

Nativization of English in the Short Stories of NVM Gonzalez: Basis for Designing a Model Lesson for ESL Instruction

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Abstract

The nativization of English gives rise to a language that is culture specific, able to express the *unique Weltanschauung of a people*. *Teaching English as a second language via nativized literature* therefore reduces the affective filter in learning. The contexts read and talked about in the texts have been made familiar and comprehensible with the use of the nativization devices, thus making English less intimidating and threatening. Teaching English as a second language via nativized literature therefore will make for the comprehensibility of literary texts and bring the reader closer to understanding cultural contexts.

Acculturating English to new sociocultural settings effectively transmits the intended indigenous meaning enhancing understanding and appreciation of the culture embedded in literary texts. With the adoption of the rhythm, register, syntax, and semantics of the English language to the linguistic and cultural nuances of the native language, English ceases to be a stanger to the local reader and is able to adequately and authentically express Filipino culture and other realities.

Grounded on the analysis that nativized texts express local shades of meaning with which local readers identify, the way becomes clearer for deducing cultural values and practices as well as socio-political and socio-economic realities. Cultural background knowledge relates the readers to their reading fare.

Nativizing texts assists in developing the learners' communicative skills, makes teaching sessions more enjoyable, and generates an awareness of the potential mistakes that might crop up in comprehension, interpretation, translation, and communication.

Keywords: nativization, contextualization, localized innovation.

Introduction

“...[the] point at which understanding becomes most vital but also problematic is not in the area of science but in the area of lore. It is our metaphors that have divided us, and it is through sharing them that we have begun to come together again.”

Munro Edmunson (1971:3)

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. It is a variety of English that has earned its place among world Englishes. The main characteristics of Philippine English have been viewed by critics as syllable-timed rather than stress-timed with full pronunciation of the vowels. Intonation and other expressive features are clearly local, often with a rise in intonation in wh-questions and in tag questions.

What must be the cause of this? Aside from 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, the researcher, through experience and observation along with those shared by her colleagues, have found out that the college students in the University of Eastern Philippines apparently have difficulty in English. They do not seem to care about modelling their English after the American English model they are asked to follow and apparently use it following the features of the local language.

It is obvious that the variety of English Filipinos use is not the American or British or any non-indigenous variety but the local or Philippine variety. Filipinos speak and write English flavored by their culture. They use English but sound and write 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.

claim that nativized English does help achieve understandability in reading materials. The researcher analyzed how English has been contextualized in the stories of a Filipino writer, literature being regarded as the best example of the use of language. And to fully exploit these nativization devices used by NVM Gonzales, a model lesson for ESL instruction has been designed.

Gonzales 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.

This paper investigated the ways by which English is used by a Filipino creative writer, N. V.M. Gonzales, one of the giants in Philippine fiction in English. This paper demonstrated how English was appropriated to express Filipino culture; looked into how the writer contextualized English through the use of lexical devices, syntactic devices and rhetorical patterns; identified the Filipino cultural values, practices, and other realities (socio-political and socio-economic events) reflected in the short stories and finally pointed out the pragmatic bases for the localized innovations. These are all essential for ESL instruction.

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.

A close reading and textual analysis of the short stories were employed to crystallize the devices utilized by N.V.M. Gonzales in indigenizing his creative process.

The short stories were read several times over before they were analyzed and summarized. The devices were categorized into lexical and

syntactic level 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 paper 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 texts were analysed and the nativization devices were identified, picked out, and categorized. Also, the content or meaning of the short stories was extracted from the texts to crystallize the cultural values and practices of the Filipinos as well as the socio-political and socio-economic situations and other Philippine realities.

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. 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.

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 coda-like phrase at the end of the sentence were most often used in the short stories.

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. 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.

The domestication of 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.

Another finding in this study is that Filipino cultural values, practices, and other Philippine realities were clearly illustrated 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 hardwork/industry. The most popular practices are the offering done to ward off evil spirits to produce good harvest, the warm accommodation of visitors and the celebration of feasts. This finding is in accord with Hermosa's study which showed that the Filipino short story writers have expressed their national or cultural identity by addressing themselves to the politico-socio-economic events or issues of their day, enshrining their sociocultural values and national aspirations in their work, and by using devices of contextualization which have made the English language a code for articulating the thoughts and sentiments and the experiences of the Filipinos. It has been proven that English can be used locally to fit the cultural, economic, and socio-political needs. In general, English has been nativized to reflect the local culture.

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. The pragmatic bases for localized innovations were expressed vividly in the texts. This agrees with Kachru's perspective that there is a "repertoire of models for English", that "the localized innovations [in English] have pragmatic bases", and that "the English language now belongs to all those who use it".

By the pragmatic bases for localized innovations, Kachru means a nativized variety of English that incorporates innovations in vocabulary, grammar, and discourse because of the new roles and functions which English is made to play in its new environment. Localized innovations in Gonzales' stories depict vivid Mindoro countryside and life. Thus, new items of vocabulary (e.g., for food, for literary genres, for common expressions) and different patterns for speech events (e.g., for greetings, for apologies, for obituaries) are developed when English is transplanted to a new culture.

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

Language is the medium of literature. All great literature are produced through the medium of language. Language thus helps readers to read literature, understand and appreciate the work of great writers and poets. In this study, literature serves as a vehicle for language teaching. A literary text can be a springboard in teaching language. Through the analysis of the short stories the researcher found out that nativization devices facilitate the readers' understanding of literary texts. Hence, this model lesson in teaching English as a second language.

Conclusions and Implications

The nativization devices are not only identifiable and recognizable; they are also a 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 understanding of short stories because of the vivid images created by the nativization devices.

Filipino cultural values, practices and other Philippine realities are clearly expressed through the use of nativization devices. This implies that the English language can be used as a code for articulating the thoughts and the experiences of the Filipinos; that though an alien code, it is capable of verbalizing Filipino cultural identity when flavored/colored by local features, meanings are intensified.

The pragmatic bases for localized innovations are vividly shown in the text both in the lexical and syntactic level which implies that the use of native lexis, sentence structures, and patterns of combining words effectively are justifiable especially if there is no equivalent term in English to give the local color of the scene being established.

Designing a model lesson for ESL instruction facilitates language and literature teacher in teaching the lessons and helps the language learners in understanding easily the lessons as they are guided by the nativization devices.

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