

Contextualized English and the Pragmatic Bases of the Localized Innovations

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Abstract: *This paper is part of a bigger paper that demonstrates how English was appropriated to express Filipino culture and is meant to enrich the knowledge of universal readers significantly those interested in language and literature. It investigated how Filipino culture is expressed and portrayed through Philippine English by the use of nativization devices. This descriptive qualitative research used textual analysis to determine the nativization devices employed in the short stories written by NVM Gonzalez to express Filipino realities. It looked into how the writer contextualized English through the use of lexical and syntactic devices and rhetorical patterns; identified the Filipino cultural values, practices, and other realities; and pointed out the pragmatic bases for localized innovations. Thirty short stories were reviewed and analysed through close reading and textual analysis that crystallize the nativization devices used in indigenizing creative process. Findings revealed that the nativization devices are not only identifiable and recognizable; they are also a proof of the creative potential and adaptability of a living language. The pragmatic bases for localized innovations are vividly shown in the text both in the lexical and syntactic level. Filipino cultural values, practices, and other Philippine realities are clearly expressed through the use of nativization devices. These are all essential in the design of a model lesson for ESL instruction.*

Keywords: nativization, contextualization, localized innovation

1. Introduction

Language and culture are closely intertwined (Whorf 1991). Language influences the ways in which individuals think and perceive the world. Several researches have attempted to test this assumption with a variety of approaches and one of which is the cultural accommodation hypothesis which posits that individuals adjust their responses (or behaviors) in a way that corresponds to the culture with which they have an encounter. Cultural accommodation specifically suggests that individuals think and act differently depending on the language they are using (Ralston et al. 1995a).

Varieties of English are formed within the result from the sociocultural 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 forwarding an implication that nativization processes are recognized and innovations in language and style are considered as indexical markers.

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 of their environment (Ogden and Richards 1923:306). Clearly, 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 the Filipino culture.

Peripheral to the investigation of the thirty (30) stories is Andersen's nativization model and acculturation model. Accordingly, second language acquisition consists in learners making input, making them conform to their own

internalized view of what constitutes the second language system (Andersen in Pereira 2014). Further, it 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 sequence which contrasts with many thinking in other cultures. He subsequently 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 the 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 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.

This study therefore looked into the contextualization of English through the use of lexical devices, syntactic devices, and rhetorical patterns.

2. Methodology

This descriptive qualitative research used close reading and textual analysis on the 30 short stories of NVM Gonzalez to ferret out the nativization devices used.

The researcher collected NVM Gonzalez' short stories as the subject of the study. These short stories were chosen on the basis of their having won literary awards, having been anthologized, and having been compiled by the author.

A close reading and textual analysis of the short stories were employed to crystallize the devices in indigenizing his creative process.

The short stories were read several times over before they were analysed 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. 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.

3. Results and Discussion

Gonzalez was revered for preserving Filipino cultural roots through his short stories and other writings. He appreciated his land, his people, his language, his culture, and mostly wrote about the simplicity of life. He wrote with sensitivity about Filipinos living their lives in their hometowns or abroad, in the process making a new clearing within the English idiom and tradition on which he established an authentic vocabulary. He explains how an alien language (English) does not fail if it is employed in honest service to the scene, in evocation of the landscape, and in celebration of the people one has known from birth (Skinner 1994).

Generally, the analysis of the text showed that English can be used to express Filipino culture. The findings 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 remarks and the use of 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 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. 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 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 Gonzalez 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 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 lexes, 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 therefore 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.

4. Conclusion

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 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 stranger to the local reader and is able to adequately and authentically express Filipino culture and other realities.

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.

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