description of these varieties attest to this difference. This is the core theory on which the present study hinges.

Varieties of English are formed within and result from the socio-cultural context of their use. It is seen in the use of Philippine English, as one new English, used in writing short stories which are reflective of Filipino culture. Its emphasis is on the functional use, that is, for easy understanding on the part of the Filipino readers and the adaptation required to suit the Philippine English variety to the Filipino culture. This implies that 'nativization processes are recognized and innovations in language and style are considered as indexical markers.

Malinowski proposed that "the study of any language, spoken by people who live under conditions different from their own and possess a different culture, must be carried out in conjunction with the study of their culture and their environment (Ogden and Richards 1923:306). Language is an inevitable aspect in the study of culture such that the birth of a new variety of English such as Philippine English bears with it the sociocultural milieu of the country. Thus, this study analyzed the nativization devices used by the writer to portray Filipino culture.

Peripheral to this investigation are Andersen's nativization model and acculturation model. According to the nativization model, second language acquisition consists of learners making input, making them conform to their own internalized view of what constitutes the second language system (Andersen in Pereira 2014).

Likewise, Brown's (1980) acculturation model says that the degree to which a learner is acculturated to the target language group will control the degree to which s/he acquires the second language. In acculturation then the Second Language Acquisition (SLA) is determined by the degree of social and psychological distance between the learner and the language culture. Second language acquisition is somehow affected by the proximity of the language learner to the culture of the target language. Thus, a language learner learns easily if he can relate to the culture of that particular target language.

The present study is also anchored on Kaplan's (1966) concept that each language has a cultural thought pattern and that patterns of rhetoric are culturally relative. Kaplan cited the English language and its related thought pattern as having evolved out of the Anglo-European

cultural pattern, and it is predominantly linear in the sequence which contrasts with many thinking in other cultures. Subsequently, he argues that all of the various rhetorical modes are possible in any language, but maintained that each language has clear preferences and that the full range of forms does not occur with equal frequency in any used language.

This explains why Philippine English has a different rhetorical pattern from that of General American English. Each speech community has a formally and functionally determined range of language and/or dialect as part of their competence for linguistic interaction. Such that the second language is affected by the rhetorical pattern of the mother tongue. According to Kachru (1990), one has to consider not only the blend of the formal features, but also the assumptions derived from various cultural norms, and the blending of these norms into a new linguistic configuration with a culture-specific meaning system. These include consciously or unconsciously devised strategies according to the patterns of interaction in the native culture, which are transferred to English.

Conclusion

The nativization devices are not only identifiable and recognizable; they are also proof of the creative potential and adaptability of a living language. This implies that nativization, as a process, is essential in conveying a message. It is a response to the communicative needs of language-in-contact users such as articulating certain nuances of meaning for which there are no equivalents in the second language, establishing social roles and relationships, and remembering and sharing cultural memories. Moreover, the stories of NVM Gonzales are rich in borrowings. This implies that the use of Filipino English can facilitate the understanding of short stories because of the vivid images created by the nativization devices. Gonzales welcomes the idea that Filipinos have finally appropriated English within their cultural needs, thus emancipating themselves from the clutches of American English. Filipinos have taken the language for their creative uses, emancipation which is bound to result in novelty in the creative uses of the patterning of English at the lexical and syntactic level, in addition to semantic and phonological innovation (Tupas 2004). This form of linguistic emancipation gives Filipino writers just like NVM Gonzales, whose short stories are the subject in this present study, the chance to change the patterns of English to be able to reflect local realities.

Kachru (2008) laid down this proposition: "Once a language establishes its autonomy, it is liberated." To which Filipino poet Gemino Abad (1997) exuberantly and memorably responded in a writer's forum: "English is now ours. We have colonized it too." This has been manifested in the writings of the Filipino writers whose works have been recognized locally as well as internationally.

A linguist commented on the motivations of Filipinos for learning English:

"Contrary to predictions, a positive attitude towards Americans were not crucial in the Filipinos desire to learn Rather, feelings of satisfaction with the Philippine the community were associated with the integrative motive and English language achievement. This association suggests that English is perceived in part as a Philippine language, and

that the integrative motive to learn English in the Philippines derives from an identification with a set of Filipinos, and this particular set is believed to constitute a Filipino English speaking community.” (Bautista 2000)

And a quote from fictionist, poet, and foremost figure in Philippine letters Nick Joaquin in 1964, (Hermosa 1986), shows that he had observed the same “nativizing” tendency in Philippine literature:

“All these very young writers today are doing something with the English language. It no longer is simple English. These young boys are making it their English. It’s some sort of terrifying English ... It couldn’t be expressed by an American, British, or Indian.”

Historical sources show that Filipino words began to be borrowed into the English of the American colonizers at a very early stage in the colonial period. Today, the English used in the Philippines has a distinctive localized vocabulary that finds expression in a range of settings, including government, education, and the media as well as the personal domain (Bolton and Butler 2008). Such is evidence that the Philippine English lexicon is recognized as it is used in personal communication, in the print media, and in literature showing a creative and vibrant word stock that directly reflects the hybridity of life in Philippine society..

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