

# Language Preference of Student Journalists in Mindanao State University-Marawi, Philippines: Reasons and Attitudes

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## To cite this article:

Riz P. Sunio, Jerryk C. Alico. Language Preference of Student Journalists in Mindanao State University-Marawi, Philippines: Reasons and Attitudes. *Advances in Sciences and Humanities*. Vol. 2, No. 6, 2016, pp. 92-103. doi: 10.11648/j.ash.20160206.16

**Received:** August 26, 2016; **Accepted:** September 12, 2016; **Published:** October 21, 2016

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**Abstract:** Student journalists are trained to express and translate their outputs into paper. The preferred language medium they use to do so, however, may convey their perception and attitude towards languages. This study aimed to determine the preferred language that student journalists use in their articles, the reason for their preference, and their attitude towards English, Filipino, and their vernacular language. Mixed qualitative and quantitative methods were used as research design. Data were collected through distributing survey questionnaires to 58 student journalists in Mindanao State University-Marawi during academic year 2013-2014 and conducting interviews to a random sample of 12 from those surveyed. Results showed that most of the student journalists prefer English while only a few uses Filipino and none prefer vernacular in writing. English is perceived by the student journalists to be understood by more people, dynamic and rich; formal, an indicator of better proficiency but not an indicator of intelligence and high social status. Comfortability, ability to express better, training, usage in school, and self-efficacy are the reported reasons why they prefer such language. Filipino and vernacular were least preferred due to lack of resources for reference and writing, lack of knowledge, and low self-efficacy on the usage of the medium. They said that if they were given the mastery of the languages, they are willing to write in Filipino and vernacular. Thus, there is a need to instill versatility of the usage of Filipino and vernacular among student journalists through adequate training and equal appreciation towards them.

**Keywords:** Student Journalists, Campus Journalism, Language Preference, Language Attitude

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## 1. Introduction

A language used to communicate is important to ensure that the message is relayed well. This is all the more important to student journalists who wish to write for their reading audience and send messages of change, value, propagandas, information, and others. Nevertheless, each person has his or her own language preference in writing, expressing, and speaking. One may be well versed in speaking using a language but prefers to write using another. Along with these differences and preferences is their individual attitude towards other languages, may it be English, Filipino, or their vernacular or native language.

English, Filipino, and native languages are used in

journalism in the Philippines since the American colonization. There are major newspapers that publish in English, Filipino, a mix of the both, and vernacular. Some schools also have separate publications for English and for Filipino articles. Prior to the implementation of the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013, popularly known as the K to 12, schools implemented the system of using English as a subject and a medium of instruction in the classroom (Tupas and Lorente, 2014). However, since the implementation of the policy, schools have been reverberating back to the mother tongue where it is not only a medium of instruction but also a module in elementary education (Rappler, 2012).

Vernacular, or the mother tongue, is the first language of a person, followed by Filipino as second and English as third (IBON Foundation, 2012). Though Filipinos are not native speakers of English, most of them have a high regard for it (Vizconde, 2006). This reverence can be credited from the American colonization where the English language was widely propagated across the country. The Philippines became a colony of Spain for 333 years and of America during the 1800's to the 1900's. One of their major contributions was their wide and massive integration of the English language in education, assimilating it in all aspects of the Filipino culture especially in education and learning materials. Filipinos were immersed in English and were trained to read, write, and speak using the language (Constantino and Constantino, 1989). In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the Filipinos are even more immersed in English through media and globalization.

Among Filipino students, there is a high preference for the use of English (Tupas and Lorente, 2014). Most students also prefer the use of English even though they are no longer engaged in academic activities. As people view a language highly, their attitude towards their preferred language and of other languages also varies. People fluent in English are perceived to be smarter, have better job and social opportunities, and have a higher rank in the society (Vizconde, 2006). Others tend to look down on other languages as that of having colonial mentality where Filipino aspects, even the languages, may be looked down upon over American culture (Garbones, 2013).

In the Mindanao State University-Marawi, there is a number of student publications. As a melting pot, it is rich in diverse cultures, dialects, and people of different spectrums. Each student journalist in the campus has his or her language preference, reasons for preferring the language, and attitude towards other languages. The researchers conducted this study to find out the preferred language student journalists in MSU-Marawi use in their articles, why they prefer to use it, and their attitude towards other languages.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. The Bilingual Philippines

Filipino is the national language in the Philippines with almost 25 million speakers. Even after the country was colonized by almost 333 years by the Spaniards, Spanish was not widely learned by the Filipinos. This was because the Spanish friars highly encouraged the use of the Philippine native language in order to facilitate religious conversion. Aside from this, there was also a lack of funds to teach the Filipino natives Spanish so that there was no organized educational system of primary education. However the *ilustrados* or educated ones, and the *meztizos* or the Philippines-born Spaniards, were those who were able to learn the colonizers' language (Tupas and Lorente, 2014). There were still the likes of Dr. Jose Rizal who did not forget the value of the native tongue and even wrote articles about

cherishing it (Khan, 2006).

The Spaniards split the languages further, isolating tribes to the different parts of the Philippines. In Zamboanga and Cavite, the Spaniards forbade the use of their native tongue and decreed that they only use Spanish in order to keep them away from the Muslim Tausugs whom they are related to. Eventually, the people there lost their native tongue and developed the *Chavacano*, a corrupt form of Spanish.

After being able to overthrow the Spaniards in 1898, the Filipinos stood off with the Americans in 1899. The Philippines was under the United States government during 1902-1946. Education was founded on by the Americans during their colonization, integrating their language in it (Constantino and Constantino, 1989).

The first public school opened in Corregidor Island after Admiral Dewey destroyed the Spanish Navy in the Battle of Manila Bay on May 1, 1898. English as a medium of instruction in schools was introduced. Even the American military men taught in schools and education was widely spread. This time also, education was made available to all—not just the *meztizos* and *ilustrados* (Tupas and Lorente online). The primary reason for the American public school system in the Philippines was because of the belief that “no measure could so quickly promote the pacification of the islands as education” (Constantino and Constantino, 1989).

Constantino further commented that the Americans truly have succeeded in this. Education became ‘the master stroke of the plan’ for colonial policy. As Filipinos were educated, it divided the Race apart. They started to worship American culture (Constantino and Constantino, 1989). With this, Spanish literature was cut down and the Filipinos became well-versed in American English (Khan, 2006).

In December 30, 1937, a constitutional convention to lobby Tagalog as the Philippines' national language was pushed by then President Manuel L. Quezon. The requirement to declare a language as a renowned national one was it must be spoken by at least half a million people. However, there are only 18 percent Tagalog speakers in the Philippines while there are 23 percent Cebuano ethnics and is the largest, followed by 12 percent Ilonggo and 14 percent Ilocano (Khan, 2006). Nonetheless, Filipino, a Tagalog-based language, was declared as such.

In the early 1950's the subject known as National Language was taught in elementary and high schools. On August 31, 1959, it was then referred to as *Pilipino* where it is mandated “to instill in the language the indelible mark of Filipinism to show that this language belongs to the people and not to a particular group. On March 12, 1987 again, it was renamed to *Filipino*. English and Filipino were used as a medium of instruction in schools. Spanish was also changed from a required subject to optional (Khan, 2006).

The 1987 Philippine Constitution states:

“Subject to provisions of the law and as the Congress may deem appropriate, the government shall take steps to initiate and sustain the use of Filipino as a medium of official communication and as a language of instruction in the educational system. For purposes of communication and

instruction, the official languages of the Philippines are Filipino and, until otherwise provided by law, English. The regional languages are the auxiliary official languages in the regions and shall serve as auxiliary media of instruction therein. Spanish and Arabic shall be promoted on a voluntary and optional basis.”

In 1973, the Department of Education, Culture, and Sports (DECS), now Department of Education (DepEd), adopted the policy of bilingualism (Tupas and Lorente, online). It is generally referred to “two languages within a person.” Balanced bilingualism is where one can communicate well using any of the two languages they know. However, it is still a theoretical concept, some writers and researchers claim. They concur that persons who have balanced bilingualism are rare. A bilingual child will still tend to be more competent in one language than the other. His stronger language may be called his dominant language (Lan, 2010).

The usage of bilingualism in the Philippines however contributed to the deterioration of English and Filipino and the emergence of *Taglish*, a mix of Tagalog and English. Poet Rolando Tinio introduced this concept in 1965 in his works. He also contributed to its proliferation in the masses. He said this was “a convenient language for underdeveloped—and therefore, consistently shallow—minds.” “Mental laziness” and “sense of fun” also contributed to its growth. The mass media further reinforced this through print ads, radio, comics, movie and TV broadcasts. Terms like “*kadiri* to death” and “*kilig* to the bones” became prominent (Khan, 2006).

The Filipinos have also developed its own English language identity called the *Carabao* English. It has a different context with the British or American Standard English. However, fellow Filipinos are able to understand it (Khan, 2006).

The introduction of English to the Philippines landscaped the perception towards other languages. “English would represent colonial oppression and ideological superiority, as well as democracy and modernity. The vernacular languages would represent barbarism, tribalism and anti-Americanism, as well as freedom and social justice” (Tupas and Lorente, 2014).

On August 25, 1998, President Corazon Aquino issued Executive Order (E. O) No. 335 “enjoining all departments, bureaus, offices, agencies, instrumentalities of the government to take such steps as are necessary for the purpose of using Filipino language in official transactions, communications, and correspondence.” However, the policy received foul feedbacks from non-Tagalog speakers, saying that *Filipino* is but sugar-coated *Tagalog* (Khan, 2006).

Cebu takes pride in its language being the Queen City of the South. It even translated the Philippine National Anthem to Cebuano as a form of ‘rebellion’ to the national government. Cebu once suspended the use of Tagalog in their area to give room for the promotion of local culture. Talking about Nationalism, Emilio Mario Renner Osmeña, a Cebu governor, said that it is nationalism if the country will name its national language after the king of Spain. It also places prejudice against other languages. However, according to

Khan, more and more young Cebuanos are writing in Cebuano and are publishing using the language (Khan, 2006).

According to *Binisaya.com*, publications in Cebu City like *Bisaya Magasin* of *Manila Bulletin*, *Sun. Star* affiliates and the *Banat News*, have created a standard orthography for Bisaya.

## 2.2. Language Policies in Schools

While the school is the second home for young learners, it also incubates the standards, skills and even language preference of the students.

Historically, English has proven to be the language which most Filipinos have favored (Vizconde, 2006) even after the American rule. Even though the bilingual system in the Philippines has been implemented, English is still favored over other languages. Even the elites cling to this language to assert their power partially. English language users are perceived to belong to the upper bracket of the society (Vizconde, 2006). Filipino and English-speaking bilingual elementary students in the Philippines preferred English for media, school-related communication, and religion but preferred Filipino for communication with friends and family (Fritz, 2011). It was asserted that children who can be offered private and tutorial lessons have better chances in learning English than those who are sent to public schools as in the case of China (Lan, 2010).

Still, the Filipino language remains the most popular. According to Vizconde’s study, teachers in high school use Filipino in teaching their lessons for the students to better understand the lesson. Popular it may be, English still remains more of an ‘official language’ than Filipino where our newspapers and even the Philippine Constitution, and educational textbooks are in English. The goal of producing individuals who are proficient in both Filipino and English has yet to be attained even at the level of higher education.

The K to 12 Program has been implemented in the Philippine educational system in 2012 where kindergarten becomes a requirement to enter primary education and also add an additional two years to secondary education. Among its features are the Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) from kindergarten to Grade 3; the emphasis on core academic areas such as Mathematics, Filipino, English, Araling Panlipunan (AP), and others; and specializations where senior high school students can choose a technical-vocational course or sports and arts track (IBON Foundation, 2012). This policy was based on the results of local and international studies which reports that the usage of the mother tongue inside the classroom during early years of a child’s schooling produces better and faster learners who can easily adapt to second (Filipino) and third (English) language (Rappler, 2012).

The mother tongue used pertains to the 12 major dialects spoken in the country namely Tagalog, Kapampangan, Pangasinense, Iloilo, Bokol, Cebuano, Hiligaunon, Waray, Tausug, Maguindanao, Meranao and Chabakano. The MTB-MLE will be implemented in two modules: 1) as a

learning/subject area; and 2) as a medium of instructions. It will be used for the development of reading and speaking for grades 1 to 3. As a medium of instructions, the mother tongue will be used in all learning areas from kindergarten to Grade 3 except in teaching English and Filipino (Rappler, 2012).

### 2.3. Attitude Towards English, Filipino and Vernacular

According to Constantino (1971), “The national language is not only a tool for social communication; it is a basic tool for the assertion and preservation of the national identity” and it is also a component of independence.

The Tagalog vocabulary is 60 percent cognate with Pampango, 48 percent with Cebuano, 47 percent with Hiligaynon, 40 percent with Bicolano and 31 percent with Ilocano (Khan, 2006).

Language attitude is valuable in determining the language to be used as a medium of instruction. Filipino college students favor the use of English. This was because students are motivated to use it causing to be easily identifying themselves with it and the American culture. Teachers and college students also find the usage of English more comfortable in explaining concepts and ideas. Teachers also noted that English is an “intellectualized language (Vizconde, 2006).”

James Soriano said in his column published in Philippine Daily Inquirer, “English is the language of learning. I’ve known this since before I could go to school.” All his learning materials were in English. He also admitted to complain about the subject Filipino where he said it was “like a chore,” “It was the language we used to speak to the people who washed our dishes,” “the language of the streets.” Filipino “might have the capacity to be the language of learning, but it is not the language of the learned” (Philippine Daily Inquirer, online)

Wilfredo Villacorta, chairperson of the human resources committee of the 1987 Philippine Constitution, said that though some Cebuanos have a bad mentality over the Filipino language, it is still respected by the lower members of the hierarchy in Cebu. They still pick up certain vocabularies in mass media and books they have read, that is why Filipino is the language of the mass media.

Still, some Cebuanos argue that they do not like Filipino and would rather use English than the said language. Some writers also said that only house helpers from Cebu who feel stellar after working in Manila speak Filipino (Khan, 2006).

Filipinos may also have the tendency to have colonial mentality where the natives look too high on foreign culture and too low on their own and to others.

Colonial mentality may also be a factor in influencing a person’s preference and attitude towards a language. Colonial mentality is also a form of internal oppression where one thinks of his or her own culture or ethnicity as inferior to the other. One also tend to reject something Filipino and preference over foreign or western ones and mimic the colonizers’ culture (Garbones, 2012).

The colonial mentality among Filipinos has two dimensions: 1) lack of patriotism or having not much

appreciation of the Country; and 2) preferring foreign things over our local ones. Filipinos have grown to incorporating anything foreign with themselves—a trait that is not Filipino. This habit weakens a person’s nationalism and makes them become readily available to anything foreign.

Globalization also contributes to the phenomenon where it aims to unify all countries from transnational progress and international affairs. Opening more gates for other countries also contribute to the Filipinos’ susceptibility to western influences.

In effect, it hampers Philippine progress. Filipinos would want to patronize foreign and western products than local ones, perceiving the former as much more superior. With weak patronage, the Filipino product economy could collapse. Even our entertainment industry, from movies to books, is filled with foreign materials.

However, in the latter part of Soriano’s article, the writer did admit of the Filipino languages’ uniqueness. He said that having Filipino to be foreign to him made him smelling worse “than a *malansang isda*.” He said that education made English his mother language. Still, there are words that only the Filipino language or vernacular can capture (Philippine Daily Inquirer, online). For example is the word *kapwa* which, when translated to English, means “other”. However, *kapwa* has the essence of union of the self and of others, not just “others.” Other words that Soriano identified are *bayanihan*, *tagay*, and *kilig* (Gabornes, 2012).

“I don’t agree that if you don’t write in Tagalog, you’re not nationalistic. I admit that nationalism reflects the national language, but it is still not proven that Tagalog is the real national language,” said Cirilo Bautista, a professor of English. He also believes that language should not be legislated but be a product of national development. However, there are also claims that some languages were forgotten because it was not imposed to be used by a group of people. Still, he said that whatever declared national language we have is not important because a writer’s concern is only on the language in which he can best express himself (Khan, 2006).

### 2.4. The Campus Press

Even the language preference manifests in the language used in the media and in the student paper.

The first publication on newspaper in the Philippines was given birth in the form of *Del Suprerior Gobierno* even before the Americans formally had theirs (Ramirez 3). The press has the following scope: 1) to write, 2) to broadcast, like in radios or televisions by reporting news or giving commentaries, 3) reporting live on the scene (Matienzo and Matienzo, 2007).

The history of campus journalism in the Philippines started when the University of Santo Tomas published *El Liliptiense* in 1890. However, Oscar Manalo, Narciso Matienzo, and Virgilio Monteloyola in *Ang Pamahayagan* (1985) argued that the history of campus journalism in the country started when the University of the Philippines

published *The College Folio*, now *The Philippine Collegian*, in 1910. They also added that *The Torch* of the Philippine Normal University, *The Guidon* of the Ateneo de Manila University, and *The Varsitarian* of the University of Santo Tomas were also published two years later. The first school paper in Manila public high schools and incidentally in the country was born in the school year 1911-1912. This was *The Coconut* of the old Manila High School (now Araullo High School). A mimeographed paper, it was edited by Carlos P. Romulo and is recognized as the oldest school publication (Bakisan, 2013).

The campus press is entitled the same independence and freedom as any professional newspaper. Since it also has the same responsibilities and duties for objectivity, it must also have access to information. A newspaper's primary goal is designed primarily to provide news to the community it serves, where, in the academe's context, is the studentry. Ordinarily, it is the university community's only source at its disposal. It has to cover development regarding the University; stimulate a student's and the university community's social conscience, make students understand; and get comments from the audience. In publishing these, the paper can make appeals to the university administration. These will pave steps to solving societal and university problems. The student press first presents materials to the public first where people concerned and in authority can study and analyze the matters further. However, high standards for writing and presentation as well as effective coverage should be done. Professors and university officials should also cooperate with the publication. Therefore, it must be free from any forms of censorship or external interference or regulations by the university or any governmental authorities (Ramirez, 1989).

Ramirez stated that the role the student newspaper plays varies on the formation of their environment. Of the large number of existing school newspapers, some of them seem to be rather purposeless in conception because of the anemic role they play in the society. At a certain extent, the school press has a role of promoting cooperation within a university for a better community and world order.

He also said that student journalists must also observe ethics such as the pursuance of unbiased and accurate reports, to reveal his or her identity as a representative of the press when gathering data intended for publication, to apologize in print for any mistake in information published, and to respect confidences in sources.

Matienzo and Matienzo stated that is important for schools to have newspapers written in Filipino. There should be school newspapers with students as staffers in as early as elementary education for the students to develop their potentials and have experiences in publishing and campus journalism. Still, these newspapers must have a strong and profound reason for being.

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1. Research Design

This study employed the mixed methods design, particularly the sequential explanatory design. According to Creswell (2009), it is "characterized by the collection and analysis of quantitative data in a first phase of research followed by the collection and analysis of qualitative data in a second phase that builds on the results of the initial quantitative results" (p. 211). In the first phase, a survey questionnaire was distributed to the student journalists, and in the second phase, in-depth interviews were done with some select participants.

#### 3.2. Research Setting

The study was conducted in Mindanao State University-Marawi in the Islamic City of Marawi, Lanao del Sur.

The campus has a 15,000 student population in the academic year 2013-2014, according to MSU-Marawi's Information Systems Department and it is the melting pot of students from the MINSUPALA or Mindanao, Sulu, Palawan region. These students have diverse ethnic tribe origins, tongues and religions.

MSU was conceived by a mandate to integrate the MINSUPALA region and bring peace to Mindanao through Senator Domocao Alonto's proposal to the senate, according to the incumbent president Dr. Macapado A. Muslim. Its first president is the late Dr. Antonio Isidro. Presently, it has 11 campuses all over Mindanao.

MSU-Marawi has 16 colleges where 15 have a student college publication each namely the *Sawto Assalam* of King Faisal Center for Islamic, Asian and Arabic Studies (KFCIAAS), *Daluyong* of College of Fisheries (COF), *The Conservator* of College of Forestry and Environmental Studies (CFES), *The Goblet* of College of Hotel and Restaurant Management (CHARM), *The Cursor* of College of Information Technology (CIT), *The Lamp* of College of Health Sciences (CHS), *Scientia* of College of Natural Sciences and Mathematics (CNSM), *Bidlisiw* of College of Social Sciences and Humanities (CSSH), *Sarimanok* of College of Public Affairs (CPA), *Shekel* of College of Business Administration and Accountancy (CBAA), *The Ember* of College of Education (CED), *Pedon* of College of Agriculture (COA), *Law Gazette* of College of Law, *Bangkaw* of College of Sports, Physical Education, and Recreation (CSPEAR) and *Blueprint* of College of Engineering (COE). The University's official student publication is *The Mindanao Varsitarian*.

#### 3.3. Research Subjects

Respondents of the study were all the willing and available writers and editorial board members who are part of the CEGP. These publications were organized during the first semester of academic year 2013-2014 and continued to function until the second semester.

Out of the 100 survey questionnaires that were distributed,

only 58 were returned to the researcher, comprising 52% of the target population, where there were 111 editorial board members from the nine target publications. From 20% of the respondents, the researcher randomly chose 12 respondents for the follow-up interview.

A purposive sampling method was done where only the Editors-in-Chief, Associate Editors, Managing Editors, Associate Managing Editors, Circulation Managers, section editors, and staff writers from nine publications were surveyed. Of the more than 100 questionnaires distributed to the said respondents, 58 were returned to the researcher. A follow-up personal interview was also conducted for further study and elaboration of the popular answers. Twenty percent (20%) of the said number, totaling to 12, were randomly chosen to be interviewed.

### 3.4. Research Instrument

The self-made survey questionnaire was used as primary research instrument. Close-ended questions and attitude-determining questions composed the questionnaire. Questions were adapted from the information from the related literature of this study about language policies in schools and attitude towards the languages. The second part of the survey questionnaire was coded, categorizing them into specific questions to determine the respondents' attitude towards the use of Filipino, English, and the vernacular. There were eight (8) questions to measure their positive and negative attitude, composing five (5) positive statements and three (3) negative statements.

As soon as pilot-testing was done and changes incorporated, the questionnaire was then distributed to the respondents from the nine (9) target publications. The tallying and interpretation of data followed after retrieving the questionnaires. After analyzing the results, the researcher randomly chose 20% of the respondents for the personal interview. An interview schedule was then used

## 4. Results and Discussion

The data presented are the answers to the survey questionnaires by 58 respondents out of 111 student journalists from nine (9) target publications in MSU-Marawi. After the survey, 20% or 12 were interviewed.

Table 1 below shows the language of student journalists in MSU-Marawi prefer in writing their articles:

Table 1. The Preferred Language of Student Journalists.

Medium	Frequency	Percent (%)
English	54	93.103 %
Filipino	4	6.896 %
Vernacular	0	0 %
Total	58	100 %

The table above shows that most of the student journalists prefer the use of English in writing their articles, comprising 93.10% of the respondents and only four chose Filipino

comprising 6.8%. None answered for the use of vernacular.

### 4.1. Perceptions on the Use of the English Language

From the 58 respondents who were surveyed, 12 were interviewed on their perceptions about the English language and their reasons for their preference for the language.

The news editor of *Bidlisiw* of the College of Social Sciences and Humanities and *Mindanao Varsitarian*, the official student publication of MSU-Marawi said:

*"For me, it's a very rich language. It's dynamic and many could understand it because, for me, it is considered as the universal language. It is used world-wide or is the most commonly used media,"*

He opines that English is understood by more people. A staff writer of *Umalohokan*, laboratory publication of ComStud 102 (News Writing), also said that more people have access to English, compared to Filipino that is only understood by Filipinos only, and vernacular, also only by those who understand the language. She added *"alam kasi ng ibang tao kahit hindi nakapag-aral, may nalalaman sila sa English, (People know English. Even the uneducated ones understand it)."*

The editor-in-chief of *The Ember*, the student publication of College of Education, further commented about English:

*"English is a very important language to learn because aside from the fact that it is the lingua franca of the world; you can't go to other countries or you can't even understand people coming from foreign lands without learning English."*

The editor-in-chief of *Shekel* perceives English to be formal. He also said that English is commonly used, therefore it makes communicating easier.

As what Vizonde (2006) said, English is also highly esteemed. The editor-in-chief of *Shekel* also commented that "English is the language of the learned." The editor-in-chief of *Umalohokan* said:

*"Aside from the fact na comfortable ako using it, we still have this kind of mentality na parang when you're good at English, you're like superior and all. And whether I like it or not, parang yun din ang naft-feel ko."*

Perception for English remain good and high for deeming it very dynamic and rich and being a necessity to communicate with more people and even to the world. People who are good with using English are also deemed to be superior.

### 4.2. Reasons for Preferring English

Below are the perception of the English language by the student journalists in MSU-Marawi.

Being used to writing in English can be credited from the trainings and lessons in the primary school years in English and in using the language.

The editor-in-chief of *The Ember* said:

*"I have been learning [English] since grade one. And It is also the content area of my teaching profession. At some point, I am taking confidence out of my educational experience, in my whole academic life."*

The opinion editor of Daluyong said he prefers English because he can easily make out words fitting for his articles than when using Filipino. He also said that preference depends on which medium a person can best express his thoughts.

The associate editor of Bidlisiw said that she can write articles using Filipino, but that she opts to write in English for now because the articles outputs from their classes are required to be written in English, that is why she uses English now “for academic purposes.”

The news editor of The Lamp, however, said that even though she primarily uses Filipino in her write-ups, she is still confident of her usage of English in writing articles.

However, there are student journalists who prefer English because they are not good with writing using the other two languages. The news editor of Bidlisiw said:

“I am well-versed in English compared to other languages. Because for example, I am not that good in writing articles in Filipino [and] vernacular. I am just used to writing using English.”

There are also perceptions about Filipino being a difficult language to write with. The feature editor of Sawto Assalam said:

“I’m used [to] using English in writing and mas nosebleed ang Tagalog. Swear... Because it (English) is used as a medium of instructions, so it’s more understandable. Unlike Filipino [where only] selected subjects [use] this language.”

The associate editor of Bidlisiw admitted that though she still commits basic mistakes in writing in English like grammar and the usage of tenses, she still prefers English.

Another reason for the preference of English among student journalists is the ability to better express themselves using the said medium. The editor-in-chief of Shekel prefers English because:

“feel ko kasi doon ko napapahayag ang sariliko. feel ko na (tuwing) ginagamit ko ang English na language is, parang ibang tao ako. (I feel that I can better express myself using the medium. I feel like I’m a different person whenever I use English).”

He also said that in choosing a medium to write an article, the writer must consider if he or she can express his thoughts well using the medium and that if his or her target audience will understand the message well.

Filipino college students favor the use of English, according to a study by Vizconde (2006). This was because students are motivated to use it causing to be easily identifying themselves with it and the American culture. Teachers and college students find the usage of English more comfortable in explaining concepts and ideas. Teachers also noted that English is an “intellectualized language and a valuable tool to source information technology” [27].

The first language of a person is vernacular (IBON Foundation, 2012), but most of the student journalists still prefer the use of English, a second language, in their write-ups because of comfortability brought about by their trainings and medium of instructions in their primary and secondary years, of being able to express themselves well

using the medium, and for not being good with the usage of other languages. This may be credited to the trainings and materials used in school and at home that are mostly in English.

The most common answer for preferring the use of English is (a) comfort in using the language, (b) being able to effectively express themselves using the language and construct sentences fit for the message they want to write about; (c) trainings in and since their primary years to read and write using it; (d) academic outputs to be submitted in class that are required to be written in that language; and (d) for perceiving that they are not good in writing using Filipino and other languages.

### 4.3. On the Use of Filipino

The news editor of The Lamp, prefers the use of Filipino, implying that she is more comfortable writing using Filipino and better delivers her message through the said medium.

She added that her articles written in Filipino better communicates and reaches the masses. Her write-ups vary from the degree of depth of the words she uses.

She also said that Filipino should further be propagated because many are already forgetting its usage and that articles written in Filipino is something ‘new’ to the eyes of the masses.

“Namamangha ang iba kasi parang mas sanay sila sa English ngayon. Tapos feedback, ok lang naman. Naiintindihan naman nila (article) (Others are amazed because most of them are used with English today. The feedbacks are OK. They said they can still understand my articles).”

There are student journalists who prefer to use English more but still writes articles using Filipino.

The associate editor of Bidlisiw said that she feels spontaneous in writing in Filipino and only uses simple Filipino words in her write-ups, that is why she is confident that her readers understand her outputs. The news editor of Bidlisiw, even though he prefers English, still deem Filipino and the vernacular as good.

The editor-in-chief of Umalohokan recently learned to appreciate Filipino. He said:

“When I was in high school, hindi ako masyado bumibilib sa mga nagsusulat in Filipino. Pero right now, I realized na talagang bumibilib na ko ngayon sa gumagamit ng Filipino kasi I myself eh nahihirapan (Those who wrote in Filipino did not really amaze me before. But right now, I realized that I am astounded by those who use it because I myself am having a hard time writing in Filipino).”

A staff writer of Mindanao Varsitarian prefers the use of English but still deem the Filipino language as poetic and romantic. As of the moment, he said he is currently studying deep and uncommon Filipino words and is trying to learn to use them. He said:

“Yung mother language natin, maganda naman talaga siya. Yun nga ang sinabi ko, poetic atsaka romantic siya pakinggan. Atsaka, mas effective siya siguro in terms of communicating, (Our mother language is really beautiful, it

is poetic and romantic to listen to. It's also more effective for communicating)."

The editor-in-chief of *The Ember* said that even though English is his current course and uses English in his researches and academic papers, he also writes using Filipino and once had an article published in their paper that is written in Filipino.

However, because of the trends in writing and in order to cope with what the audience might want or how a story is better presented using a medium, writers may also change their medium used.

The health news editor of *The Lamp* and associate editor of Mindanao Varsitarian, said she used to write in a Filipino high school publication but suddenly shifted medium preference to English now that she is in college. She also said:

"I really felt good at that time (highschool). I can write better in Filipino at that time than in English. I was even insecure at that time with my English. I just didn't know what happened. I think I was forced to use English when I went to college."

Some writers still would not prefer to write using Filipino because of the lack of mastery using the medium, deeming it hard to write using the language.

The feature editor of *Sawto Assalam* said that it is harder to write articles using Filipino remarking that it is hard to master. She also thinks that there are only a few subjects that Filipino is used.

The opinion editor of *Daluyong* said there are more chances to commit grammatical errors when writing in Filipino than in English. This may be because of the lack of mastery and training to use Filipino.

Another staff writer of Mindanao Varsitarian said she prefers English in writing articles and only uses Filipino in other types of write-ups such as writing lampoon and fictions, saying that English is easier to use than Filipino when writing articles, a kind of formal writing. She said that writing in Filipino was fun and funny.

The associate editor of *Shekel*, said he has never written a formal article yet in Filipino but only writes Taglish-written blog posts. He said

"Ok naman ang experience ko sa pagsusulat (in Filipino). Na parang natatanggalan (ako) ng tinik when I write. But when I use English, mas maganda sa feeling compared to other languages. I don't know why, pero yun yung feeling ko eh."

Still, there are student journalists who deem that English should be more prioritized to be learned and used than Filipino. The editor-in-chief of *The Ember* said:

"Filipino also is an interesting language. It is the national language and one of the official languages. But I think in terms of the goals of the government in bilingualism, Filipino should not take much of a part in teaching. I'm not saying that it should be neglected or it should be ignored but I think English should have greater time, greater focus."

Filipino and English-speaking bilingual elementary students in the Philippines preferred English for media,

school-related communication, and religion but preferred Filipino for communication with friends and family (Fritz, 2011). For the student journalists in MSU-Marawi only a few of them prefers to write articles using Filipino. Among most popular reasons for preferring so is lack of mastery using the said medium and in order to cope with how a story is best presented through the usage of a specific language.

Nonetheless, they still deem Filipino as good and interesting. Some of them still use Filipino but in other types of writing such as lampoon, fictions, and blog posts.

Some student journalists use Filipino also because of comfortability and also because it is perceived to reach more people. There are student journalists who also writes using Filipino but prefer English more. But even among those who said that they cannot write using the language, student journalists perceive Filipino as good. However, there are still perceptions of writing in Filipino as hard, leading to a propensity to commit more errors in writing using it. Others would not use Filipino to write formal articles but in other types of write-ups only.

This may imply that there is a lack of training for usage and mastery of Filipino in schools where only a few are able to be trained. The schools may be too focused on teaching and training their students only in English.

#### ***4.4. In Writing Using Vernacular***

All of the student journalists who responded for this study have never tried writing articles in vernacular before. They only consider the vernacular only good for speaking.

The editor-in-chief of *The Ember* said:

"I [have] not experience writing formal articles [and] academic papers using the vernacular language."

The associate editor of *Bidlisiw* said:

"Although sayon (gamiton para) makipag-communicate, kung musulat na kay lisudan ko mugamit ug Cebuano. Storya ra pero kung mag sulat ko, dili gyud ko makasulat ug Cebuano na article, (Although it is easy to use to communicate, it's hard for me to write [articles] using Cebuano. I can only talk using it, but I really can't write using Cebuano."

A staff writer of *Umalohokan* also said that it is hard to read Bisaya text compared to the other two media. She said that there are available spelling and grammar checker programs for English, but none for Filipino nor Bisaya.

The health news editor of *The Lamp* said:

"I don't even know how to use formal vernacular [Whenever] I write [using vernacular], it turns out that at the end of the paragraph or at the end of the conclusion part, it [becomes] Taglish."

Nonetheless, most of the student journalists are interested to learn to write using vernacular. The editor-in-chief of *Shekel* said he would be willing to write Filipino or vernacular because:

"Kasi babalik yun sa point ko na mas confident ako magsulat sa lengguaheng makaka-express ako. Ma-e-express ko yung gusto kong sabihain, and maa-understand ng readers ko yung gusto ko na point ipahayag. (Because it would go



back to my reason (for preferring) that I am more confident in writing using the language I where I can better express myself with and using the language that my readers would understand what I want to say.”

The editor-in-chief of *The Ember* said that through writing using vernacular,

“I can develop my skills in writing, and I can become a versatile writer. And not only using English because I prefer it, but also to use other languages like Filipino, my vernacular language, or even Chinese, why not?”

The associate editor of *Bidlisiw* also said that writing in Bisaya is ‘chuy’ (cool) for having the element of surprise. Writing in vernacular may be “mas striking siya sa heart,” said the features editor of *Sawto Assalam*.

The news editor of *Bidlisiw* thinks that:

“For me, it takes a good writer... to be very good in using [and] writing [in Bisaya].”

The News Editor of *The Lamp* said:

“Example vernacular, mas malapit talaga sa masa, especially masa naman talaga pag nasa journalism ka... Yun naman talaga ang target audience mo, ([Vernacular] is closer to the masses, especially that you have to be so in journalism where the mass is really your target audience).”

She said that usage of vernacular will make the articles reach more people. However, this is contrary to what the staffer of *Umalohokan* said where English reaches more people, even those who are not educated.

Nonetheless, there are still those who would still not write articles using vernacular even if given the mastery. The opinion editor of *Daluyong* said he would not like to use vernacular in writing his articles because its usage is not formal. He deems vernacular as for personal writings and for speaking only. He also deem the vernacular to only be understood by only a few people, that is why he prefers English over Bisaya in writing.

Fritz (2011) said that most Filipinos use their first language to talk to friends and relatives. Student journalists in *MSU-Marawi* have never written formal write-ups using vernacular yet and only use it for talking to people. Most common reason for not writing in vernacular is also the lack of mastery to write formal articles using it. Some think that vernacular can still yield to creative write-ups and that most of the student journalists are willing to write articles using it. Some still consider it neither formal nor suitable for writing formal articles.

Vernacular is only used by most of the student journalists only for speaking. Most of them prefer English for writing articles. The respondents said that it is because they can write better and are more comfortable in delivering their message in writing using the said preferred language that by writing using vernacular, where they have difficulty.

Contrary to the popularization of Cebuano literature in Cebu as said by Khan (2006), there is a lack of training, and even appreciation, for writing using vernacular in the classrooms and at home for the student journalists in *MSU-Marawi*. Educators and parents should instill to their children the goodness of writing using vernacular and train them to be

more creative through its usage. Furthermore, writing using vernacular should further be propagated in schools and by the educational sector along with the Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) brought by the recently implemented K to 12 education.

Writing using the vernacular is difficult for the student journalists is hard because (a) lack of resources for spelling and grammar checkers, and (b) lack of knowledge on how to use the medium. However, some student journalists are willing to write using the vernacular given the mastery. Some would still not write articles in the vernacular for deeming its usage in writing as not formal.

Based on the perception of the three languages, there is still a deadlock on what language does really reach more people, since all three of the languages are perceived to be able to reach the majority.

Table 2 below shows the attitude of the student journalists towards English.

**Table 2.** *The Attitude of the Student Journalists Toward English\*.*

Statements	M	SD	Interpretation
Using English well does not always mean smart.	3.38	0.80	Strongly Agree
Using English unnecessarily is OA (over acting).	2.54	0.93	Agree
English is the language of the learned.	2.24	0.86	Disagree
English should always be used in writing articles.	2.09	0.71	Disagree
English is the most superior language.	1.98	0.92	Disagree
English is the language of the elites.	1.93	0.81	Disagree
I like English because it makes me feel like an American	1.74	0.85	Strongly Disagree
Those who cannot speak and write in English well are not smart.	1.28	0.59	Strongly Disagree

\*Scale: 1.00-1.74=Strongly Disagree

1.75-2.49=Disagree

2.50-3.24=Agree

3.25-4.00=Strongly Agree

Table 2 shows that the student journalists’ perception towards English is not too high.

They agreed that the usage of English is not the basis for a person’s intelligence or standing in the society. They also agree that English is not the language of the learned, that it is not most superior language nor is the language of the elites, that it should always be used in writing articles. Furthermore, they perceive that using English unnecessarily is bad nor will its usage make one akin to Americans.

This means that the student journalists view English not as a language that sets a person higher in the social strata, thinking that English is a language for everybody, even though most of them prefer the use of English. The findings of Vizconde (2006) about English regarded highly and making Filipinos akin to American culture is not applicable for the student journalists in *MSU-Marawi*.

By disagreeing with some of the statements in the table above

does not necessarily mean that the student journalists have a bad attitude towards English but that they only see English as not a basis to set one’s standing in the society higher.

The mean and the standard deviation were computed in order to find out the answer of the majority towards their attitude towards the languages and the margin of the most popular answers from the rest of the answers.

Table 3 below shows the attitude of the student journalists towards Filipino.

**Table 3. The Attitude of the Student Journalists Toward Filipino\*.**

Statements	M	SD	Interpretation
I have to be good in writing using Filipino.	3.32	0.65	Strongly Agree
Using Filipino in my articles is formal.	3.07	0.62	Agree
Using Filipino in my write-ups will yield to creative and well-written articles.	2.75	0.78	Agree
Using Filipino in my articles will impress the audience.	2.67	0.58	Agree
My articles will be better understood using Filipino.	2.55	0.63	Agree
Filipino is a lesser kind of language.	1.44	0.65	Strongly Disagree
Using Filipino in writing articles does not sound smart.	1.41	0.56	Strongly Disagree
Filipino is only for the poor.	1.21	0.53	Strongly Disagree

\*Scale: 1.00-1.74=Strongly Disagree  
 1.75-2.49=Disagree  
 2.50-3.24=Agree  
 3.25-4.00=Strongly Agree

Table 3 shows that the student journalists have a positive attitude towards Filipino.

The student journalists believe that though they prefer English as a language in writing, they still need to be good in writing using Filipino. Because Filipino is still a formal language, it is appropriate to be used in write-ups. They also believe that Filipino will bring about good effects in their write-ups such as creative outputs, good impressions and comprehensibility. Furthermore, they disagreed that Filipino is not a lesser kind of language, that its usage is not smart, and that it is for the poor, indicating that the respondents consider Filipino with a positive attitude. Colonial mentality in a form of looking down on Filipino is not present in the student journalists, based on the findings.

This means that the student journalists have a good attitude towards Filipino even in its usage though most of them prefer English as a language in writing their articles.

The appreciation and importance of Filipino as a language and in writing is still present for the student journalists in MSU-Marawi. But this appreciation should further be backed up with training and usage of the language.

Table 4 below shows the attitude of the student journalists towards the vernacular.

**Table 4. The Attitude of the Student Journalists Toward Vernacular\*.**

Statements	M	SD	Interpretation
Using the local dialect in writing articles is still formal.	3.22	0.69	Agree
Using my dialect in my write-ups will yield to creative and well-written articles.	2.79	0.59	Agree
I will be able to make my audience understand my articles better using my dialect.	2.77	0.76	Agree
The local dialect is a high-quality medium.	2.74	0.64	Agree
Using the dialect in my articles will impress the audience.	2.55	0.71	Agree
I do not have to write articles using my dialect.	1.96	0.73	Disagree
I do not have to be good in writing using my dialect.	1.92	0.62	Disagree
Writing using the dialect is for the poor and lower-class.	1.47	0.65	Strongly Disagree

\*Scale: 1.00-1.74=Strongly Disagree  
 1.75-2.49=Disagree  
 2.50-3.24=Agree  
 3.25-4.00=Strongly Agree

Table 4 shows that the student journalists in MSU-Marawi have a positive attitude towards vernacular as a language and for writing.

The respondents agree that the usage of vernacular in writing is still formal, that it will yield creative outputs, be understandable, is a high-quality medium, and will still impress the audience.

They also deem that they should still write articles using vernacular and that writing using the dialect is not *cheap*. Though the answer of the respondents may not be ‘strongly disagree’ as their answers for Filipino, the data still reflect a good attitude of the student journalists towards vernacular and its usage for writing.

This means that the student journalists have a good attitude towards the vernacular as a language and as a medium in writing. This positive attitude exist even though most of them prefer English as a language in writing their articles and that none of them actually use vernacular in writing..

This positive attitude towards vernacular should be backed up with the academic institution’s training for students to write using the vernacular.

## 5. Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following conclusions are drawn. Most of the journalists in MSU-Marawi prefer to use English as a language for their articles. The most common answer for preferring the use of English is the (a) comfort in using the language, (b) ability to express themselves more using the language and construct sentences fit for the message they want to write about, and (c) for perceiving that they are not good in writing using Filipino and other languages; which discards the researcher’s assumption that their preference is because of the perception that the language is formal and appropriate and that the preference was

influenced by media consumption at home. However, training in school and during the primary school years did contribute to this preference. The researcher's assumption of the student journalists' biased attitude over other languages is also disproved when the findings showed that the respondents have a positive attitude towards Filipino and the vernacular. It is also found out that the student journalists do not have colonial mentality over their preferred language. Based on the findings, the following are recommended:

- a. A content analysis on the depth of words used in Filipino articles;
- b. A further study on the perceptions towards writing in vernacular among student journalists;
- c. A study on the language preference among elementary and high school students;
- d. A content analysis of the level of vocabulary and language used by student journalists in their articles;
- e. A content analysis of the word choices used by student journalists in their write-ups;
- f. A research on the language preference of the reading audience; and
- g. A research on the perception of the students towards other world languages

## Acknowledgements

Ms. Sunio would like to thank Prof. Ma. Ninotchka Herrera, Pof. Sorhaila Latip-Yusoph, Dr. Eugene Torres, and Ms. Mary Louise Omelio for their guidance and invaluable contributions to the development of this paper.

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