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A Survey of Stylistic Features of Short Stories Authored by Selected Filipino National Artists for Literature

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ABSTRACT

In applying stylistic analysis, language and literature are merged to analyze literary pieces such as short stories. However, based on several studies conducted in this genre, it was discovered that studies which dealt with the stylistic analysis of short stories written particularly by the Filipino national artists for literature remains to be unexplored. Therefore, by focusing only on lexical and grammatical categories, this paper looked into these linguistic features which serve as linguistic evidence to support the literary interpretations of these stories. As for lexical analysis, the results showed that there are some specialized vocabulary found in the stories. The presence of some nouns, adjectives, and verbs in the stories are also relevant for they reveal meaningful insights about these stories. Similarly, grammatical features found also aid in formulating solid and substantial interpretations of the stories. Specifically, these features include sentence complexity (cumulative sentences), fragments, verb tenses, direct speeches, and punctuations (colon). Further, as for pedagogical implications, this study promotes stylistics to the teaching of Philippine literature in English because teachers can further enrich their instructions by merging stylistics with their existing array of approaches and strategies used in their literature classrooms.

Keywords: Survey; Stylistic Features; Lexical Features; Grammatical Features; Meaning; Interpretation; Short Stories; Filipino National Artists

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1. Introduction

The emergence of stylistics, as one of the areas in applied linguistics, becomes relevant and necessary as it is through stylistics that both language and literature are linked together for a particular purpose, and that is, to meaningfully and successfully study literary discourses (i.e., short stories) from a linguistic lenses or viewpoint. According to Carter^[1], when reading literary texts, readers may frequently feel certain moods, tones, or feelings as a result of their interaction with the text, but they may not always have a way to gain the confidence “to explore more fully and then explicitly formalize those same feelings.” Therefore, because stylistic analysis validates one's intuitions on texts, it can assist readers in finding linguistic proof for such sensations in literary texts. Moreover, Alemu^[2] emphasized that stylistics is the explication tools that enable one to objectively characterize what an author has done in his use of language, whether it be linguistically or non-linguistically. The primary goal of stylistics is to help readers comprehend the author's intention in the way the writer or author has conveyed the material. Thus, the study of grammar, lexis, semantics, phonological characteristics, and discursive devices is the focus of stylistics.

Recent stylistic studies have underscored the critical role of linguistic and rhetorical features in shaping meaning, emotion, ideology, and narrative appeal in literary texts. Tsyntar et al.^[3] emphasized how syntactic devices such as exclamatory sentences and repetition serve as expressive strategies to convey heightened emotional experience. Similarly, Dlamini^[4] in analyzing interjections and ideophones in isiZulu novels, revealed how these elements guide readers through layered emotional landscapes. Other scholars have examined the ideological functions of stylistics: Rawian et al.^[5] analyzed sports commentary to show how conceptual metaphors encode racial and religious biases, while Al-Zubaidi and Al-Mamoori^[6] used a critical stylistics lens to analyze human trafficking in *A Walk Across the Sun*, revealing how transitivity, speech acts, and modality expose gendered exploitation in developing societies. Their work emphasizes how narrative structure and linguistic agency reflect social ideologies and systemic injustice. Abdurrahman^[7] examined the intricacy of the sentences in *A Rose for Emily* by William Faulkner. The study concluded that Faulkner's deliberate use of complex sentence structures mirrors the psychological

complexity of the protagonist and intensifies suspense and thematic delivery which only proves that stylistic complexity is a deliberate literary device employed by the author. Similarly, Chandio et al.^[8] explored stylistic elements like adjectives, sentence length, and conjunctions in Ahmed Ali's *Our Lane*, revealing how linguistic deviation reflects colonial trauma and critiques socio-political deterioration under British rule. Their findings show how stylistic norms, such as adjective placement and coordinating conjunctions, can symbolically encode nostalgia, resistance, and cultural decay. In political communication, Kotenko et al.^[9] demonstrated that Donald Trump's use of lexical repetition and antithesis played a role in crafting a persuasive populist persona. Creativity in language has also been explored through ludic stylistics, as seen in Tykhomyrova and Izotova's^[10] study on metafiction and language play in *The Science of Discworld*, and in Wulandari et al.^[11] mapping of expressive stylistic devices in children's literature. From a formalist perspective, Khalil et al.^[12] illustrated how punctuation and modality reflect epistemic uncertainty and emotional depth in fictional narratives. Meanwhile, Boro^[13] analyzed stylistic elements in the short story *Boxing* by Nandeswar Daimari, focusing on phonological tools (such as alliteration, assonance, and consonance) and morphological features (including reduplication, dialect, and code-mixing). His study demonstrates how stylistic devices in indigenous narratives connect dreamlike narration with socio-realistic themes in the Bodo language. Together, these studies affirm that stylistics, which explores various genres, languages, and media, not only decodes how language works aesthetically but also reveals deeper ideological, psychological, and cultural dimensions. However, while rich in thematic and linguistic scope, these works rarely focus on the short fiction of Southeast Asian authors. This research attempts to close this gap by surveying the stylistic features specifically employed by selected Filipino National Artists in their short stories, situating Philippine literature within broader global stylistic discourse.

Meanwhile, in the Philippines, various studies exploring the works of Filipino writers have been published. Recent studies reflect a growing interest in stylistic analysis as a tool for uncovering deeper meanings in literary texts. Tan-de Ramos^[14] employed a formalist stylistic approach to analyze Emmanuel Torres' poem *It is Difficult to Speak of Saints*, revealing how unconventional sentence structures

and diminishing rhyme reflect the persona's crisis of faith. Tribunal-Nemenzo^[15] focused on the Hiligaynon works of Alicia Tan-Gonzales, analyzing semantic and expressive features to explore portrayals of female emotional states and identity. Similarly, Seño^[16] examined six short stories by male Filipino authors across historical periods, highlighting how stylistic features such as imagery and dialogue reflect evolving gender roles of women. Building on the application of stylistic tools, Tarrayo^[17] utilized Leech and Short's stylistic model to examine Cristina Pantoja Hidalgo's flash fiction. His analysis showed how lexical and grammatical features which include concrete nouns, sentence fragments, and figures of speech, enhance meaning-making and reader engagement. In a later study, Tarrayo^[18] analyzed Ian Rosales Casocot's work through lexical and syntactic lenses, demonstrating how stative verbs, tense shifts, and sentence fragmentation reflect the narrator's traumatic memory. Caparas^[19] provided a stylistic analysis of the essay *The Will of the River* from the Philippines, emphasizing how initial-position adjuncts, especially circumstantial and conditional ones, shaped its argumentative and metaphorical structure. The personification of the river and the use of cohesive devices allowed the essay to explore profound philosophical and ecological themes. Likewise, Elamera et al.^[20] examined stylistic deviations in five Bikol poems by Kristian Cordero. Analyzing the poems on lexical, semantic, and phonological levels, the study revealed how these deviations work together to figuratively express the poems' themes, particularly through poetic distortion and figurative meaning. Parina^[21] analyzed Ian Rosales' short story *Things You Don't Know* and found a dominant use of epistemic modality, which underscores the narrator's uncertainty and shapes the story's overall negative shade. The narrator's dependence on perceived external appearances highlighted a stylistic strategy of expressing disorientation, ambiguity, and introspection—underscoring the power of modality in shaping narrative tone and psychological depth. Another contribution comes from Basilan et al.^[22], who applied Leech's foregrounding theory to analyze linguistic deviations in Ben & Ben's most liked English songs from 2017–2022. Their findings focused on lexical and semantic deviations, identifying devices such as affixation, compounding, metaphor, oxymoron, hyperbole, and irony. These stylistic features reflect the emotional intensity of the lyrics and enhance thematic depth. However,

despite the rich body of local literature on stylistics, most studies focus on single texts or specific authors, often isolating lexical, grammatical, or semantic features. Few conduct comparative analyses across a body of works by national literary figures, specifically on surveying the stylistic features they employed in their short stories. There remains a significant gap in comprehensive stylistic surveys that map out common stylistic features in the short fiction of Filipino National Artists for Literature. Hence, this is the gap this study aims to address.

Thus, this only means that recent studies in the area of stylistics have explored various genres of literature both written by Filipino and foreign authors. However, it was discovered that studies which dealt with the stylistic analysis of short stories written particularly by the Filipino national artists for literature remains unexplored. Thus, there is a need to further explore the short stories written by selected national artists for literature to deepen and widen the understanding of the style employed by these authors. Their literary works have been very significant to be studied since they have contributions to Philippine literature. Their writings were also said to have power and elements of greatness. By analyzing their works, readers can generate meaning and explain their intuitions and feelings towards the text by looking objectively into linguistic evidence found in these short stories.

Furthermore, doing this present study on stylistics could also bridge the gaps pertaining to the teaching of Philippine literature in English. For instance, Simene's^[23] study on the methods and techniques used by educators to teach Philippine literature in a certain institution in Mindanao, Philippines showed that the strategies these instructors used were varied but they tend to only cater the approach they favor. Also, Bañes^[24] on his study revealed that 'relevance' and 'recency' should be considered in choosing literary text for instruction, and further recommended that literature in senior high school should be revitalized. Thus, this present study on the stylistics analysis of works of Filipino authors would be of great help for language and literature teachers on the application of stylistics as relevant approach in literary analysis and interpretation of short stories authored by these Filipino national artists. These stories carry authentic meanings and showcase Filipino culture and identities which are necessary to be learned and appreciated by Filipino learners

in the present time. This would also imply that through this study, literature teachers would become more familiar regarding the significance of stylistics to the teaching of Philippine literature in English which they can further add to or merge with their existing array of approaches and strategies used in their literature classrooms. Hence, this study surveyed the stylistic features of Philippine short stories authored by Filipino national artists for literature with emphasis on lexical and grammatical categories and their contribution to the meaning and interpretation of the stories. Specifically, the following queries were answered: a.) What stylistic features are found in the Philippine short stories written by Filipino national artists for literature in terms of lexical and grammatical categories?; and b.) How do these features contribute to the meaning and interpretation of the stories?

2. Materials and Methods

This study employed descriptive research design utilizing both quantitative and qualitative data. Specifically, critical evaluation of the texts was highly dependent on qualitative data through document analysis. Leech and Short^[25], as cited in Tarrayo^[17] explained that in doing a documentary analysis, the researcher takes sample passages from the texts that present salient linguistic features or ‘style markers’ chosen based on their ‘consistency’ and ‘tendency’ as they appear in these texts. This means that stylistics is a ‘highly selective exercise’^[25], because the reader/researcher only selects some features and ignores others. In addition, as to the role of quantitative data in stylistic analysis, these data serve as support to qualitative data to enrich and validate the analysis made. For instance, as the researcher reads the text, he would formulate intuitions about the text and must cite sample passages or lines from the texts (document analysis) to support such intuitions. Then, the frequencies or occurrences of the linguistic features which are in the form of a quantitative data should be noted and presented (i.e., counting the number of nouns, adjectives, phrases, sentences). These quantitative linguistic proofs would then serve as support to qualitative data which could further enhance and enrich the analysis of the given texts or works of literature (i.e., short stories).

Specifically, in doing the stylistic analysis of these short stories, the researcher followed the following procedure:

First, the researcher purposively selected short stories written by selected national artists for literature namely: Jose Garcia Villa, Nick Joaquin, NVM Gonzales, Francisco Arcellana, Alejandro Roces, and F. Sionil Jose. These stories are: *Footnote to Youth*, *The House on Zapote Street*, *The Bread of Salt*, *The Flowers of May*, *My Brother’s Peculiar Chicken*, and *Puppy Love*. Second, the researcher analyzed the six stories using an appropriate framework of analysis. Specifically, the analysis was anchored in two of the four linguistic and stylistic categories proposed by Leech and Short^[25], namely lexical and grammatical. As a limitation of the study, the researcher only focused on the lexical and syntactic aspects. Following Tarrayo’s^[18] procedure in the conduct of stylistic analysis, guide questions in Leech and Short^[1] framework were employed but some of them which are irrelevant to the context of analysis were eliminated.

3. Results and Discussions

3.1. Lexical Categories

3.1.1. General

Table 1 shows that there are a total of 18 specialized vocabulary found in six short stories analyzed. The presence of these words has made a contribution for the unlocking or revealing relevant meanings and interpretations of the texts analyzed. For instance, in the story *Footnote to Youth* by Jose Garcia Villa, specialized vocabulary, which are all Tagalog words, such as *batalan*, *tatay*, *inay*, *sawali*, *papag*, *kundiman*, and *hilot* would give the readers an impression that the story happened in a rural area. Although the specific place was not stated in the story, it can be gleaned that the place setting of the story is a rural area because these words illustrate an image of typical (or traditional) and simple life in the province or rural areas. These specialized vocabulary also give readers an idea about the social status of the characters in the story or a kind of life they live in the area. Similarly, words such as *bodega*, *hacienda*, and *mestizo* found in the story *Puppy Love* written by F. Sionil Jose, serve as status symbols or implications of having a rich family or an indication that someone (i.e., someone who owns an hacienda and a bodega) belongs in the upper portion of the social ladder. In this story, Jacobo (main character and narrator) has a childhood love interest named Gina. Jacobo

originates from an economically disadvantaged household, whereas Gina comes from an affluent family. Gina's family (Garcia Family) is the richest family in town. They own an hacienda; they have tenants; and they have a *bodega* where grains or harvests from their hacienda are being stored. In re-

lation to another study, Boro^[13] discovered in his analysis of story *Boxing* that the writer adopted a few Assamese words to make the story more productive. Assamese language is an official language of Assam or an Indo-Aryan language spoken mainly in Assam.

Table 1. Specialized Vocabulary in Six Short Stories Authored by Selected Filipino National Artists for Literature.

Short Stories	Specialized Vocabulary
Footnote to Youth	<i>batalan, tatay, inay, sawali, papag, kundiman, hilot</i>
The House on Zapote Street	<i>Balae</i>
The Bread of Salt	<i>pan de sal, asalto, solfeggio</i>
The Flowers of May	<i>none</i>
Puppy Love	<i>bodega, hacienda, mestizo, jueteng, carinosa, buri</i>
My Brother's Peculiar Chicken	<i>binabae, teniente del barrio</i>

3.1.2. Nouns

Nouns also play a vital part in the interpretation or analysis of the short stories. **Table 2** presents the relevant nouns found in six short stories authored by selected Filipino national artists for literature. Leech and Short^[25] noted that the presence of nouns in the text from a stylistic perspective may refer to events, perceptions, processes, moral qualities and social qualities. In the present study, these relevant nouns used in the narratives would, firstly, carry the central theme or one of the themes in story. For instance, in the story *Footnote to Youth*, words (nouns) such as *worm, foot, toe, creek*, and *child* would direct or lead the readers in discovering one of the themes of the story which is on the obligations and harsh reality of marriage and family life as these aforementioned words would imply Dodong's (main character) innocence or would refer to the youth who are aggressive and still unaware of the consequences of their actions. Because it reveals Dodong's personality and destiny, the worms' appearance and the fact that one of them crawled over his foot are crucial to the plot. When a short, colorless worm scampered clammily across Dodong's foot and marched blindly in its direction, Dodong pulled his foot, causing the worm to fly into the air. The worm's attributes can also be traced back to Dodong's account in a number of ways, most notably the fact that the short worm was crawling aimlessly. As a teenager, Dodong is still clueless of the future consequences of his actions particularly on the struggles and dilemmas he and his family encountered as revealed in the middle and last parts of the story. Similarly, in the story, *The Flowers of May* by Francisco Arcellana, one of the themes could be revealed

through words (nouns) such as *rain, skies, grass, earth, air*, and *sky*. There are all associated with nature which further implies that death is a natural phenomenon or always part of life. In this story, Victoria, one of the daughters died at an early age. The entire family was in deep grief brought by her untimely loss. Other words such as *flowers, sampaguitas, camias, lilies, lily*, and *petals* would depict freshness, innocence, and youngness of Victoria. Like these delicate flowers, Victoria is also precious and is being cherished by her family. Like a flower, she blooms in grace and beauty but died two months before the month of May. In the same story, proper nouns or names of persons such as Manuela, Juaning, Victoria, Peping, Narciso, Clara, Ting, and Lourdes, Paz, Gloria, Monserat, Toni. Josefina, and Concepcion gives the readers an impression on the importance and significance of family in the story. As observed, the story revolves on the loss of one family member who is Victoria.

Secondly, the presence of nouns would also contribute in creating an image of the place of the story. For instance, in the story *My Brother's Peculiar Chicken*, words such as *cornfields, corn, chickens, seeds, food, wings, field, birds, whirlwind, feathers*, and *dust* would give readers an idea that the place setting of the story is in the rural area. Similarly, Alemu^[2] also discovered in the stylistic analysis of O. Henry's stories that the setting description, the setting's surroundings, and the story's characters are all related to the concrete nouns.

Thirdly, nouns may also emphasize the contrast between characters or events, as seen in N.V.M. Gonzales' short story *The Bread of Salt*. The story follows a young boy who regularly buys *pan de sal*, known in English as the

bread of salt. His routine includes passing by the home of an old Spaniard, where he hopes to catch a glimpse of Aida, a girl he quietly admires. While walking to school, he often watches her and dreams of confessing his feelings. Hoping to save money to buy her a brooch, he joins his friend Pete's orchestra. He also begins learning the violin, fulfilling both a romantic gesture and his personal ambition to become a musician. Unfortunately, during one of their performances, he embarrasses himself in front of Aida. Ashamed and disappointed, he quickly leaves, believing that the incident has ruined any chance he had of winning her affection. Upon reading the story, it can be claimed that the way NVM Gon-

zales employs nouns would guide readers in unlocking the themes of the story. Nouns in the story serve as linguistic evidence to showcase the disparity between the rich and the poor. Nouns such *centavos, coins, rolls, bread, farm, scrap* can be associated to the life of the boy in the story. Nouns such as *castle, silver, veranda, servants, wedding anniversary, cakes, candies, party, meringues, bonbons, ladyfingers, cinnamon buns, Swiss baker's, boat, table, china, flowers, brim* are just examples of lexical evidence proving that Aida (girl) belongs to a rich family as evidenced by several things seen during the grand surprise party held at their residences for her two cousins from Manila, Philippines.

Table 2. Relevant Nouns Found in Six Short Stories Authored by Selected Filipino National Artists for Literature.

Short Stories	Nouns (<i>Abstract and Concrete/Proper and Common</i>)
Footnote to Youth	a) <i>worm, foot, toe, creek, child, Dodong, Teang, Blas, Tona</i>
The House on Zapote Street	a) <i>dog, gate, gun</i> b) <i>Pablo Cabading (man, agent, brawn, guts, force, vitality, dresser, killer)</i>
The Bread of Salt	a) <i>centavos, coins, rolls, bread, farm, scraps,</i> b) <i>castle, silver, veranda, servants, wedding anniversary, cakes, candies, party, meringues, bonbons, ladyfingers, cinnamon buns, Swiss baker's, boat, table, china, flowers, brim</i>
The Flowers of May	a) <i>rain, skies, grass, earth, air, sky</i> b) <i>flowers, sampaguitas, camias, lilies, lily, petals</i> c) <i>Manuela, Juaning, Victoria, Peping, Narciso, Clara, Ting, and Lourdes, Paz, Gloria, Monserat, Toni, Josefina, Concepcion</i> d) <i>Tondo, Gagalaingin, Walled City, Ermita, Malate, San Andres, Baguio, Lourdes Church, Intramuros, Pro – Cathedral (San Miguel)</i>
Puppy Love	a) <i>tenants, canned food-pork and beans, sardines, luxuries, apple</i> b) <i>man, menstruation, woman, prostitutes, love, face, breast</i>
My Brother's Peculiar Chicken	a) <i>cornfields, corn, chickens, seeds, food, wings, field, birds, whirlwind, feathers, dust</i>

Fourthly, nouns in the story would also reveal the personality or trait of a particular character in the story. For instance, words such as *man, agent, brawn, guts, force, vitality, dresser, and killer* help in revealing the character of the antagonist in the story (Pablo Cabading). The story *The House on Zapote Street* presents a tragic tale of love between Leonardo and Lydia. Although their marriage was rooted in genuine affection, it eventually unravelled due to the interference of Pablo Cabading—Lydia's possessive and mentally unstable father. Lydia and her family suffered under Pablo's oppressive control, living in constant fear. He dictated their actions, subjected them to abuse, and forced them to comply with his demands. His erratic behavior—shifting from moments of kindness to cruelty—became unbearable for the couple, ultimately leading to the collapse of their relationship

and the tragic events that followed. Because of obsession and jealousy, he killed his wife, his daughter Lydia, his daughter's husband Leonardo, and himself as revealed in the last part of the story. Other nouns such as *gate* and *dog* could also be associated to Pablo Cabading. He is like a dog who would guard his daughter all the time and would bark at any strangers who would attempt to get along with Lydia. The gate symbolizes Lydia having no freedom at all under the control of his strict and overprotective father.

3.1.3. Adjectives

Like nouns, adjectives also revealed important insights from six stories analyzed. Specifically, Leech and Short^[25] cited how adjectives could enrich the analysis of certain literary pieces by looking into the attributes these adjectives refer. These include physical and psychological descriptions, visual

and auditory cues, use of color, references to external concepts or contexts, as well as language that conveys emotions and judgments. For Chandio et al.^[8] on their analysis of Ahmed Ali's short story *Our Lane*, it was found that the adjectives portray poignant conditions of the people; add adverse features to weather, cloud, sky, darkness or gloom; show existential dilemma, and add adverse features to places and things. There are several adjectives found in the stories which would also guide readers to elaborate the themes or meanings in these stories as shown in **Table 3**. Adjectives such as *ice – cold*,

lonely, and *murky* from the story *The House on Zapote Street* as presented in Extract 1 depict horror and mystery behind the murder that happened in the house of the Cabadings in Zapote Street as well as the death of Lydia, her mother, and her husband Leonardo. The crime was committed by his father who also killed himself due to jealousy and obsession towards his daughter. This is similar to Elnaili^[26] found that Libyan writers frequently use adjectives to construct both favorable and unfavorable portrayals, as well as to highlight the empowerment or disempowerment of characters within their narratives.

Table 3. Relevant Adjectives Found in Six Short Stories Authored by Selected Filipino National Artists for Literature.

Short Stories	Adjectives
Footnote to Youth	<i>fresh, fragrant, earthy, slender, soft, short, colorless</i>
The House on Zapote Street	<i>ice – cold, lonely, murky</i>
The Bread of Salt	<i>long, flowing (participle), white, slightest, closed (participle), radiant</i>
The Flowers of May	<i>beautiful, fresh, fragrant, lovely, green</i>
Puppy Love	<i>big, biggest, magnificent, thick, shiny, small, grand green, yellow, red, red, white, green</i>
My Brother's Peculiar Chicken	(none)

Extract 1

It was an ice – cold night, the dark of the moon, but the two brothers shivered not from the wind blowing down the lonely murky street but from pure horror of the house that had so totally thrust itself into their lives.

In the same manner, F. Sionil Jose, author of *Puppy Love* also made use of adjectives (Extract 2), specifically colors (green, yellow, red, red, white, green) to showcase the admiration of Jacobo (main character) to Gina. In the story, the author used colors to describe the costumes worn by Jacobo and Gina when they paired together for a district folk dance competition. The use of bright colors (colorful images/objects) imply a special and precious admiration of Jacobo towards Gina. These colors also depict his joy and the surreal feeling of having Gina as her partner in dance. The white color also depicts their innocence as a child and his pure and sincere intention for Gina as the person he admires or may be his partner in the future. This can be related to the study of Elnaile^[26] which revealed that Libyan short stories exhibit distinct stylistic patterns, such as employing the colors black and white to evoke negative or positive moods and to portray characters as either villainous or idealized.

Extract 2

When I was in grade six and Gina was in grade five, we were paired together in the school folk dance team and were participants in three numbers, among them the old carinosa. For three dances, we had no costume change - she wore a green skirt with a yellow blouse, and I wore red trousers, a white shirt and a red scarf. Everyday for three months, we rehearsed the numbers after school till early evening. The district competition was going to be held in Esmeralda, the town five kilometers to the east.

In addition, F. Sionil Jose does not only employ nouns to showcase the disparity between the rich and the poor or luxurious life versus simple life as mentioned earlier, but he also made use of several objectives to elaborate further on this concept. Words (adjectives) such as *big, biggest, magnificent, thick*, and *shiny* were used by the author to describe the house of Gina's family. On the contrary, the author describes the house of Jacobos' family as *small* and *thatched* and is made of *buri* and bamboo.

Color was also significant in the story *The Flowers of May* to support the theme in the story. For example, the green

stalk of lilies in the story is an additional evidence that refers to Victoria as young, innocent, and delicate. Other adjectives such as *beautiful, fresh, fragrant, lovely* also support this particular meaning or interpretation.

3.1.4. Verbs

Verbs also carry essential meanings in the stories and relevant in the interpretation of literary pieces. According to Leech and Short^[25], these verbs would refer to states, actions, events Including gestures, bodily actions, verbal expressions, mental or emotional conditions, sensory experiences, and similar elements. Likewise, Alemu^[2] discovered that verbs in the stories written by O. Henry play a vital role in conveying meaning, primarily by illustrating actions and, to some

extent, expressing states or conditions within the narrative. Most of the verbs used are dynamic, highlighting movement or change, while stative verbs are present but occur far less frequently.

There are also several verbs found in the stories which would also guide readers to elaborate the themes or meanings in these stories as shown in **Table 4**. In the story *Footnote to Youth*, verbs such as *felt, move, pierce, hide, and run* depict psychological state specifically the feeling of regret felt by Dodong when he realized the consequences of his action as well as the feeling of fear or anxiety of the situations as shown in the extract below. When Teang (Dodong's wife) gave birth, Dodong realized that he has a huge responsibility to do as a father at an early age.

Table 4. Relevant Verbs Found in Six Short Stories Authored by Selected Filipino National Artists for Literature.

Short Stories	Verbs
Footnote to Youth	felt, move, felt, pierce, hide, run
The House on Zapote Street	shivered, unloaded, warned, crawled, jumped, closed, opened, entered, slipped, tried, dropped, detect, crept, groped, ended, cursed, spattered, shot, lay, died
The Bread of Salt	walked away, hide, trod, was singing, broke up, walked away, done, pulled out, divided
The Flowers of May	claps, sit, claps, rise, sing, dip, pick, throw
Puppy Love	(none)
My Brother's Peculiar Chicken	battling, fighting, notice, dived, caught, struggles, squawked, held, ran realized, happened, arguing, crying, cried, argued

Extract 3

Dodong felt more embarrassed and did not move. What a moment for him. His parents' eyes seemed to pierce him through and he felt limp. He wanted to hide from them, to run away.

Verbs are also relevant in the story *The House on Zapote Street*. Verbs such as *shivered, unloaded, warned, crawled, jumped, closed, opened, entered, slipped, tried, dropped, detect, crept, groped, ended, cursed, spattered, shot, lay, died* portray struggles and tensions in the story. These verbs were employed by the author in the scene where the Quitangons (Leonardo's brothers) and some police officers were trying to enter the Cabading's house to secure what happened after Gene (Leonardo's brother) heard the gunshot inside the house. However, Leonardo, Lydia, Lydia's mother, and Mr. Cabading were discovered lifeless in the room, covered in blood. The use of these verbs adds tensions and give readers

an impression on the struggles encountered by the characters in the story through actions and movements depicted by these verbs.

In the story *The Bread of Salt*, verbs were also found relevant such as the verbs *walked away, hide, trod, was singing, broke up, walked away, done, pulled out, and divided*. Through these verbs, the frustration of the character can be felt by the readers. As we all know, the boy has a huge admiration to Aida as shown in the story specifically in the beginning of the story. The boy, along with Saez's band, was invited to the *asalto* held in honor of Don Esteban's daughters who had just returned from Manila. He felt privileged to attend such an elegant event and to admire Aida's striking beauty up close. At that night, he got the chance to be beside Aida which made him feel the immeasurable joy and pride to be with someone he admired most. However, moments later, he was overwhelmed with deep embarrassment at the buffet table when Aida saw him quietly slipping some sweets into

a packet hidden under his shirt. Although she later offered him a generous bundle of food after the party, his intense humiliation left him unable to respond, stripping him of both his poise and the affection he once eagerly expressed toward her.

Extract 4

I walked away to the nearest door, praying that the damask curtains might hide me in my shame. The door gave on to the veranda, where once my love had trod on sunbeams. Outside it was dark, and a faint wind was singing in the harbor.

In the story *The Flowers of May* verbs such as *claps, sit, claps, rise, sing, dip, pick, throw* which are all written in present tense would give readers a hint that the narrator is reminiscing their memories with Victoria, and the use of these verbs would make one feel that Victoria seems to be alive in the memories of her loved – ones or family members. Her untimely death is still fresh in the memory of these people and it seems that they could not still accept that Victoria is already gone. In addition, verbs present in the story *My Brother's Peculiar Chicken* would help readers to unlock themes in the story such as 'battling of ideas or opinions or disagreement'. In the story, chicken found by Kiko in the farm could not be determined whether it is a rooster or a hen based on its features. Verbs such as *battling, fighting, notice, dived, caught, struggles, squawked, held, ran, realized, happened, arguing, crying, cried, argued* are examples of these verbs.

3.2. Grammatical Category

3.2.1. Sentence Complexity

After reading the stories, it could be noted that there were noticeable use of cumulative sentence or loose sentence. The presence of this kind of sentences in the text help in building the intensity of tension or emotions in the story. This claim is related to the that of Tarrayo's^[18] in which he revealed in the flash fiction (FF) he analyzed that the use of cumulative or loose sentences helps depict a stream of rapid, fragmented thoughts as the narrator revisits a traumatic experience, recounting the story of his dog, Tibby, with a tone of wistful reflection. Also, building on Abdurrahman's^[7] study, the use of complex and lengthy sentences was shown to be

an effective stylistic device for exploring ideas in depth, providing vivid descriptions, and building narrative tension. In the present study, the use of cumulative sentence in the story *The Flowers of May* intensifies the sadness of the mother over the death of Victoria who died at an early age as shown in the following extract:

Extract 5

Mother is a long time about the third lily. She falls into an agony over it. She holds it like a candle in her hand—the long stem secure against her palm, the green stalk caught between her thumb and fingers, the lily leaning forward like a candleflame—and does not know what to do about it.

In connection with Abdurrahman's^[7] study, it was highlighted that complex and extended sentences serve as an effective stylistic device. They allow for deeper exploration of ideas, provide detailed descriptions, and build narrative tension. Notably, the story's longest and most intricate sentence—comprising 129 words—marks the climax, underscoring its structural and emotional significance.

3.2.2. Fragment

Another grammatical structure found to be relevant in unlocking meanings in the story is fragment or a structure which includes words and is not a complete sentence as shown in **Table 5**. This aligns with the findings of Tsyntar et al.^[3], who observed that components of compound sentences can function as partial structures or fragments. These fragments convey emotional undertones within the text by shaping its stylistic and rhythmic organization. In the same vein, Tribunal-Nemenzo^[15] found that Alicia Tan-Gonzales used sentence deviations in *Mga Luha Para Kay Tatay Jose* to shape the portrayal of a strong female character. Reduced sentence constructions emphasized the character's strength, while redundant ones revealed her flaws. In the story *The Footnote to Youth* by Jose Garcia Villa, fragments were found relevant in the story and could be linked to the central theme of the story which is "excitement of youthful age" or "teen marriage." These fragments would allow readers to feel Dodong and Teang's disappointment and regret as well as their feelings of being disoriented, broken and confused brought by the consequences of their wrong decision – to marry at an early age as shown in Extract 6.

Table 5. Relevant Fragment Constructions Found in the Stories Authored by Filipino National Artists for Literature.

Short Stories	Fragments
Footnote to Youth	Teang, his girl. Dirty. Afraid of the house. Cooking. Laundering. The house. The children. Yet she wished she had not married. Not even Dodong, whom she loved. Young Dodong. Seventeen. Maybe not either. But she loved Dodong.
The Bread of Salt	With the napkin balled up in my hand. But the party broke up at one or thereabouts.
The House on Zapote Street	But I like you.

Extract 6

She was shapeless and thin now, even if she was young. There was interminable work to be done. Cooking. Laundering. The house. The children. She cried sometimes, wishing she had not married. She did not tell Dodong this, not wishing him to dislike her. Yet she wished she had not married. Not even Dodong, whom she loved. There has been another suitor, Lucio, older than Dodong by nine years, and that was why she had chosen Dodong. Young Dodong. Seventeen. Lucio had married another after her marriage to Dodong, but he was childless until now. She wondered if she had married Lucio, would she have borne him children. Maybe not either. That was a better lot. But she loved Dodong... Dodong whom life had made ugly.

3.2.3. Verb Tense

Verb tense is also relevant in the stylistic analysis because it would also direct readers to look into the relevant events in the story which can contribute in appreciating the central theme or meanings in the story. In the analysis of the six stores, verb tense was found most relevant in the story *Puppy Love* as shown in the last part or ending of the story through the following extract:

Extract 7

“I know. But listen, the boy's most lasting memory was that morning they went to their rice bodega to play. There was a big rattan basket where the grain was stored. They climbed into it. The girl was reading *Wuthering Heights* and eating an apple...”

Her eyes lighted up and instantly she leaned towards me. “Jacobo,” she said softly.

“The boy - he was very poor - he had never tasted an apple before.”

“Jacobo,” Gina repeated as her eyes started to mist.

In the story *Puppy Love*, both Gina and Jacobo lost the opportunity to continue the puppy love as it gets postponed during their adolescence period. After that, Jake (new and current name of Jacobo) met a girl which he believes to be Gina. However, due to some unexpected circumstances Jacobo (or Jake) was not able to find Gina anymore until he got married and had his own family. His wife, Jenny, it becomes her routine to give a newspaper to Jake every morning. Jake read an article wherein there's a girl who got imprisoned because she cut the penis of his husband. Until he recognized that it was Gina. He was able to locate Gina and as shown in Extract 7, he tried to help her but Gina refused because she is guilty. That moment, Jake told everything to Gina, that it was him, a boy who have not eaten an apple before. After knowing everything, Gina just cried, and the story ends. Notice in

the extract that there is a shift of tenses from present tense to past tense. This shifting of tenses in the story is a stylistic feature employed by the author to showcase the passing of time in the lives of the characters – from the time when they were still young until the present. The shifting of the tenses also imply that their love for each never lost. Specifically, the past tense conveys how this puppy love became special and significant in their lives as Jacobo recalls their childhood memories in his direct speech. Tarrayo^[18] also identified this stylistic feature in the flash fiction (FF) piece he analyzed, noting that the use of the past tense lends a reflective quality to the narrative. It enables the narrator to revisit and recount a traumatic episode from his life, emphasizing that the events occurred in the distant past. Moreover, the use of the past tense suggests the narrator's intention to confine those painful memories to the past.

3.2.4. Direct Speeches

A direct speech is also one of the significant stylistic features which can help a reader explore meanings in Leech and Short^[25], this particular stylistic feature was found to be relevant in the analysis and interpretation of the story *My Brother's Peculiar Chicken*. Specifically, the presence of this feature in the story serves as linguistic evidence reinforcing the central theme—that individuals may interpret the same situation in entirely different ways, with one person perceiving it from one perspective and another seeing it in a completely opposite light. This theme arose in the story because this story revolves around an argument whether the chicken found by Kiko is a hen or a rooster. Each persona in the story has their own opinions about the peculiarity of the chicken, and these opinions are expressed through direct speeches, and not through a narrative. The story has 1421 words, and a total of 60 direct speeches were noted from this story. This further means that the author wanted his characters to be actively involved in every part of the story. As observed, these characters come alive because they would talk most of the time through these direct speeches to support their arguments or share their opinions on the peculiarity of the chicken in the story.

3.2.5. Punctuations

Like the direct speech, punctuation was not also found in the stylistics framework of Leech and Short^[25], but this linguistic feature could also contributed in the analysis and inter-

pretation of a certain literary text. For example, Tarrayo^[18] looked into the punctuation in the FF he analyzed because he believes that punctuations would regulate and clarify the meanings of various text, particularly shorts stories although they are not included in Leech and Short's^[25] schema. Similarly, Tysnstar et al.^[3] also reported the stylistic relevance and contribution of exclamation point in conveying emotions on text. Moreover, Almahameed^[27] also discovered a frequent use of various punctuation marks—such as commas, semicolons, en dashes, hyphens, and quotation marks in the graphological style of Hans Christian Andersen in the story *The Little Match Girl*. Also, Khalil et al.^[12] concluded that in the story *Speech Sounds*, the use of punctuation—such as dashes and ellipses—intensifies the story's tension, showing how even punctuation contributes to the narrative's emotional impact. In the present study, the use of colon seemed to be consistent in the story *The House on Zapote Street* as there are a total of 25 occurrences of colon in this story. The presence of this punctuation in the said story helps in highlighting significant meanings and ideas in the story as shown in the following extracts:

Extract 8

Cabading liked to brag that was a “killer”: in 1946 he had shot dead two American soldiers he caught robbing a neighbor's house in Quezon City.

The use of colon in the story attracts the attention of the readers and gives them clue about Cabading's capacity to kill a person. It also directs readers to one of the central meanings in the story which is “killing” and “death” The story ends in horror when Cabading committed suicide after killing his wife, his daughter Lydia together with husband Leonardo.

Extract 9

Leonardo explained that he was not much of a talking: “That's why I fell in love with Lydia, because she's the quiet type too.”

Similarly, the use of colon in the particular extract in the story also allows readers to focus on the love affair between Leonardo and Lydia. One could feel how much they love each other despite the sacrifices and struggles of living with Pablo Cabading or Lydia's father in one roof. Leonardo found himself within a family who is so self-enclosed that

they do not engage any socialization or interaction with their neighbors. His brothers say that he made more friends in the neighborhood within the couple of months he stayed there than the Cabadings had made in a year. Within that house, Pablo Cabading sought to insert himself at the center of every aspect of his daughter's life, even intruding on her honeymoon. Whenever Leonardo and Lydia went out, whether to watch a movie or take a drive, he insisted on accompanying them. If placed in the back seat while the couple sat together in front, he would become visibly angry and sullen, demanding to sit beside them instead. These are just some of the sacrifices Leonardo experienced after he married Lydia. However, despite all these trials, Leonardo still continues to fight and endure the hardships for the sake of his love for Lydia.

4. Conclusions

Lexical categories, specifically specialized vocabulary, nouns, adjectives, and verb were found relevant in the analysis of these stories because they serve as linguistic proofs that support the interpretation of these stories. There are also grammatical categories found to be relevant in interpretation of the short stories because they serve as linguistic support or keys for unlocking meanings in the story. These include sentence complexity, fragment constructions, verb tenses, direct speeches, and punctuations.

Further, this study could also guide and motivate researchers to further focus on stylistic studies especially on the works of the local or Filipino authors. When a lot of research works are done with these local works of literature, future language/literature teachers as well as those who are already in the field will have enough materials to use in their literature classrooms. Teachers will be guided on how to employ stylistics in analyzing the text which would also improve students' critical thinking skills as these students are being lead into looking at the significant linguistic features to help them make sense of then stories, to make them appreciate what the texts convey, and eventually to foster in them the love for culture and preservation of Filipino identities.

Finally, the researcher recommends that additional studies should be conducted on the works of Filipino national artists focusing and highlighting other genres (i.e., poetry, drama, essays, etc.) of literature to further capture the unique style of our own local writers. Learning their writing styles

is also a way of promoting and appreciating their works and giving honor to their contributions to the field of Philippine literature. These works are also worthy to be studied because they carry with them the unique Filipino culture and tradition which could strengthened Filipino nationalism and patriotism. As highlighted by Nuriadi et al.^[28], literature can be utilized as a tool in promoting human values and in combating inhumanity and social injustices. Further, it is also recommended that instructional module or learning packets might be crafted in accordance with the findings derived from the study's analysis. The said material would then be used as instructional material for literature classrooms after being evaluated and accepted for publication.

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Institutional Review Board Statement

This study does not require ethical clearance because it does not involve human participants.

Informed Consent Statement

This study does not employ informed consent because it does not involve human participants.

Data Availability Statement

The six stories are the sources of data in this study. One can access the copies of the stories online through the following links:

<https://www.scribd.com/document/421653425/Footnote-to-Youth>

<https://www.scribd.com/document/333498903/JOAQUIN-N-The-House-on-Zapote-Street>

<https://www.scribd.com/doc/36289912/The-Bread-of-Salt>

<https://www.scribd.com/document/259296897/The-Flo-wers-of-May-by-Francisco-Arcellana>
<https://www.scribd.com/document/418453115/Puppy-Love-by-Francisco-Sionil-Jose>
<https://www.scribd.com/document/299062548/MY-BROTHER-s-PECULIAR-CHICKEN-by-Alejandro-Roces>

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Conflicts of Interest

The author conflicts of interest concerning the conduct or publication of this study.

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