

WRITING PHILIPPINE LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

by:

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Others may argue that to write in the native tongue is to reject the remnants of colonialism that have been implanted in us. To disregard the use of English in telling our stories is to deny the existence of the hierarchy of languages where others are superior and others, inferior. It is to leave behind what Lourdes & Kingsley Bolton (2009) referred to as the contrasts between the languages of the West and the East, romantic and realistic writing, high and low literary standards, good and bad taste, maturity and adolescence, intellect and ignorance. In other words, writing in our vernacular would be a celebration of our identity and a recognition of our worth as a nation.

Moreover, it can also be argued that language and culture are intertwined. Language always carries meanings and references beyond itself: The meanings of a particular language represent the culture of a particular social group (Guessabi, 2017). Accordingly, the poet writing in English may not be fully aware that to do so is to exclude himself from certain subjects, ideas, values, and modes of thinking and feeling in many segments of the national life that are better expressed – and, in most cases, can only be expressed – in the vernacular, as Emmanuel Torres, himself an eminent English poet, urged in 1975. Further, Apolinar B. Parale's *The Case for Pilipino* stated that English is still, despite our pretensions to the contrary, a foreign language.

English in the Philippines is a fascinating story that should be known around the world. It is true that in history, English was utilized by the Americans to manipulate our minds and degrade our language. However, we cannot deny that it has been a part of our culture. Presently, the majority of people in the Philippines are considered to be among

the world's largest English-speaking nations, speaking the language fluently (Cabigon, 2016). Further, as written in our constitution, English is one of the official languages of the Philippines and is spoken by millions of Filipinos. The English language has become our own; therefore, to write in English is to write in our language.

Regarding the limitations of the Filipino writer in expressing his sentiments and experiences when writing in English, (Harrison, n.d.) stated that the languages that we most like speaking are the ones that accept us and enable us to communicate more fully and compellingly. In other words, a strong relationship with the author's chosen medium would enable him to conquer the limitations that writing in a second or foreign language could pose. Furthermore, Bohn (2017) added that there is not one correct way to speak a language – or to write in a language. There is freedom to express oneself freely in a foreign language if an individual chooses to adopt it for personal reasons. Over time, Filipinos have embraced English as their language; thus, their ability to utilize it in writing.

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