



**Working Papers on Culture, Education and Human
Development**

ISSN 1699-437X

Year 2011, Volume 7, Number 1 (May)

**BRAULIO'S STORY: ETHNOGRAPHY, ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING,
AND LITERARY ANALYSIS**

Angeles Clemente, *Universidad Autónoma Benito Juárez de Oaxaca*
William Sughrua, *Universidad Autónoma Benito Juárez de Oaxaca*
Ervin Lai Méndez Ortiz, *Universidad Autónoma Benito Juárez de Oaxaca*

Contact address:

Angeles Clemente
Facultad de Idiomas
Universidad Autónoma Benito Juárez de Oaxaca
Ciudad Universitaria
Colonia Exhacienda "Cinco Señores"
Oaxaca de Juárez, Oaxaca,
Mexico, C.P. 68040
(951) 5725216
e-mail: angelesclemente@gmail.com

Abstract

This article analyzes an ethnographic encounter involving the personal narrative of Braulio, a graduate of the Bachelor of Arts program in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) of the public state university of Oaxaca, Mexico. In his personal narrative, Braulio becomes empowered as an English teacher while also being cast into such diverse roles as a businessman of a chocolate factory, an English translator for the APPO social movement, and an interrogator for the state police. The analysis of the narrative is realized through the lens of a postcolonial literary perspective based on the literary tools of plot, point of view, and characterization. The resultant crossover treatment of literary analysis, ethnography, and TESOL not only locates Braulio's narrative within a postcolonial context but also allows the researchers to be co-performers in the narrative act. This leads both Braulio and the researchers to a critical reflection on the everyday practice of English teachers in postcolonial contexts such as Oaxaca.

Keywords: Postcolonial studies, Ethnographic narrative, English language teaching

EL RELATO DE BRAULIO: ETNOGRAFÍA, ENSEÑANZA DEL INGLÉS Y ANÁLISIS LITERARIO

Resumen

Este artículo analiza el encuentro etnográfico que surgió de la narrativa personal de Braulio, un egresado del programa de licenciatura en la Enseñanza del Inglés para Hablantes de Otras Lenguas (TESOL, por sus siglas en inglés) de la Universidad estatal pública de Oaxaca, México. En su narrativa personal, al mismo tiempo que Braulio experimenta cierto empoderamiento como profesor de inglés, también se ve envuelto en el desempeño de papeles tan diversos como hombre de negocios en una fábrica de chocolate, traductor de inglés en el movimiento social de la APPO, o interrogador para la policía estatal. El análisis de la narrativa se realizó a través de una perspectiva literaria postcolonial basada en los conceptos literarios de argumento, punto de vista narrativo y personificación. El resultado del tratamiento cruzado del análisis literario, la etnografía y el área de TESOL, no solamente sitúa la narrativa de Braulio en un contexto postcolonial sino que también permite que los investigadores se conviertan en co-performantes del acto narrativo. Esto lleva a Braulio y a los investigadores a una reflexión sobre la práctica diaria de los profesores de inglés en contextos postcoloniales como el de Oaxaca.

Palabras clave: Estudios postcoloniales, Narrativa etnográfica, Enseñanza de inglés

This article analyzes an ethnographic encounter through the lens of a postcolonial literary perspective in order to locate a personal narrative in its overall postcolonial context. In this article, the ethnographic encounter involves the narrative of Braulio, a young English teacher in Oaxaca, Mexico, who studied on the B.A. program in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) at Benito Juárez Autonomous University of Oaxaca (UABJO); and the literary perspectives or “tools” are plot, point of view and characterization. These widely used literary tools, when placed within postcolonial literary criticism, become detached from their universalistic and perhaps structuralist assumptions and hence reveal the localized realities of those, such as Braulio, who are narrators of their own stories. Consequently, by activating these three literary tools in order to conduct narrative research specifically in the form of a literary analysis of our ethnographic encounter with Braulio, we are able to enter the postcolonial narratives as co-performers along with the authors¹. Our research problem or otherwise endeavor is to demonstrate this co-performed analysis while engaging in a corresponding critical reflection. This reflection is intended to address a general research question: What significant issues emerge with respect to the everyday practice of English teachers such as Braulio in non-English speaking environments within the postcolonial contexts of this world such as Oaxaca? We first begin with background and contextual matters.

Story, Narrative, Narrative Research, and TESOL

“Story” can be seen as evolving into “narrative” and “narrative” into “narrative research.” On one level, “story” is an oral or written “telling” based on time, place, and action or interaction engaged in by a character or characters and/or the narrator (Barkhuizen, 2008, p. 232) and hence generally “an account of things that have happened” (Stanley, 2008, p. 437). On another level, “story” becomes “narrative” once it is appreciated affectively “as the central means by which people give their lives meaning across time” (Pavlenko, 2007, p. 164) and as “lived experiences” (Barkhuizen & Wette, 2008, p. 374). Because this life experience and meaning is “storied” (ibid), “narrative research,” then, becomes “the study of experience as story” (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p. 477); more specifically, narrative research is the “analytic examination of the underlying insights and assumptions that the story illustrates” (Bell, 2002, p. 208; referring to Conle, 1992 and Golombek, 1998) according to theme/content, outside reality, and the textual/rhetorical structure of the story itself (Pavlenko, 2007, pp. 165-171) as well as the crossover dimension of “temporality, sociality, and place” (Clandinin, Pushor & Orr, 2007, pp. 23-24).

In TESOL, narrative research has assumed an important position (Bell, 2002; Barkhuizen, 2008). It explores methodological issues (Pavlenko, 2002, 2007; Barkhuizen & Wette, 2008) and themes such as teacher’s knowledge construction (Xu & Liu, 2009), professional identity formation (Tsui, 2007), and social context (Barkhuizen, 2008) including the resultant research priorities (Barkhuizen, 2009a). Following from previous narrative inquiry-

based studies in TESOL that have approached data through various frameworks of story analysis (Barkhuizen, 2008, 2009b), this article engages in TESOL-related narrative research through the lens of literary analysis.

Why Literary Analysis?

Although narrative-based research has developed a wide variety of tools for analysis and interpretation (Bamberg, 2007; Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach & Zilber, 1998; Sorsoli, 2007), we have chosen literary analysis for several reasons. First, it appears appropriate since narrative research seems to have originated in literary criticism (Bell, 2002; referring to Mitchell, 1981). Second, literary analysis bears a strong connection with postcolonial approaches (Spivak, 1987; Ashcroft, 1989; Bhabha, 1994; Said, 1993), a critical stance that has much relevance to language and English language teaching (Clemente & Higgins, 2008; Clemente, Higgins, Merino-López & Sughrua 2009). Third, Braulio's story has some of the elements highlighted in postcolonial literary models (Barry, 2009) which are of interest to TESOL scholars (Canagarajah, 1999; Pennycook, 1998). Finally, literature and literary analysis are widely used among language teachers (Maley & Duff, 1989; Brumfit & Carter, 1986).

Postcolonial Literary Criticism

Beginning with the seminal work of Ashcroft (1989), Bhabha (1990), Said (1993), and Spivak (1987), postcolonial literary criticism sees literature as the art of writing constrained and recreated by cultural, social, regional, and national differences. This has led postcolonial literary criticism to recognize that conventional approaches to analyze literature have relegated and marginalized the colonized cultures. One of the main goals, therefore, is to raise awareness about the manner in which non-Western cultures are depicted and judged as the "Other" by Western stances (Said, 1993). As a result, postcolonial literature celebrates cultural diversity, hybridity, and individual agency as found in today's globalized postcolonial world, in which individual social actors deal with specific social locations such as gender, class and sexual orientation in order to make sense of their lives critically and creatively. Not only "social" but also "linguistic," postcolonial literary criticism has a special interest in the way language itself is used and recreated by literature. This has allowed connections to other academic areas related to language, such as translation studies (Carbonell, 1997) and language education. In the case of TESOL, various scholars have taken critical stances involving postcolonialism (e.g. Canagarajah, 1999; Norton and Toohey, 2004; Pennycook, 1998).

ETHNOGRAPHIC ENCOUNTER

We refer to the present study as EELTLA, an acronym based on the subtitle of this paper. EELTA, whose interdisciplinary focus of "ethnography-TESOL-literary analysis" in a postcolonial vein is presented and justified in the first

three sections (above), forms part of an umbrella project, a four-year ethnographic investigation called the “Ethnography of the Language Center” (ELC). The objective of the ELC was to provide an ethnographic account of the way UABJO students learn, practice, use and teach English in the context of Oaxaca. The ELC focused on a group of students who were then finishing the B.A. TESOL program at UABJO; among these students was Braulio. The ELC ended in 2008 with the publication of a book (Clemente & Higgins, 2008). However, other studies derived from the ELC, such as the present study (EELTLA) involving the ethnographic data obtained from ELC participant Braulio. For the ELC and hence EELTLA or Braulio’s story, the data was gathered primarily from depth interviews and secondarily from focus groups, observations, and any documents that the participants considered relevant to the project (e.g. diaries, school assignments, creative texts like poems, narratives). It is important to note that although the content of most of the interviews dealt with English use and English teaching, the interaction took place in Spanish, which, since the 16th century, has been the colonizer language in Mexico.

The data has emerged in three stages. First, the participants provide stories about their lives, which are directly referred to, or retold by, the ethnographer. Secondly, these narratives are combined with the researcher’s own reflections. Finally, the participants come into play again, adding or changing their own narration or commenting on the manner in which the researcher has interpreted it. The general analytical strategies of both the ELC and EELTLA are ethnographic. For us, ethnography is not considered only a tool but also an overall approach for carrying out social research and establishing a covalent relationship between the participants of the research, which in this case are the three authors.

These three stages were achieved more specifically through a range of consecutive procedures, as shown in the following table:

Table 1: Research procedures of the ELC and EELTLA

Description	Methodological stages and tools
ELC, i.e. the umbrella project “Ethnography of the Language Center”: Braulio and the other UABJO students as participants. (2005 to 2008)	1. Gathering of main data (interviews, discussions, documents)
	2. Transcription of oral data
	3. Composition of narratives
	4. Recomposition of narratives by all participants
	5. Publication of book (Clemente & Higgins, 2008)
EELTLA, i.e. the present “ <i>ethnographic-TESOL-literary narrative analysis</i> ” study: based on data relevant only to	1. Gathering information while Braulio was writing an ethnographic reflective account of his teaching
	2. Recomposition of his narrative
	3. Literary analysis of narrative by authors

Braulio, as obtained in ELC above. (2009-2010)	4. Completing the writing stages of the present article
--	---

In order to follow ethnographic conventions and to emphasize the content of the data, we have deleted repetitions and incomplete words from the transcriptions to follow in the present paper. For the composition process, the data was put together in chronological order and the repetitions in content were deleted. As for the incomplete phrases or thoughts in the data, as well as those statements not well understood by the researchers, all the versions of the narrative were discussed with Braulio. As explained in the first and third sections of this paper (above), for the purposes of the EELTLA, we borrowed three literary resources: plot, point of view and characterization. These will be the subject of description and analysis in the paper. Before that, however, we describe the context of the study.

Oaxaca and UABJO

The state of Oaxaca, where Braulio grew up and still lives, is located in the southeast of Mexico. Noted for its ethnic diversity, Oaxaca has 16 formally registered Indigenous communities and languages as well as the highest population of Indigenous peoples in Mexico. The rural areas of the state are pervaded by extreme poverty. The capital city, Oaxaca de Juárez, has a population of close to half a million. It is the political, commercial and communication center of the state. Known for its colonial architecture, ethnic/social diversity and culinary excellence, the city is one of the most popular tourist destinations in Mexico. It also expresses many of the problems of urbanization in Mexico: a shortage of housing, limited employment possibilities for those in lower socioeconomic classes, traffic congestion, and constant forms of political confrontation.

Just outside the city limits of Oaxaca is the Language School of the UABJO. Its main focus is an undergraduate B.A. program in TESOL, where Braulio studied. The B.A. TESOL students (around 700) come mainly from the city and the outlying regions of the valley of Oaxaca. They are mostly from middle class and working class backgrounds. Many, like Braulio, come from a mestizo background, which is “the embodied mixture of Western and non-Western races or cultures in the Americas” (Tarica, 2008) or, put more simply, the mixture of European and Indigenous ancestry. Few UABJO students belong to the Indigenous communities, though many of their parents or grandparents come from Indigenous communities. In addition to the B.A. in TESOL, the majority of the students study various general languages courses that the Language School offers. Braulio, for instance, has studied French, Italian, German, and Japanese.

Within the UABJO and the Oaxaca community, Braulio comes to perform a significant role as a UABJO graduate and English teacher. His narrative or story, as explained above, can be understood by reading and analyzing it

according to the literary conventions of plot, point of view, and characterization. What are these literary conventions?

PLOT, POINT OF VIEW, AND CHARACTERIZATION

In general

“Plot,” “point of view,” and “characterization” are among the various internal elements of the story and novel. “Point of view” stands for the voice or storyteller behind the work; “plot” refers to the sequence of the important events of the story; and “characterization” relates to the personality and defining characteristics of the characters or people in the story, including the motivations for their actions and the manner in which the characters relate or do not relate with each other (Burroway & Stuckey-French, 2007; McCarthy, 2004). One can see, therefore, that these conventions are standard to most literary works. For instance, all stories and novels have a narrator or storyteller and hence a point of view; and in all stories and novels something happens, which means they all have a plot. Of course, there are other elements such as symbolism, setting, and imagery; but plot, point of view, and characterization seem the controlling elements (ibid). Although these elements are “conventionalized,” each literary work can have its own unique version of the elements. For instance, the point of view can be omniscient or 3rd person; the plot may have a climax or may not have a climax but only rising action that suddenly terminates with the last word on the page. Let it suffice to say that the conventions of plot, point of view, and characterization are like the glue holding the story or novel together in order to create a single dramatic experience. We now present each in turn.

More specifically

Plot. As “a series of actions in a story or a drama which bear a relationship to each other” (Abcarian & Koltz, 1978, p. 1168), a plot does not refer to all the actions or events in the story but rather only to those key events with a causative relation. For instance, the British novelist E. M. Forster says: “‘The King died and then the Queen died,’ is a story, [while] ‘The King died and then the Queen died of grief,’ is a plot” (in Abcarian & Koltz, 1978). The events that form a plot, therefore, are select events from the total events of the story. These events can be connected by some sort of emotion, as is the case in Forster’s example above. Or, according to Gardner (1984), the select events that form the plot “may develop argumentatively, leading the reader point by point to some conclusion” (p. 165). Gardner further explains: “In this case events occur not to justify later events but to dramatize logical positions; thus event *a* does not cause event *b* but stands in some logical relation to it” (italics in original text; ibid). Related logically (as Gardner explains above) or connected by a common thread of emotion (as Abcarian & Koltz explain above), the actions of the plot order themselves so as to engender a dramatic effect on the reader (Baldick, 2008). According to a “classic” statement of Abrams from thirty years ago:

As a plot progresses it arouses expectations in the audience or reader about the future course of events. Anxious uncertainty about what is going to happen, especially to those characters whose moral qualities are such that we have established a bond of sympathy with them, is known as suspense. If what in fact happens violates our expectations, it is known as surprise. The interplay of suspense and surprise is a prime source of magnetic power and vitality of an on-going plot (1971, pp. 127-128, in Baldick, 2008).

Point of view. According to McCarthy (2000), “[p]oint of view is the vantage point from which the story is told” (p. 92). This “vantage point” is that of a character within the story or an “outside presence” other than the author her/himself who narrates the story. The following are the most common “vantage points” or otherwise “points of view” in a story (Abcarian & Koltz, 1978; Burroway & Stuckey-French, 2007; Safder Kharbe, 2009):

(1) *First person*, where the story is told by someone, often, though not necessarily, the principal character, who identifies her/himself as “I.”

(2) *Third person*, where the story is told by someone (not identified as “I”) who is not a participant in the action and who refers to the characters by name or as “he,” “she,” and “they.”

(3) *Omniscient*, a variation on the third person, where the “unseen” narrator who tells the story knows everything about the characters and events; can move about in time and place as well as from character to character at will; and can, at any moment, enter the mind of any character and report on her/his thought processes and see things through her/his eyes.

(4) *Central intelligence*, another variation on third person, where narrative elements are limited to what a single character sees, thinks, and hears.

Characterization. Beyond representing the writer’s techniques in showing the characters or people in a story as unique and lifelike through the use of direct dialogue and the scenic development of action (McCarthy, 2000), “characterization” principally is the positioning of all the people in the story according to the roles of main character / protagonist, minor character, and (sometimes) antagonist (Abrams & Harpham, 2009; Dawson, 2004). As the story progresses, the other characters in some way revolve around the protagonist who usually has some sort of “conflict” to resolve. The minor characters and antagonist perform certain roles and actions which either help or hinder the protagonist in resolving her/his conflict (ibid).

THE LITERARY ANALYSIS OF BRAULIO'S STORY

The above three literary elements of “plot,” “point of view,” and “characterization” underlie our analysis of Braulio's story. We begin with the first.

Plot

As indicated above, the plot is “a series of events deliberately arranged so as to reveal their dramatic, thematic, and emotional significance” (Burroway & Stuckey-French, 2007, p. 273). While “a story gives us only ‘what happened next’ ... [the] plot's concern is ‘what, how, and why,’ with scenes ordered to highlight the workings of cause and effect” (ibid). This arrangement of events places Braulio in a specific postcolonial context, while depicting his identity as a Oaxacan English teacher and his agency to react emotionally to, and resist, specific situations of this postcolonial context.

Conflict and emotion in a TESOL story. We begin with a summative story of Braulio's professional life after he finished the B.A. in TESOL at the Language School of the UABJO:

After his graduation, he started working as an English teacher in a public school. However, he also decided to apply for a job in a chocolate factory of Oaxaca, where they needed an English teacher. He got the job which entailed different functions: translating menus, selling chocolate and other products, dealing with international exportation, training staff, and so on. He quit this job and accepted other temporary jobs, some paid (e.g. mediating between drug dealers and state police in the middle of the Oaxacan Sierra) and others voluntary (e.g. acting as a translator for the 2006 APPO social movement, for an international human rights commission and for an international reporter). On and off he kept teaching English, from private lessons to VIPs of the Oaxacan society, to staff in an art center, to bread makers in the market, and children who sell handicrafts to tourists (Clemente & Higgins, 2008, p. 184).

Now we turn to Braulio's own story, which develops specific aspects of the above summary. One senses at work here a plot, that is, a sense of coherence and “structural glue” in the narration (Bamberg, De Finna & Schiffrin, 2007, p. 5). Braulio says²:

Excerpt 1: Personal communication, April 2006

En uno de mis trabajos me pagaban con mezcal³. Tenía que ayudar a los hijos de mi patrón a hacer la tarea, y también me daban traducciones.... Acepté que me pagaran con mezcal y me gustó. Me la pasé borracho por cuatro meses, todo el tiempo. Me enfermé ... por irresponsable e indisciplinado. Todo por el inglés. Triunfos, desgracias, vicios, irresponsabilidades, indisciplinas, todo se lo debo al inglés. Así es!

In one of my jobs they paid me with mezcal. I worked there to help the bosses' kids with their homework, and to do some translations.... I accepted to be paid in mezcal, and I liked it. For four months [I] was drunk all the time. I got sick ... because of irresponsibility and indiscipline. Everything has come with English. Triumphs, misfortunes, vices, irresponsibilities and indisciplines are due to English, that's it.

Certainly this passage sets the tone for the whole narrative. Braulio seems willing to share personal information about his true self (Bamberg, 2010) in connection to his English. This raises expectations as to the “triumphs, misfortunes, vices, irresponsibilities and indisciplines” to come further on in the narrative. Braulio also values sharing his true self with his students:

Excerpt 2: Personal communication, April 2006

A mis alumnos les gusta mi clase de inglés [cuando] comparto mis sentimientos personales, íntimos. También se sacan de onda cuando les pido que lleven sus propias fotos y a veces hasta lloran cuando hablan de sus vidas.... La primera vez que lo hice casi se me salen las lágrimas. Por encimita, es sólo una tarea de inglés, pero poco a poco se dan cuenta que les estás hablando de tu familia y de ti mismo.

Students ... love their English class [when] you share personal and intimate feelings with them. They are also impacted, when they bring their photographs and sometimes they even cry when they are talking about their own lives.... The first time I did it, I was on the verge of tears. On the surface it is only an English activity, but little by little you realize that what you are talking about is your family and yourself.

The events of Braulio's professional life are not random events but rather respond to the agency of a young man who, by means of his command of English, strives to succeed in globalized postcolonial Oaxaca. Braulio's English is actually the constant element in a series of jobs characteristic of the Oaxacan commercial world:

Excerpt 3: Personal communication, May 2007

Al principio mi función era enseñar inglés a los empleados de la compañía. Hasta inventaron un eslogan: “¡Inglés chocolate para todos!”

At the beginning my main function there was teaching English to the chocolate company staff. They even invented a slogan: “Chocolate English for everyone!”

However, in the world of chocolate, Braulio's university English did not work:

Excerpt 4: Personal communication, May 2007

Me di cuenta que para mí, era un nuevo mundo en inglés. Tenía que usar el diccionario casi cada dos palabras. Vine a preguntarles a mis maestros de aquí. Me puse a anotar todas las expresiones comunes, las preguntas, y el vocabulario especial que se usaba para el chocolate, el proceso de elaboración y hasta la manera en que le tenía que hablar correctamente a mis diferentes públicos.

I realized that I was facing a new world of English. I had to use the dictionary every other word. I asked my former teachers for help. I took notes about common

expressions, questions and specific vocabulary related to chocolate, its process of elaboration and even the manner to politely address different audiences.

Braulio felt that his teaching skills were being tested by his bosses:

Excerpt 5: Personal communication, May 2007

Hice un programa especial para enseñarle a los encargados, para que pudieran explicar el proceso del chocolate en inglés. Tenían diferentes niveles. Como siete de cada diez nunca habían tomado clases de inglés. Le echamos muchas ganas, cada quien en su papel. Di lo mejor de mí, hice todo lo posible para motivarlos, para que lograran hacerlo. Fue un proceso largo y detallado de enseñanza-aprendizaje. Luego me dieron otro curso con 17 trabajadores, algunos ni siquiera habían terminado la primaria. Aquí lo tome de diferente manera, con un método de transmisión oral iba repitiendo en todas las tiendas. El resultado no fue un inglés perfecto, aunque sí una sonrisa en los clientes internacionales cuando oían los intentos de comunicación de mis alumnos.

I designed a specific program to teach the clerks how to explain the chocolate process in English. They were from different backgrounds. Seven out of ten never had English classes before. I thought that the position of the company was to prove me as a teacher. We did the best together playing our roles. I played my best cards and I did as much as possible to motivate them to get their goal. For me it was a long, detailed process of learning and teaching. They organised another course with 17 people, some of whom hadn't even finished primary school. This time my approach was different, an oral transmission method repeating the same information in each one of the shops. The result wasn't perfect English but a smile from the international costumers when they heard my student' attempts to communicate.

Although Braulio became aware that his English abilities were well regarded in the affluent world of his bosses, he soon realized that he was far from being part of that elite group:

Excerpt 6: From Clemente & Higgins, 2008, p. 187

Empecé a crearme importante. Una noche, me emborraché y me puse como loco, gritando y peleando con todos. Creía que era igual a mis jefes, con el poder de hacer lo que quisiera. Estaba pendejo, me sentía grande.... La policía me golpeó y me encerró. El día siguiente me soltaron, pero no porque yo fuera importante, sino porque mis jefes no querían que sus nombres se vieran inmiscuidos en el asunto; no les convenía.

I started to think I was someone important. One night, I got drunk and acted obnoxiously; shouting and arguing with everyone. I just thought that I was one of my bosses, and that I had the power to do whatever I wanted to do. How foolish I was! I felt I was big!... The police beat me and sent me to jail. The next morning they released me, not because I was somebody, but because my bosses didn't want their names to be involved in that event; it wasn't convenient for them.

Hence feeling excluded and used, Braulio decided to leave the chocolate company:

Excerpt 7: From Clemente & Higgins, 2008, p. 187

Un día me mandaron a traducir para un evento de promoción de cosméticos, yo apenas y sabía de lo que se trataba. Me harté a la mitad y pensé “¡Ya basta!” y me fui.... Trabajé tanto para esos cabrones, gente con poder, acostumbrados a dar órdenes. Me di cuenta que el inglés se usa para explotar a los pobres.

One day, they sent me to translate for an event selling makeup products, which I knew very little about. I got fed up and in the middle I thought “That’s it!” and walked away.... I worked so much for those bastards, people with power, used to giving orders. I realized that English can also be used to exploit the poor.

This awareness of social exploitation fits in with Braulio’s political views. He became involved in the 2006 social movement in Oaxaca. In two cases, his English proficiency proved useful. The first was when he helped an international journalist conduct interviews in Spanish:

Excerpt 8: From Clemente & Higgins, 2008, p. 192

Durante la APPO conocí a Brad Will, un reportero gringo que hablaba muy poco español. Le ayudé con sus entrevistas ... por más de tres horas.... Dos días después una amiga me llamó: ‘¿Te enteraste? Está cabrón. Mataron al gringo; al que le ayudamos a traducir en el Zócalo’.... Me sentí muy mal. Había estado trabajando con él y ahora estaba muerto. Cuando estaba chico, le decía a mi papa que quería ser fotógrafo de guerra. Y ahora, muchos años después, el inglés me pone aquí, para hacer esto. Tengo sentimientos contradictorios. Me siento muy mal porque mataron a Will pero también me siento importante porque fui su traductor para estos momentos políticos radicales.

*During APPO⁴ times, I met Brad Will, a USA reporter that spoke very little Spanish. [I] helped him to carry out his interviews ... for more than three hours.... Two days later, [a friend] called me: “Have you heard? This is fucking bad. They killed the **gringo**; the one we helped translating in the **Zócalo**”.... I felt very bad. I’d been working with him and now he’s dead. When I was a little kid, I used to tell my father that I wanted to be a photographer for the war. Now, many years later, English brings me here, to do this. I had very contradictory feelings. I was very upset that Brad was killed but I felt that it was important that I’d been a translator for these radical political events.*

He was also hired to translate for a human rights commission:

Excerpt 9: From Clemente & Higgins, 2008, p. 191

Un amigo me preguntó si quería una chamba como traductor para... una comisión internacional de derechos humanos ... (en) un pueblo que estaba en conflicto con el gobierno del estado. Me harían pasar por turista.... Querían que entrevistara a la presidenta municipal ... porque estaban teniendo algunos casos de abuso en la comunidad.... Fui el intérprete entre los observadores y la presidenta.... Nos contó que era porque la gente en ese pueblo estaba apoyando a la APPO, por eso los estaban golpeando e intimidando con armas. Les di la información a los de la comisión y lo incluyeron en el informe oficial de los derechos humanos sobre el abuso en Oaxaca.

A friend ... asked me if I wanted to do this gig translating for ... an international human rights commission ... [in] a village that was in conflict with the state government. [I] would be pretending to be a tourist.... They wanted to interview the mayor ... because there’d been abuses within the community.... I was the translator

between the observers and the mayor.... We learned from her [the mayor] that it was because the people in this village were supporting the APPO they're being beaten and intimidated with guns. I passed on this information to the commission and it became part of the human rights official report on abuse in Oaxaca.

The events in Braulio's narrative have a significant relationship to each other. It is clear that from early on in his professional life he discovered that his command of English would take him to different paths, though they would be riddled with conflict and emotion. In addition to such turmoil, Braulio's story is marked by another aspect of plot: suspense and surprise.

Suspense, surprise and English. The following excerpt illustrates the suspense Braulio wants to convey to his listeners. For this reason, we have preserved the length of this passage, which in itself seems a suspenseful story, as the reader wonders "how it will all turn out" (Kennedy & Gioia, 2007, p. 12).

Excerpt 10: From Clemente & Higgins, 2008, p. 189-191

Un amigo me contó que habían detenido a un gringo que no hablaba español y que necesitaban un intérprete.... Llegué para el trabajo ... y me dijeron que teníamos que ir a un pueblo.... Me explicaron que habían agarrado a este pinche extranjero que plantaba y vendía drogas... sobornando a las autoridades del lugar y pagándole bien a la gente de allí para poder hacer su negocio. Pero que la policía lo había agarrado [y] encerrado en una cabaña.... Anduvimos por dos horas. Cuando llegamos me dijeron, en un tono muy fuerte, que tenía cinco minutos para sacarle todo lo que pudiera a ese tipo: dónde sembraba, quiénes eran los otros narcos de la zona.... Me dijeron que lo único que se la pasaba repitiendo era 'No español, no español!'... Entré y empezó con su 'No español, no español!' Traté con inglés, y luego con italiano y francés, hasta con mi poco de alemán. Pero no parecía que entendiera. Luego me puse a pensar ... que tal vez estaría más abierto a negociar si estuviéramos solos, sin policías. Entonces les dije que salieran del cuarto. Cuando se fueron le empecé a hablar en inglés y se rio y me contestó en un pinche español perfecto: 'Mira cabrón, te voy a dar esta maleta llena de dinero.... Lo puedes repartir con el jefe de ellos, y yo me voy de este lugar y nadie me sigue, ¿entendiste? Te doy dos minutos para que le digas, así que apúrate cabrón!' Así, otra vez, alguien me estaba dando órdenes a mí! Como un pendejo, salí y le dije al jefe lo que me había dicho... [pero] él contestó: '¡Ni madres! ¡Este hijo de puta nos quiere chingar!'. En ese momento nos ... dimos cuenta de que la gente del pueblo venía para rescatar al gringo. Cuando nos vieron, nos empezaron a disparar.... Me sentí mareado ... empecé a vomitar.... Los policías me jalaron de los pelos y me metieron a una camioneta.... Los policías también tenían un miedo cabrón, unos llorando y otros se habían orinado en los pantalones. Había aceptado el trabajo por la aventura y el pinche dinero y ahora me estaba cagando de miedo. Todo un pueblo armado detrás de mí.

*A friend told me they had detained this **gringo** and he didn't speak any Spanish and so they needed a translator.... I arrived for the job ... and they told me that we had to travel to this **pueblo**.... There I learned that they have caught this fucking foreigner who had been growing and selling drugs ... bribing the local authorities and paying local people a lot of money to be able to do his business. But the cops had caught him [and] locked him up in a cottage.... We walked for two hours. When we arrived they told me in a very strong tone that I had five minutes to get everything I could from this guy; where his fields were and who the other **narcos** in this zone were.... They told me that from the moment he had been taken the only thing he would say was, "**No español, no español!**"... I went inside, and he started with, "**No español, no***

español!” *I tried with English and with Italian and French, even with my broken German. But he didn't seem to understand. Then I thought that ... he would open up and negotiate if we were alone, with no cops. So I told them to leave the room. When they left I started with English and he laughed and said in fucking good Spanish: “Look bastard, I'm gonna give you this suitcase full of money.... You can divide it with the head of the cops, then I will leave this place and nobody will follow me, understood? You have two fucking minutes to tell him, so make it fucking fast!” So again, someone was giving orders to me! Like an idiot. I went out and told the guy in charge what I had been told ... [but] he said: “No way! This motherfucker wants to fuck us!” At that very moment we ... realized that the people from the village were coming to free the drug dealer. When they saw us, they started shooting.... I felt so sick ... started vomiting.... The cops pulled me by the hair and threw me into the truck.... The cops were also fucking scared, some crying and some had pissed in their uniform. I had taken this job for all the excitement and for the fucking money and now I was scared to shitless. A whole armed community after me.*

The surprise factor, however, does not lie in one single event of Braulio's story. It permeates throughout the narrative, when the audience becomes aware of the negative role that Braulio attributes to English, such as that of a bilingual interrogator at the service of the Oaxaca state police whom Braulio sees as oppressive, or a translator for the sale of commercial products such as chocolate and cosmetics which, in Braulio's view, do not have a productive social consequence. Actually, it is doubtful that many from the world of English language teaching would expect Braulio to blame his English for all the misfortunes that he has experienced. Especially in the commercial marketing of English language classes and course materials, English is said to open the doors to a better life, giving access to a globalised world where everything is positive and rewarding. This view is rather distant from the perspective that Braulio offers:

Excerpt 11: From Clemente & Higgins, 2008, p. 191

Eso es lo feo del inglés. Nunca les conté a mis papas.... Ya ves, he hecho pendejadas con mi inglés. Me he divertido a madres por el inglés y he ganado mucho dinero, pero también he tenido experiencias feas con el inglés.

That's the ugly thing about English. I never told my parents... As you can see, I have done some dumb things with my English. I have partied very hard with English and made a lot of money, but have also had some ugly experiences with English.

Point of View

The plot is a series of select events that give meaning to the story; but who tells the story? As explained above, this would be a “narrator” or in literary terms a “point of view,” that is, not the author her/himself but rather a person or presence telling the story through her/his/its own perspective (Burroway & Stuckey-French, 2007). For the purposes of this analysis, we explore first person point of view and omniscient point of view in Braulio's story. Both are revealing as to the “ethnographic encounter” itself.

First person point of view: Braulio as ethnographic participant. In a fictional work, the author chooses to express her narration in the first person voice;

whereas, in ethnography it is more than choice, since the purpose is to present the actual voices of the actors participating in the ethnographic encounter. Braulio's story is narrated in the first person (through his interviews with the researchers). As first person narrator, Braulio exercises his agency as to what to include and what to leave out from his story; selects which aspects to focus on and develop more descriptively; and uses distance in time (six years) in order to reflect back on the events regarding the role of English in his professional life. This is very well illustrated in the narcotics-related event (above). An ethnographic narrative is mostly narrated in the first person so as to respect "the linguistic construction of social personae" (Keane 2001, p. 268) -- in this case, the voice of Braulio.

Omniscient point of view: The researchers as ethnographers. Apart from Braulio's first person narration there are the researchers' observations and reflections on Braulio's story. Accordingly, the researchers assert their own ideologies and identities, while taking the liberty to sequence the various excerpts of Braulio's story and to represent Braulio's feelings and motives. The researchers as ethnographers, therefore, become an "all-knowing (...) or omniscient (...) narrator [who] sees into the minds of (...) the characters, moving when necessary from one to another" (Kennedy & Gioia, 2007, p. 24) as well as "evaluating their actions and motives and expressing (...) views about human life in general" (Abrams, 1971, p. 134).

It is important to remember that Braulio's story requires decisions on selection, sequence, presentation and framing of the interview's content. In terms of selection, it was clear that the theoretical discussion would determine which elements were more salient than others. The sequence was determined by the logical development of the argument. The presentation of the data reflects the researchers' decisions to quote or paraphrase Braulio (which involved both first and third person points of view, respectively). These ethnographic activities can be read as either the intrusion of the "omniscient narrator" or as the recognition of the performative reality of ethnographic encounters (Fabian 2007). Take the following example from Clemente & Higgins (2008):

[Braulio] was noted for his "gift of gab" and his skill at hyperbolic explanations of his achievements and adventures. As a student he was one of the more political and radical students of his generation.... Some of his professors considered him to be a critical student, though, at times, irresponsible. Others regarded him as one of their best students in terms of his English teaching skills.... His tales capture, often quite dramatically, many of the themes we have been addressing in our analysis. He is clearly located within the complex social folds of postcolonial Oaxaca, particularly in his dealings with international commerce, police and the drug trade as well as issues of human rights. He finds that his everyday life requires navigating the reality of the colonial difference.... And although his attainment of user rights of

English is complete, he finds that success has come with personal and political costs (p. 183).

This could be read as the intrusion of the “omniscient narrator” because the researchers move in the same time and space of Braulio and are even able to enter into his state(s) of mind. Because of this intrusiveness (and not because of what she/he may know about the character), the omniscient narrator and the author can be considered one and the same.

Both points of view: Braulio and the researchers as co-participants. In the ethnographic encounter, the author, the narrator and the participants share the same time and space, and they hopefully enter into each other’s states of being (Fabian, 2007). Fabian argues that the goal of anthropology is to understand and demonstrate “humanity’s unity” (2007, p. 3); and that “to attain this goal depends on recognizing the presence or co-temporaneity of the peoples whom we study” (ibid, p. 3). To paraphrase Fabian’s argument, one could say that the ethnographic narrative has its empirical foundation in research as communicative interaction; this, in turn, requires the ethnographers to recognize the people whom they study as their coevals. Fabian stresses that “ethnography is (...) dialogical” and that “[w]hat we take away from research as data is only sometimes found, most often it is made” (2007, p. 13). This emphasis on “communication and language in action” suggests that most “cultural knowledge and hence ethnography is performative (...) [and that] (...) what we learn does not come as responses to our questions but is enacted in, and mediated by, events which we may trigger but cannot really control” (ibid). In this study, the interviews between Braulio and the ethnographers were, in Fabian’s terms, ethnographic performances. It is within these performative dynamics that the co-equivalency of all the participants is composed (Clemente, Higgins, Merino-López & Sughrua, 2009).

Braulio’s narrative can be seen as ultimately omniscient. Yet this is an omniscient-type of point of view in contrast to that commonly found in conventional analysis of literature. As stated above, the omniscient quality of the narrative lies in the controlling power of the researchers in organizing and interpreting the narrative, with the final product being a generally third-person rendering of incidents, motivation and emotion. At the core of this omniscient rendering, however, is the free-standing first person “story” of Braulio as participant in the research. On a superficial level, this first person point of view seems subordinate to the overall omniscient frame; however, on a deeper level, this interplay between first person and omniscient points of view places the participant and researchers on the same plane as co-participants within the coevalness of the ethnographic encounter (Fabian, 2007).

Characterization

As conveyed earlier in this paper, “characterization analysis” begins with the identification of the character(s) of a literary work. Generally, a single character will stand out from the crowd; that is, the “main character” or “protagonist,” while the rest will be “minor characters.” Sometimes one of the “minor characters” is the “antagonist,” that is, the person who stands in the way of the protagonist. These characters in some way revolve around the protagonist. We can see this in a diagram based on Braulio’s story.

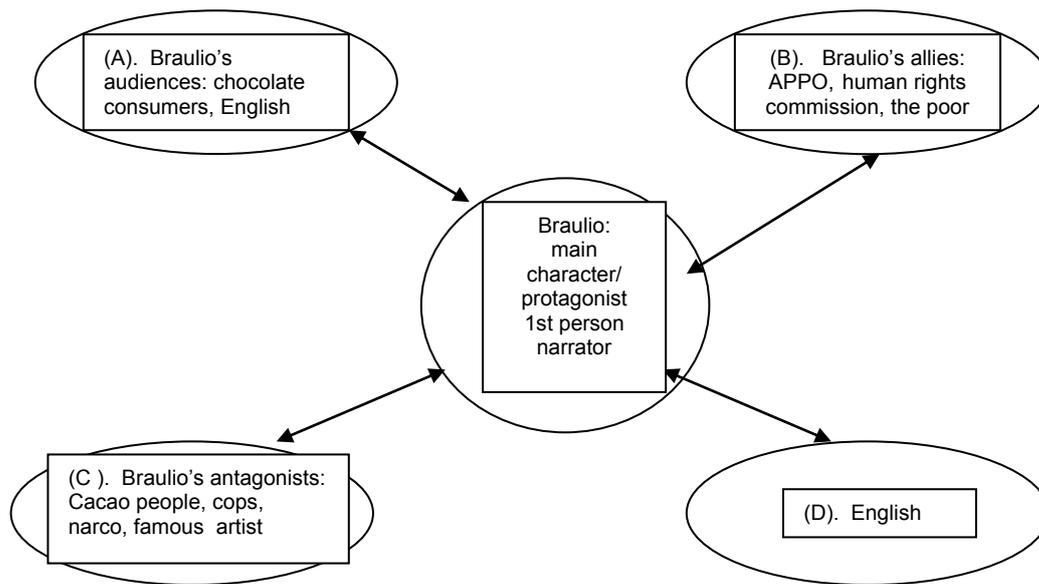


Figure 2: Protagonist Braulio’s scheme of characterization

Braulio, at the center, is the protagonist. He is surrounded by four different clusters of minor characters (labeled A, B, C and D). Needless to say, these positions are relative and fluid, as are most locations in postcolonial contexts.

Braulio as protagonist with his “audience”. We consider Braulio the main character not only because he has served as the primary interviewee and participant in the study; but also because he overtly reveals his awareness of being a protagonist:

Excerpt 12: Personal communication, May 2007

Me gusta jugar con el inglés porque me gusta ser protagonista. Este contexto del inglés es lo que me hace protagonista. Me encanta el rollo del inglés. Me metí en él y lo amo.

*I like playing with English because I like being a protagonist. It is this context of English that makes me a protagonist. I love this “**rollo del ingles.**” I am stuck in it but I love it.*

According to characterization, the minor characters exist only to promote the main character -- in this case, Braulio. The first cluster of minor characters are the “audiences” whom Braulio has addressed in his professional work (A; Figure 2). These people heed Braulio for different purposes, for example, to understand the process of cacao, to buy this product or to learn English. It is assumed that they are interested in listening to Braulio because he is skillful in addressing audiences. Braulio refers to his felt connection with his audience in general:

Excerpt 13: Clemente & Higgins, 2008, p. 191

Tengo esta habilidad de hablar. Le digo [a mi mamá]: ‘De esto vivo, madre, así que lo tengo que hacer bien’. Me salían increíbles mis discursos, y me empezó a gustar, trataba de modular la voz de diferente manera, cambiar la entonación.

I have this ability to talk. I [tell my mother]: “This is what I make my living from, mother, so I have to do it well.” My speeches were incredible, and I started liking it a lot, trying different ways to modulate my voice, to change the intonation.

These audiences include high profile clients of the chocolate factory, for whom Braulio acts as an improvised tour guide:

Excerpt 14: Personal communication, May 2007

No sabía nada de nada, pero ... inventaba un buen. Inventé de todo, de veras. Un día inventé que el árbol que está en la entrada de Monte Albán lo había plantado Alfonso Caso, y ahí tienes a toda esa gente tomándole fotos al pinche árbol. Traté de ser honesto con mis jefes: ‘No sé nada de eso. No tengo ninguna preparación’. Pero no les importaba. Lo importante era que yo hablaba inglés y que me gustaba hablar. Ahora ya sé que decir. Hablo mucho de identidad, de mi amor por Oaxaca.

I did not know anything about anything, but ... I bullshitted greatly. I invented everything, really. Once I invented that the tree at the entrance of Monte Alban had been planted by Alfonso Caso, so, all these people taking photos of the fucking tree. I tried to be honest with my bosses: “I don’t know anything about that. I am not trained to do that.” But they didn’t care. The important thing was that I spoke English and that I liked to talk. Nowadays, I know what to say. I talk a lot about identity, about my love of Oaxaca.

As seen here, English somehow puts Braulio on a type of stage, from where he is able to distinguish between those with whom he has professional dealings. Braulio hence creates for himself a type of “multi”-audience with seemingly unique characteristics which includes the tourist-clients of the chocolate factory who come to Oaxaca to close deals on surplus exports of chocolate. Braulio even refers to an English-speaking visitor who prefers what seems the most unlikely tourist destination: a run-down gym where aspiring Oaxacan boxers are trained.

Excerpt 15: From Clemente & Higgins, 2008, p. 188

Empecé a hacer ejercicio en un gimnasio de box. Un día, el dueño me preguntó si conocía a alguien que pudiera traducir para este grupo de extranjeros que iban a visitar el gym. Entonces me ofrecí. Ya ves, el inglés me sigue a todos lados.

I started just exercising out in this boxing gym. One day, the owner asks me to find someone to translate for this group of foreigners that were visiting the gym. So I offered myself. You see, English follows me everywhere.

Such people are abundant in Braulio's narrative; each one is unique, while collectively they form the audience of Braulio's "on-the-job" performance of English. As "literary creations" in the sense of being minor characters in the narrative, they are refreshingly unique and memorable in our reading experience. Whether the tourists-boxers, the savvy merchants astonished by the sight of a tree, the frightened policeman crying during the shootout, or the accountant-minded artist (below), the minor characters have their own definable presence in the narrative, while fully engaging the emotions and presence of Braulio as protagonist.

Braulio's allies and antagonists. The second cluster within the scheme of "characterization" (B; Figure 2) is Braulio's allies: APPO (The People's Popular Assembly of Oaxaca), the Human Rights Commission, the poor, and so on. The first two of these are allies in the sense that they have ideological and political perspectives similar to those of Braulio, who made use of his English to contribute to the social struggle in 2006 in Oaxaca. In fact, one of the factors that made Braulio stand out in his university years was his strong political commitment:

Excerpt 16: Personal communication, May 2007

Pedí permiso para hacer un periódico mural. Hice el primer número solo. A nadie le interesaba. La ideología de los estudiantes no tenía ninguna conexión con él. Parecía que tenían esos valores de clase media, no se interesaban por cosas políticas ni ideológicas. Nadie hablaba de las luchas sociales ni ... del discurso de la izquierda.... Me preguntaban por qué hablaba del maltrato a los animales. No veían la conexión. Unos hasta me agredían verbalmente. Me sentí acosado.

I asked permission to make a wall periodical poster. I made the first issue by myself. Nobody was interested. The students' ideology did not connect with [it]. They seemed to have that sort of middle class values, not interested in political nor ideological issues. Nobody talked about social struggles nor ... the discourse of the left.... They asked me why I talked about mistreatment of animals. They saw no connection. Some even were verbally aggressive. They felt aggravated.

Actually Braulio is aware of the opposition he receives from the characters in his own story; this seems to relate to the manner in which he identifies with the poor and weak and repels the rich and powerful:

Excerpt 17: From Clemente & Higgins 2008, pp.187-188

Para ellos, la gente no vale. Sólo eres algo que les puede producir.... Están acostumbrados a correr a los trabajadores y a abusar de las trabajadoras.... Me di cuenta de cómo se aprovechan de su condición privilegiada.... No ayudan a los artesanos; al contrario, los roban.... Por eso los dejé. Iba en contra de mi sentir sobre como quiero que sea el mundo.

For them, people like me do not have any value. You are just something that makes them produce.... They are used to fire the male worker and to abuse the female one.... I saw the way they take advantage of their privileged position.... They do not help the artisans; on the contrary, they rob them.... That's why I left them. That was clashing with my feeling that that's not the way I wanted the world to be.

It seems that many of the people who hired Braulio assume positions opposite to those of Braulio. In terms of literary characterization, Braulio's employers thus become "antagonists." Although this binary is not absolute (as when Braulio thought that he was part of his bosses' world), the clash of antagonists (i.e. Braulio's employers) and protagonist (i.e. Braulio) relates to "conflict and resolution," which is a common feature of characterization (Burroway & Stuckey-French, 2007; Kennedy & Gioia, 2007).

Braulio's conflict and resolution. Officially being an English teacher but performing a multiplicity of other roles connected to English, Braulio's main quest is his professional success. The "conflict" then represents the way to succeed in all the different tasks in the development of his profession. This conflict is highlighted by those in the role of employers. In a few cases, they are in alliance with Braulio's own goals and ideals (e.g. Human Rights Commission); but in most cases, they are manipulative or money-driven and hence completely opposed to Braulio (e.g. cacao business people; state police). In all the cases, Braulio discovers that, in spite of his superior abilities in English and other languages, teaching techniques, and communicative skills, he must receive orders and play a submissive role to the "antagonists" dwelling on a superior level. As seen above, even the captured drug dealer adopts a superior role: "So again, someone was giving orders to me!" says Braulio (from above Excerpt 10).

At the core of Braulio's "conflict," then, is his use of English as a livelihood. He knows that English has made him a teacher, business dealer, translator, and interpreter. He values the financial endowment provided by this work; yet at the same time, he knows that by performing this work, he has acted out in defiance of his own ideologies. In this sense, his English proficiency has put him in harm's way. However, he finds some "resolution" to this conflict. Traces of this "resolution" emerge when Braulio is interviewed for a teaching job at an art institute in Oaxaca:

Excerpt 18: From Clemente & Higgins, 2008, p. 185-6

Un pintor famoso me entrevistó para un trabajo. Cuando me preguntó que cuánto quería ganar, pensé, 'Estos cabrones tienen dinero, les voy a pedir una buena suma'. Entonces le pedí el doble de lo que siempre cobraba. Se sorprendió cuando le dije la

cantidad. En ese momento me di cuenta que me había pasado. Me miró y dijo: 'No sabía que les pagaran tan jodido a los profesores de inglés'.... Ahora ya sé cuánto debo cobrar.

This famous artist interviewed me for an English teaching job. When he asked me about my fees, I thought, "These bastards really have money so I am going to ask for good money." So I told him double of what I regularly charged. He was shocked when he heard the amount. At that moment I realized that I had gone too far. He looked at me and said: "I didn't know that you English teachers are so fucking uptight about wages!"... Now I know how much I charge them.

Given the opportunity to name his price, Braulio seems tempted by the same greed that he has seen in his antagonists (the owner of the chocolate factory, the narcotics police, and the captured drug dealer). Braulio appears willing to cash in on this greed. By overpricing his teaching services, he perhaps strives for the superiority that he was denied by his other employers. Yet it is all momentary. His sobering and sincere conclusion that "[n]ow I know" reflects his rejection of greed and his contentment in, once again, non-materialistic ideals.

This seems Braulio's "resolution." He can now shrug off feelings of having succumbed to opposing ideological forces and having sacrificed his dignity as a "performer" of English in Oaxaca. He seems to see these compromises as pragmatic necessities "of the moment," while acknowledging and valuing an underlying satisfaction about his profession:

Excerpt 19: From Clemente & Higgins, 2008, p. 193

El inglés me ha dado la oportunidad de jugar varios papeles.... Hay una escuela primaria que cada año me invita para que les hable a los alumnos sobre ... ser maestro de inglés. El programa se llama 'Como vivir tu profesión con pasión y éxito'.... No sé si he tenido éxito, pero sí sé que lo he hecho con pasión.

English has given me the opportunity to play so many roles.... An elementary school invites me every year to tell their students about ... being an English teacher. The program is called: "How to live your profession with passion and success."... I don't know if I've done it with success, but I know that I've done it with passion.

Standing in classrooms and talking to young children about their own possible futures as English teachers, Braulio has come a long way from sitting crouched in the truck bed with the Oaxacan police and the American drug dealer as a human shield. There is no guarantee that he will not find himself once again at the services of an anti-narcotics squad or oligarchic-type business men; however, his annual visits to elementary classrooms seem to remind him that he is, at heart, a teacher. However, in Oaxaca, he cannot economically support himself as a teacher, nor as a human rights worker; hence his forays into linguistic-mediation in law enforcement, chocolate marketing, and other areas totally incongruent with his own ideology. He may be one who has sold himself out; yet during his annual visits to the children he allows himself moments to glow in his awareness of what "should be" or "could be." Such is his resolution -- or at least "part"-

resolution. We say “part” because, after all, English is an “up” and “down” matter for Braulio.

This is why we have included “English” as the fourth element of characterization for Braulio (D; Figure 2). Although most literary critics may not consider such an element a “character,” there is a good reason for us to do so, because Braulio himself talks about “English” as a type of personified force. Sometimes he sees it as an oppressor: “I realized that English can also be used to fuck the people, to exploit the poor” (from Excerpt 7 above). He also feels that his English skills have turned him into an “object” to be passed around without his consent:

Excerpt 20: from Clemente & Higgins, 2008, p. 187

Yo era solamente algo que se podía ... prestar a otras compañías ... como si fuera una cosa, como ‘Préstame tu pluma’. Mi jefe les decía, ‘¿Quieres que te preste a mi traductor?’, y luego me decía a mí: ‘Ve con esta gente y haces lo que te digan’.

I was just something they could ... lend to other companies ... as if you were a thing, like “Can I borrow your pen?” My boss would say, “Would you like to borrow my translator?”, and then they would tell me: “Go with this person and do what they tell you to do.”

In other instances, Braulio makes “English” the cause of his joys and misfortunes:

Excerpt 21: From Clemente & Higgins, 2008, p. 188

La verdad, gané mucho dinero pero lo despilfarré en bebidas y parrandas. No me preocupa. Ya ves, todo viene con el inglés.

To be honest, I earned a lot of money but I threw it away drinking and partying. I don't care. You see, everything comes with English.

He personifies English to such an extent that he attributes it with agency:

Excerpt 22: From Clemente & Higgins, 2008, p. 188

Ya ves, el inglés me sigue a donde quiera. No me puedo deshacer de él... Mi vida gira alrededor del inglés. Algunas veces pienso que el inglés me ha afectado hasta emocionalmente.

You see, English follows me everywhere. I can't get rid of it... My life is always around English. Sometimes I think English has affected me emotionally.

We would remind Braulio, however, that these emotional effects can also be rewarding, as he experiences each year when he visits the primary schools. That is, “English” is a type of uninvited alter-ego or evil twin, the most useful tool of the colonizer, that Braulio must bear. Yet, it is also his oasis.

DISCUSSION

By analyzing Braulio's narrative according to plot, point of view and characterization, we have tried to highlight the importance of ethnographic research in critical language teaching and learning in the postcolonial world. As conclusions, we offer two salient aspects to Braulio's story that reveal illusory beliefs promoted by the mainstream literature in TESOL. The first one regards Braulio's "two-sided" view that English brings money and joys but also misfortunes and bitter days. This lies in contrast with the common belief that English is the door to a better-off life, in terms of economic, social and cultural capital. Braulio's story illustrates how he was able to be paid fairly well but without attaining a better social position. What is more, Braulio comes to realize that an enhanced social position implies certain values that he is not willing to adopt for his own life.

The second important element in Braulio's story is the significant absence of the native speaker of English. One would think that the native speaker could have easily been the natural antagonist of Braulio's narrative. However, during the many hours that we spent talking with Braulio, there was no reference whatsoever of the figure of the native speaker as the representative of the hegemonic ideology of English. This absence is one of the best ways to illustrate what Canagarajah calls "resisting linguistic imperialism" (1999), that is, "the possibility that, in everyday life, the powerless in post-colonial communities may find ways to negotiate, alter, and oppose political structures, and reconstruct their languages, cultures, and identities to their advantage" (p. 2).

This is also what Clemente & Higgins (2008) have called "performing English with a postcolonial accent" (p. 26). In this sense, Braulio's performance of English has enabled him to locate himself within a position from which to challenge the hegemony of the colonial difference through the production of his own style of communicative interaction in both English and Spanish (Mignolo, 2005). How Braulio learns, appropriates, modifies and redefines his use of English as a series of multilingual social and cultural performances is what is meant by a postcolonial accent. His performances are presentations of the use of English in the multicultural context of postcolonial Oaxaca. By locating himself in opposition to the standardization of the language regimes of both Spanish and English, he is able to open up discursive spaces that allow him to play in between the norms and expectations of these regimes.

While performing his gender, youth and social class, Braulio composes his own identity as a learner and user of the colonizing languages, Spanish and English (Clemente & Higgins, 2008). He contests the geopolitics of language knowledge production by stepping outside of the double-bind of the native versus non-native speaker dichotomy and composing his own forms of multilingual aesthetics (Makoni & Pennycook, 2007; Mignolo, 2005; Sommer, 2004). Further, our ability to understand his performances

involved an awareness that the ethnography that we were composing was also a performative activity between ourselves and Braulio; this is what Fabian refers to as the coevalness of the ethnographic encounter by which we have stood side-by-side with Braulio, holding co-equivalent positions in the production of the knowledge that framed our performances with a postcolonial accent (Fabian, 2007).

CONCLUSION

Our narrative analysis has been conducted through an interdisciplinary or crossover approach based on ethnography and literary studies. It attests that we as researchers can be co-performers along with the participant(s) of an ethnographic encounter within a postcolonial English language setting such as that of Oaxaca. This has been borne out by our “experiencing” of the Braulio narrative according to the literary devices of “plot,” “point of view” and “characterization.” First of all, “plot” has helped us to value the significance of Braulio’s isolated incidents and to assemble these incidents into a connected emotional intensity underlying Braulio’s complex of positionings (Korobov & Bamberg, 2007). Our involvement in the narrative as “facilitators of plot” (so to speak) becomes more obvious when we then go on to consider “point of view.” In this second stage of the analysis, we become aware of ourselves as a unique brand of “omniscient narrator” maintaining an internal territory within the narrative where a separate and autonomous “first-person narrator” can perform. This first-person narrator, of course, is the participant (in this case, Braulio); and his performance is also our performance, that of constructing an ethnographic encounter in the postcolonial sense. This encounter then becomes authentically felt and meaningful when we proceed to the third stage of “characterization.” In this third and final stage, it all becomes an intense yet wonderful ride, as we, along with Braulio, meet a whole cast of characters who bring emotion as well as pathos to the postcolonial destination of our ethnography. It has been an ethnographic as well as postcolonial literary experience.

NOTES

1. This is the main reason why the three actors involved in the ethnographic encounter are co-authoring the present article: Braulio as the narrator of the story; Angeles Clemente as one of the ethnographers in the Clemente & Higgins study; and William Sughrua as Braulio’s advisor when Braulio wrote an ethnographic reflective account of his teaching experiences as part of his process to get his B.A. degree in TESOL. Braulio is a pseudonym for Ervin Méndez Ortiz.

2. Because of the process of data collection and transcription (as explained in the fifth section of this paper), each data excerpt in the paper is first presented in Spanish and then followed by a complete translation in English (in italics). The parenthetical comment identifying the data excerpt as to “number” and “source” refers to both the Spanish and English versions.

3. Mezcal (also spelled “mescal”) is a distilled alcoholic beverage made from the maguey plant found throughout Mexico but very abundant in the state of Oaxaca (Fuller, 2010, pp.

94-95; Franz & Havens, 2006, pp. 394-395). Mezcal dates back to the Spanish conquest when the Spaniards began to experiment with the Indigenous process of fermenting agave plant juice into a “milky” alcoholic drink called *pulque* (ibid). Mezcal is clear in color, very strong, and smoky in taste; it is generally drunk straight (ibid).

4. APPO (The People’s Popular Assembly of Oaxaca) was a broad coalition of 365 groups formed to fight against the social and political injustices of the state government of Oaxaca in 2006.

REFERENCES

Abcarian, R. and Koltz, M. (Eds.). (1978). *Literature: The human experience*. New York: St. Martin’s Press.

Abrams, M. H. (1971). *A glossary of literary terms*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc.

Abrams, M.H. and Harpham, G. G. (2009). *A glossary of literary terms*. Boston: Wadsworth Cengage Learning.

Ashcroft, B., Griffiths, G. and Tiffin, H. (1989). *The empire writes back: Theory and practice in postcolonial literature*. London: Routledge.

Clemente A. & Higgins M. (2008). *Performing English with a postcolonial accent: Ethnographic narratives from Mexico*. London: The Tufnell Press.

Clemente, A., Higgins M., Merino-Lopez Y. and Sughrua, W. (2009). Yolanda’s Portrait: A Story of Triqui Linguistic Resistance mediated by English and Ethnographic Coevalness in Oaxaca, Mexico. *Working Papers on Culture, Education and Human Development*, Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, <http://www.uam.es/ptcedh>.

Bamberg, M. (2010). Blank check for biography? Openness and ingenuity in the management of the ‘who-am-I-question.’ In D. Schiffrin, A. DeFina and A. Nylund (Eds.), *Telling Stories: Language, narrative, and social life* (pp. 109-121). Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press.

Bamberg, M. (Ed.). (2007). *Narrative: State of the art*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Bamberg, M; De Fina, A. and Schiffrin, D. (Eds.). (2007). *Selves and identities in narrative and discourse*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Barkhuizen, G. (2008). A narrative approach to exploring context in language teaching. *English Language Teaching Journal*, 62 (3), 231-239.

Barkhuizen, G. (2009a). Topics, aims, and constraints in English teacher research: A Chinese case study. *TESOL Quarterly*, 43(1), 113-125.

- Barkhuizen, G. (2009b). An extended positioning analysis of a pre-service teacher's *better life* small story. *Applied Linguistics Advance Access*, published online on June 29, 2009, doi:10.1093/applin/amp027.
- Barkhuizen, G. and Wette, R. (2008). Narrative frames for investigating the experiences of language teachers. *System*, 36(3), 372-387.
- Bell, J. S. (2002). Narrative inquiry: More than just telling stories. *TESOL Quarterly*, 36(2), 207-213.
- Baldick, C. (2008). *Oxford dictionary of literary terms*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Barry, P. (2009). *Beginning theory: An introduction to literary and cultural theory*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Bhabha, H. K. (1994). *The location of culture*. London: Routledge.
- Brumfit, C. J. and Carter, C. A. (Eds.). (1986). *Literature and language teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Burroway, J. and Stuckey-French, E. (2007). *Writing fiction: A guide to narrative craft*. New York: Pearson Longman.
- Canagarajah, S. (1999). *Resisting linguistic imperialism in English teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Carbonell, O. (1997). *Traducir al otro, traducción, exotismo, poscolonialismo*. Cuenca: Ediciones de la Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha.
- Clandinin, D. J; Pushor, D. and Orr, A. M. (2007). Navigating sites for narrative inquiry. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 58, 21-35.
- Connelly, F. M. and Clandinin, D. J. (2006). Narrative inquiry. In J. L. Green, G. Camilli and P. Elmore (Eds.), *Handbook of complimentary methods in education research* (3rd ed.) (pp. 477-487). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Publishers, Inc.
- Dawson, T. (2004). *The effective protagonist in the nineteenth century British novel: Scott, Bronte, Eliott, Wilde*. Hampshire, UK: Ashgate Publishing Company.
- Fabian, J. (2007). *Memory against culture*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Fuller, R. (2010). *Bartending for dummies*. Indianapolis, IN: Wiley Publishing, Inc.

Franz, C. and Havens, L. (2006). *The people's guide to Mexico*. Emeryville, CA: Avalon Travel Publishing.

Keane, W. (2001). Voice. In A. Duranti (Ed.), *Key terms in language and culture* (pp. 268-271). Oxford: Blackwell.

Kennedy, X. J. and Gioia, D. (2007). *An Introduction to fiction*. New York: Pearson Longman.

Korobov, N. and Bamberg, M. (2007). 'Strip Poker! They don't show nothing': Positioning identities in adolescent male talk about a television game show. In M. Bamberg, A. De Fina and D. Schiffrin (Eds.), *Selves and identities in narrative* (pp. 253-272). Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Lieblich, A.; Tuval-Mashiach, R. and Zilber, T. (1998). *Narrative research*. London: Sage.

Makoni, S. and Pennycook, A. (Eds.). (2006). *Disinventing and reconstituting languages*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

Maley, A. and Duff, A. (1989). *The inward ear: Poetry in the language classroom*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

McCarthy, T. (2000). *Teaching literary elements with short stories*. New York: Scholastic Professional Books.

Mignolo, W. (2005). Prophets facing sideways: The geopolitics of knowledge and the colonial difference. *Social Epistemology*, 19 (1), 111-127.

Norton, B. and Toohey K. (Eds.). (2004). *Critical pedagogies and language learning*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Pavlenko, A. (2002). Narrative study: Whose story is it, anyway? *TESOL Quarterly*, 36(2), 213-218.

Pavlenko, A. (2007). Autobiographical narratives as data in applied linguistics. *Applied Linguistics*, 28(2), 163-188.

Pennycook, A. (1998). *English and the discourses of colonialism*. London: Routledge.

Said, E. (1993). *Culture and imperialism*. New York: Vintage.

Safder Kharbe, A. (2009). *English language and literary criticism*. New Delhi: Discovery Publishing House Pvt. Ltd.

Spivak, G. (1999). *A critique of postcolonial reason*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Sommer, D. (2004). *Bilingual aesthetics: A new sentimental education*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Sorsoli, L. (2007). Like pieces in a puzzle: Working with layered methods of reading personal narratives. In M. Bramberg, A. De Fina and D. Schiffrin (Eds.), *Selves and identities in Narrative* (pp. 303-324). Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Stanley, L. (2008). Madness to the method: Using a narrative methodology to analyze large-scale complex social phenomenon. *Qualitative Research*, 8, 435-447.

Tarica, E. (2008). *The inner life of Mestizo nationalism*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Tsui, A. B. M. (2007). Complexities of identity formation: A narrative inquiry of an EFL teacher. *TESOL Quarterly*, 41(4), 657-680.

Xu, Y. and Liu, Y. (2009). Teacher assessment knowledge and practice: A narrative inquiry of a Chinese college EFL teacher's experience. *TESOL Quarterly*, 43(3), 493-513.