

War of ABS-CBN Against Non-Tagalog Languages

The real enemy of our indigenous languages are the big three national television networks with their downgrading and marginalizing our non-Tagalog languages. They are killing our languages every day with their idiotic programs geared for the masses but which, unfortunately, have no redeeming social or cultural value. How do we tackle the television networks who are the real and very powerful, very influential enemies of our languages? The organization of Tagalogista academics and writers we have been so concerned about turns out to be a paper tiger. We have been focusing on the wrong enemy.

There recently was a contest between an independent Cebuano digital movie and a Tagalog-Capampangan one. The first had half the dialog delivered in a state of constipation while the other one had the full blessing of ABS-CBN. Guess which one won?

Moving to another setting, there was a fire raging and someone who wanted to be the savior of the scene volunteered that he would put it out by spitting directly on it. The fire did not cooperate and the young man left with his mustache gone. Another jumped right in and peed into the fire. Let's just say that he had no more pubes after that. The third person went around the blaze and saw an arsonist feeding kerosene to the fire. He picked up the biggest stick he could find and whacked the arsonist in the head.

It is up to us how we are going to put out the fire consuming our non-Tagalog languages. I have no doubt that the participants of the 2011 Cebuano language conference finished the event with a morale-lifting sense of accomplishment. I am equally certain that nearly all of them switched on the TV set when they reached home and enjoyed their nightly fill of Tagalog ABS-CBN. Aside from DILA diehards in attendance, I do not have the slightest idea who else did not do this.

The health of language is ultimately determined by official policy of the state and from support and encouragement thereby, business takes the cue. So how can local languages compete with a bigger entity in media that is national in scope? This is no more than wishful thinking. No amount of film and literature using the local language can ever compete with the Tagalog national language because it is not a level playing field.

We can use all the temporary solutions until kingdom come but the gist of the matter is until the law says your local language is required with whatever official language there is, nothing that we do that will amount to anything in the long run. It will only make us feel better for a short while.

A case that should be studied in reference to local language death is the Navajo language. The market placement of the prevalent U.S. language, English, followed by Spanish because of huge Latino immigration, has been instrumental in the Navajo language's slow demise from disuse even in its own turf.

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Manny, Benjie & Bangkaw