

## Diglossia in the Philippines by Manuel Faelnar

*“What is scary about mainland China is that many are misled into thinking that it is a model of success. The only thing I won't dispute is that China has attained the political and economic ideals of fascism - state control through repression and business unfettered as long as it produces "wealth".*

*“If China has the "Chinese" language then the Philippines also has its Filipino. Eerily similar because both are fascist creations, Mandarin rebranded into Chinese and Tagalog rebranded as Filipino. The objective is to one day eliminate the smaller Han "dialects" as well as Tibetan and the interior languages. The only difference between the Philippines and China is that the former pretends to be democratic while the latter pretends to be egalitarian.”*

The above, is of course right, given the Jacobinist language ideology of many States including our own Constitution. But there is another way of looking at this Chinese paradigm.

Clearly, the Chinese do not like to happen to Mandarin what has happened to Tagalog and Binisaya - the development of Taglish and Bisglish - because the speakers have become diglossic, as this is called by linguistics experts. Diglossia is the state where speakers are unable to clearly express their thoughts in any language. So they frequently switch from one language to another to express themselves. They cannot do it in Binisaya completely nor in English completely (and for that matter in Tagalog completely).

Diglossia happens when children are taught in a language they do not speak at home, as is happening in the Philippines where children are taught in Tagalog and English from the first day of school in grade one up to fourth year of high school.

Ours is an elitist system benefiting only the Tagalog children in the Tagalog regions for those subjects taught in Tagalog and English-speaking children of the middle and upper classes for those subjects taught in English. The rest of Filipino children are left behind, labeled laggards and dull as they can't express themselves well in Tagalog or English, and not even in their mother tongue because they have not matured with their own mother tongue which is not taught in school. And even Tagalog children have a problem in those subjects where English is medium and English-speaking children have a problem with those subjects where Tagalog is the medium.

(Incidentally, I say Tagalog rather than Filipino because the reality is, the medium used is Tagalog as used in television, radio, and the print media - not the Filipino being developed by the Komisyon sa Wikang Filipino which, like the Katharevousa language which was discarded by the socialist government of Greece in 1976, has no native speakers. )

A solution to Bisglish is to give the child, first of all, a firm foundation in Binisaya in the early years. The mother tongue has to be used as the medium of teaching. The mother tongue also has to be taught as a subject. Later Binisaya is used as a bridge to learning other languages. This is what my

organization, 170+Talaytayan MLE promotes. It supports DepEd's D.O. 74, s. 2009 on mother tongue-based multilingual education. It is also the most efficient and effective use of the "auxiliary language of instruction" provision of Art. XIV of the 1987 Constitution.

The provincial and city governments should require that television and radio stick to the language used in the program. If it is a Cebuano language program, it should not be interspersed with Tagalog or English words except for English words which the Bisaya have been using since 1945 and have now been incorporated into the language and even Bisayanized, like bakwit for evacuate, parakyut for parachute, and many more. And of course no Tagalog borrowings.

I might add that Singapore and Malaysia have these policies. These countries have Malay, Chinese, Tamil and English TV channels. Each channel is required to stick to its language, no switching from one language to another.

Bisglish and Taglish are both symptoms of diglossia, They are nothing to be proud of. Some educators in Manila brag about Taglish. That is their business but we Bisaya should not fall into the diglossic trap.