

**A Paragraph Outline of *Mula Saysay at Salaysay o Paano Dapat Isalin ang Creative Non-fiction?*
 (“From Significance to Narrative¹ or How Should [the Term] Creative Non-fiction Be Translated?”)
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[Introduction]

1. Jerry Gracio translated creative non-fiction as *sarilaysay*, referring to the personal essay alone, thus excluding the biography.
2. A fundamental step in translation is clarifying the meaning of a word, either creative or technical, from its source language (*mulaang wika*) to its target language (*tunguhang wika*), for example – creative non-fiction (a new genre in English literature)
 - *sarilaysay*, which is not comprehensive enough.
3. Two words have these origins:
 - 3.1 *sarilaysay*
 - = *sari* + *laysay*
 - from *sarili* + *salaysay* (“personal” + “story”)
 - creative non-fiction
 - 3.2 *sanaysay*
 - (a neologism coined by Alejandro G. Abadilla, 1960s)
 - = *saril* + *aysay*
 - from *sarili* + *saysay**
 - (“personal” + “essay”)

- personal essay
 -
 - *also the root of *kasaysayan* (“history”)

- 4. *Sari* in *sarilaysay* has two possible origins:
 - 4.1 *sarili* (“personal”)
 - 4.2 *sari* (“diversity”);
 - thus –

 - 4.2.1 *saribuhay*
 - = *sari* + *buhay*
 - (“diversity” + “life”)
 - biodiversity
 - 4.2.2 *sarikulay*
 - = *sari* + *kulay*
 - (“diversity” + “color”)
 - racial diversity, multicolor
 - 4.2.3 *sarikultura*
 - = *sari* + *kultura*
 - (“diversity” + “culture”)
 - cultural diversity, multicultural

- 5. What did the neologist have in mind with *sarilaysay* (personal essay)?

- 6. We could search for the neologist who coined the term *creative non-fiction* and ask about its scope, since the concept encompasses the following forms:
 - 6.1 *salaysay* (narrative)
 - (original Tagalog)
 - 6.2 *sanaysay* (essay)
 - (20th cy coinage) –
 - Abadilla’s neologism or coinage mentioned earlier
 - = *pagsasanay ng sanay*
 - “exercise”
 - + “of”
 - + “skilled/expert”

- exercise of the skilled/expert (different from Montaigne’s humble “attempts”)
6.3 *kasaysáyan*² (20th cy coinage)
= *ka* + *saysay* + *an* [noun prefix
+ significance
+ noun suffix]

[Section 1]

Kung Palpak ang Pagtumbas
(Inaccurate Translation)

7. While neologisms [or coinages in the target language] are not expected to be exactly equivalent to the original word [in the source language], or to render the precise meaning, let us be careful in doing the translation.
8. We need to review and examine words translated in the early 20th century, in order to help translators; for example – *principal* – a word often questioned as to the precision of its Tagalog translation, especially by teachers unhappy with the following:
 - 8.1 *punongguro*
= *puno* + *guro*
 (“head” + “teacher”)
> headteacher
– despite its use in books and dictionaries, and its propagation by the SWP [*Surian ng Wikang Pambansa* (National Language Commission)]
 - 8.2 the problematic translation of words like *headteacher* and *master teacher*, both different nomenclatures with varied salaries on public school payrolls under the Department of Education:
 - 8.2.1 headteacher
 - *ulongguro*
from *ulo* + *guro*
 “head” + “teacher”
 [where *-ng* after

ulo = “that or who is”]

8.2.2 master teacher

➤ *dalubguro*

from *dalubhasa* + *guro*

“master, specialist, expert” + “teacher”

➤ master teacher”

8.3 hyphenation ambivalence, for example:

punongguro or *punong-guro*?

(headteacher or head-teacher?)

dalubguro or *dalub-guro*

(masterteacher or master-teacher?)

8.4 spelling ambivalence, for example –

punong or *punung*? (head who is)

9. Translating words like *principal* is confusing, and debate has gone on for half a century, language having no Supreme Court to investigate and decide on cases, and the Department of Education, I suspect, surreptitiously using the word *principal*.
10. The proposed investigation of every translation is an important responsibility to the National Language -- an endeavor that determines the apt equivalent, systematizes the manner of deciding on competing words, and becomes a more scientific rather than a merely spontaneous or superficial study of the language, such that different or additional senses of the translated word are recorded, showing its etymology, especially if it is a technical term, from its local origins to its global use.

[Section 2]

Bokabularyong Pampanitikan

(Literary Terms)

11. That *panitikan*

(from *pan* + *titik* + *an*

for + letter

+ noun suffix *-an*

- Spanish *literatura*,
English *literature*)

is a coinage does not mean that our ancestors had no imaginative works – only that these were not written, but oral literature, called *panitikang bayan* (literature + folk)

- folk literature:

11.1 *salaysay* (narrative)

11.2 *alamat* (legend)

11.3 *tala* (poem)

11.4 no drama or theater, but later:

komedya (after the Spanish word *comedia*), *moro-moro*, *araxyo*, *linambay*, *sarsuwela* (*zarzuela*), and *other imports*, with native Cebuano loans much later (*dulallaro* = drama).

12. The form

- a. of the first long story (*salaysay*) was oral poetry – with various names in different native languages (*hudhud*, *larangen*, *ulahingan*), different from the Western *epico/epic*, called *epikong-bayan* (folk epic) by E. Arsenio Manuel, matching the 1960s' *kwentong-bayan*, *tulang bayan*, and *karunungan-bayan* (folk wisdom); and the form of the

- b. of the long narrative poem (*mahabang tulang pasalaysay*) was the metrical romance, called *korido*, from the Spanish *occurido* (“occurred”), whose title contained the word *buhay*, a translation of Spanish *vida* (“life”).

13. Before the end of the 19th century, these appeared in Western prose:
 - 13.1 *salaysay na maikli* (short story)
 - 13.2 *salaysay na mahaba* (prose or *tuluyan* ["continuous"]/non-poetry)

14. What happened to the *novela*, the long narrative in prose?

[Section3]

Hiram o Likha?

(Borrow or Create?)

15. During the Spanish times, academe preferred to borrow Spanish words, resulting in
 - 15.1 a lack of vigor in translations into Tagalog, but also in
 - 15.2 a rush of Spanish loan words into indigenous languages in colonized areas; on the other hand, during the American period, Tagalistas or Tagalog scholars actively pursued old Tagalog equivalents or created new Tagalog words, thus turning into Purists who disliked Spanish language dominance or feared repeating history with the Americanization of Filipino culture.

16. Thus, coinage produced neologisms such as – *akda* (creative or imaginative writing) *katha* (short story or fiction) *mahabang katha* (novel) – all apt, right?

17. Unexpectedly, the neologisms did not survive, as more popular words gained the upperhand (Ladino *maikling kuwento*, *kathambuhay*, *korido*, *nobela* – nativized Spanish *novela*), illustrating the unpredictability of language development – a long, slow process awaiting consensus, especially on technical terms.

18. Nevertheless, the neologism *kasaysayan* (history – from *saysay*, significance) attained quick victory, although examining it now, the assumption of *saysay* (significance) highlighted its stark contrast with *walang saysay* (no sense or value; removed from reality or truth) – the bias held against creative writing.
19. History, regarded as part of the real world, has sense (*may-saysay* -- has sense, significance, value); unsurprisingly, therefore, biography and diary easily found their translations:

19.1 *talambuhay*
tala + *ng* + *buhay*
record + of + life
➤ biography

19.2 *talaarawan*
tala + *araw* + *an*
record + day
+ noun suffix
➤ diary

[Section 4]

Ebolusyon ng Sanaysay
(Evolution of the Essay)

20. The essay, appearing as the Western form *Essais* (1580) by Michel de Montaigne, referring to attempts (*pagsubok*, *paglimi*) on various topics (unlike the formal, classical works of Plato, Aristotle, or Cicero), eventually recognized in (non-) imaginative writing (speeches, editorials, columns, etc.) – being a humble attempt -- is different from A. G. Abadilla's *sanaysay* (from *pagsasanay ng sanay*), the work of an expert, e.g., an analysis of a poem by Idefonso Santos, or a funny anecdote by Teo S. Baylen.

21. From this brief glimpse, what, then is creative non-fiction?
22. Definitely, it is not an essay, is more imaginative or creative, but is more an essay than a narrative or story, and may include the following:
- 22.1 diary (*talambuhay*
tala + m + buhay
= record + of + life)
- 22.2 travel memoirs
- 22.3 childhood memoirs
– such that it is possibly a *salaysay* (narrative or story)
– an oxymoron with the two contradictory words:
malikhaing di-katha imaginative or creative non-fiction
23. The erasure of boundaries (including those of forms and genres, according to postmodernists), has long happened in literature, ever since poetry claimed equal literary recognition, be it in the history of the West or of the Philippines, as seen in the cases of science fiction, investigative journalism, flash fiction (the return of the *dagli* of the past?), and speculative fiction.
24. The critic, historian, or translator need not amaze us with or impose the christening of every new art form, but should leave the coinage of experiments to the neologists, or wait till a persevering collector gathers samples of invention and completes studies before attempting translation, so as not to waste effort and so as to be more certain – so many words are stillborn, quickly set aside like new fashion, become outdated in works better left unmentioned.
25. Let us watch out so that our language does not get drowned in the deluge.

26. Let us not waste energy in our endeavor to translate: better that we ourselves coin literary terms; let us translate needed knowledge; mere keen observation of what the West translates marks a colonial mind, an imported mindset that refuses to create.

27. Now more than ever is it noble and worthwhile discovering ourselves, so that we may propel our language and education towards national development.

Notes

1. *Saysay* and *salaysay* are translated as “significance and narrative.” – Laurel, M. (2023). Personal communication.
2. History/*kasaysayan* (stress on the 3rd syllable: ka say SA yan), is composed of narratives with significance/*kasaysayan* (stress on the 2nd syllable: ka SAY sa yan). – Laurel, M. (2023). Personal communication.