

LITERACY, DECONTEXTUALIZED THOUGHT, AND THE INTELLECTUALIZATION OF LANGUAGE*

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1. INTRODUCTION

One of the most intriguing issues related to the study of language is the relationship between language and thought. Conjectures regarding this issue come in big and small packages, and have touched on specific and general features of language as they relate to specific and general features of thought. One of the most exciting sub-fields of study within this area is the relationship between literacy and thought. In this paper, I will attempt to contribute to the growing discourse in the field of literacy and thought by going back to some data I have regarding specific types of information-processing components among literate adults in selected Philippine communities. I shall reinterpret these data in light of some recent views about how literacy relates to different dimensions of thinking. In doing so, I will attempt to describe a larger framework for understanding the nature of literacy and of its effects on how people think. Finally, I will relate these issues to the intellectualization of the Filipino language.

2. THE LITERACY HYPOTHESIS: CONJECTURE, REFUTATION, AND REVISION

Recent scholarship regarding the relationship between literacy and thinking can be traced to the 1963 work of Goody and Watt in which they suggested that the Greek invention of logic was an outgrowth of the invention of a writing alphabet. According to Goody and Watt (see also Goody 1977), the writing system created permanent representations of speech and ideas. This permanent representation "objectified" speech and allowed people to reflect on the linguistic and logical properties of their utterances, and thus recognize the relationships among the different propositions. Thus, logic was born out of the invention of the writing system. According to Goody and Watt, readers are afforded better opportunities to reflect, analyze, and explore ideas compared to speakers. Literacy was thus conceived as being a tool for developing the highest and most abstract levels of thought and rationality.

I shall refer to this proposition regarding the effects of literacy on thinking as the *literacy hypothesis*. Other scholars of language and cognition soon took up the literacy hypothesis and many other corollary propositions were proposed. For example, Bruner and Olson (1977-1978, Bruner 1966) suggested that written language is a tool that people can use to process information about themselves and their environment. They called literacy a "cultural amplifier" that expands people's power to think. One specific means by which literacy affects thinking is by allowing people to achieve precision of reference, without regard to characteristics of the addressee. Another effect relates to the ability to construct reality independent of concrete and ordinary experience. Consistent with Goody and Watt's assertion, this level of reality construction is related to the plane of intralinguistic logic.

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Greenfield (1972) effectively articulated the gist of the literacy hypothesis when she argued that oral language was context dependent; it is heavily dependent on cues and information provided by the immediate physical and social environment. On the other hand, written language or literacy requires that one's meanings and/or intentions are made clear, independent of immediate and concrete references. Hence, the mode of information processing using written language is supposed to be more abstract and decontextualized, but that for oral language is less abstract and more context-dependent.

The literacy hypothesis was certainly provocative, so much so that many literacy development programs underscore the supposed effect of literacy on developing higher abstract thinking processes in individuals. However, there is one important problem with the literacy hypothesis; the problem is that there is no convincing empirical evidence to support the literacy hypothesis.

The most important work refuting the literacy hypothesis comes from the studies of Scribner and Cole (1973, 1978, 1981) among the Vai of Liberia. In their study, Scribner and Cole first pointed out that many of the studies purporting to provide evidence for the literacy hypothesis involved comparisons of schooled literates with unschooled illiterates. This raises the possibility that the effects of literacy on thought were actually effects of schooling. So to rule out this possibility, they studied the thinking processes of three groups of subjects: adults who were schooled and literate in English, adults who were unschooled but literate in Vai, and adults who were neither schooled nor literate in Vai. In brief, Scribner and Cole found no effect of being literate in Vai on cognitive performance, but being schooled had very marked effects on the same. Hence, it seems that the supposed effects of literacy on thinking were actually effects of formal schooling.

Scribner and Cole also suggested that the cognitive benefits of literacy are probably functionally specific to the range of cognitive tasks used in the literacy activities in a community. In relation to this point, many present literacy researchers conceive of literacy as a form of practice that is functionally related to the activities of a community or a culture (see e.g., Bernardo 1998; Cole & Griffin 1980; Doronila 1996; Feldman 1991; Heath 1983; Narasimhan 1991; Scribner & Cole 1978, 1981; Street 1984). At present, whatever effects of literacy there may be on thinking are linked to an analysis of the nature of cognitive processing associated with literacy practices or activities.

Within this broad conceptual framework for understanding literacy practice, new versions of the literacy hypothesis were born. These new versions of the literacy hypothesis define the effects of literacy on thought in more specific (i.e., narrower) and functional terms. One such version relates literacy with metalinguistic ability (Olson 1996). Metalinguistic ability refers to the ability to reflect on the language one uses. Mattingly (1972) asserted that if the oral language skills of speaking and listening are the primary linguistic abilities, reading relies upon the reader's awareness of those primary abilities. In a related line, Herriman (1986) underscored the possibility that in literacy activities of reading and writing, language can become the object of reflection and discussion. He wrote:

Metalinguistic awareness may be related to the attainment of literacy, via its emphasis on the kind of attention that can be given to the construction and comprehension of written language. The process of expository prose writing involves constantly attending to the syntax and semantics of language. The choice of words and grammatical constructions, especially in relation to details such as tense, mood, and aspect of the verb, is important to conveying the precise intention of the writer. (Herriman 1986:167)

Therefore, metalinguistic ability is a possible product of literate activities, although metalinguistic ability need not be a prerequisite of literacy.

Olson (1991) makes a finer distinction between writing as a metalinguistic form and oral metalanguage. Consistent with Herriman's and Mattingly's claims, Olson asserts that writing is "by its very nature a metalinguistic activity" (p. 260). Writing is more than a simple recording of oral language, it is representation of the oral language. The representation selects which aspects of the oral language to reflect, emphasize, or delete. The activity requires the writer to reflect on the oral language in order to produce the written text.

But beyond the metalinguistic representation involved in writing (and reading), Olson (1991) also suggests that there is an oral metalanguage that takes the aspects of utterances and texts as its object. In other words, the oral metalanguage refers to one's awareness about linguistic forms, whether these are oral or written. Oral metalanguage makes linguistic structures the object of discourse and reflection. However, I wish to underscore that the concept of oral metalanguage as Olson describes it is not restricted to literacy practices, as there are ways of "fixing" linguistic structures both in oral and literate activities (Feldman 1991; Narasimhan 1991). Moreover, it seems that oral metalanguage is not a prerequisite of metalinguistic representation in literacy practice. That is, one can reflect on oral language for the purpose of having to write some thought, without having to refer to an oral metalanguage. Olson uses the following example: "For a writer to use 'for you and me' over 'for you and I', he or she need not be in possession of the oral metalanguage used for describing prepositional phrases...the oral metalanguage may be useful for formalizing and explicating the understanding...But for the writer it is sufficient that it be represented in the script" (p.261).

Although I have an appreciation for Olson's notion of oral metalanguage, it sounds to me that his conception of it comes very close to an explicit knowledge of grammar (but see Feldman 1991). If this is so, oral metalanguage may be significant primarily for language teachers but may not have a broad theoretical significance. However, I see a theoretically broader and more interesting version of Olson's concept of oral metalanguage in Narasimhan's concept of "literate-ness". Narasimhan writes, "Literate-ness is characterized by the kinds (forms) of reflective processes deployed in one's interaction with the world, the inner world as well as the outer one" (p. 185). Literate-ness seems to be a theoretically broader conception, as it seems to encompass reflections about the external world, about oral and written language, and about any representation of the world. And although Olson's theoretical account is more finely delineated, Narasimhan's proposition provides a more integral framework within which to see how the different forms of awareness relate to each other by underscoring the importance of the underpinning process of reflection.

Both literate and oral language can be objects of discourse in both Olson's metalanguage and Narasimhan's literate-ness. However, more and more writers are of the opinion that literacy affords more elaborate and extensive forms of both processes compared to oracy practices. For example, Olson states:

Language is used for representing the world; it makes it possible to reflect on, to become aware of, the world. Writing is used for representing language; it makes it possible to reflect on, to become aware of, language. Here is where reading and writing have their role in thought. In dealing with written language...one is simultaneously aware of two things, the world and the language. (Olson 1991:265)

Consider the following example that I adopted from Olson. When asked the question, "Is the earth flat?", the discourse is about the earth. When asked the question, "Is it true that the earth is flat?", the discourse is no longer just about the earth, it is also about the sentence. Answering the question becomes a metalinguistic judgment, a judgment not only about the world, but also about a linguistic structure.

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Olson also asserted that writing in literate cultures seems to make use of metalinguistic concepts more extensively than speaking. He cited the study of Tannen (1987, in Olson 1991) on the use of speech-act verbs among children. She found that in oral reporting, children used only the verbs "says", "goes", "likes", or no speech-act verb at all. But when writing, the same children used a wide variety of speech-act verbs such as "insisted", "exclaimed", "shrieked", among others. It seems that even for children writing allows them to make use of metalinguistic concepts more often than when they are speaking.

In a similar line of reasoning, Narasimhan argues that the spatial representation underlying writing is more effective in supporting reflective thinking compared to oracy practices because these representations are decontextualized and affect delinked. He further wrote that:

While being spatial, decontextualized, and affect delinked, it [writing] is also able to reproduce the discursive nature of speech. In other words, it can help ratiocination and generate a reasoned discourse. Images by themselves cannot accomplish this. (Narasimhan 1991:189)

It is in this present form that the literacy hypothesis exists. Literacy practices seem to allow for the development of certain types of thinking processes (in particular, decontextualized thought, metalinguistic awareness, literateness, or oral metalanguage) compared to oracy practices. No longer is it asserted that literacy in and of itself brings about global, abstract, rational thinking. Instead it is asserted that features of the literacy practices and the nature of the representations these give rise to *may* allow literate individuals to achieve certain levels of reflection as regards objects of the world and the objects of language.

3. LITERACY AND THE MIND: REVISITING THE DATA AND REINTERPRETING THE FINDINGS

The book *Literacy and the Mind* (Bernardo 1998) is my own contribution to the discourse on literacy and thought. The book describes the results of a study on the information-processing capabilities of illiterate and literate adults in five Philippine communities. (The five communities are: Loob-Bunga, Zambales; Kiangon, Ifugao; Payatas, Quezon City; Irosin, Sorsogon; and Cardona, Rizal.) The results of the study clearly argued against the original literacy hypothesis and fell comfortably within the functionalist interpretations of how literacy practices may influence features of specific information-processing abilities.

One of the more interesting aspects of the results relates to the differences in information-processing performance across communities that have integrated literacy practices in different degrees. It seemed that the difference in the distribution and nature of literacy practices across communities had a stronger influence on the cognitive processes of the adults in the study compared to literacy *per se*. In the book, I argued that literacy affected thought by altering the nature of the community activities, which then required that all those who engage in these community activities engage in different forms of thought. Hence, within a community, literacy itself will not make much of a difference, since people in that community whether literate or not have to engage in the same activities. However, as communities may have integrated literacy practices in different ways, it was reasonable to expect that cognitive performance across communities should vary.

The differences in cognitive performance documented in the study were determined using distinctions defined in the conventional discourse on the literacy hypothesis. For example, performances in deductive reasoning tasks were analyzed in terms of whether they

followed a logical form or an empirical form. However, the same data could be reanalyzed using new categories suggested by the new versions of the literacy hypothesis. In this section, I will reanalyze the data on deductive reasoning in terms of whether the underlying reasoning process indicates contextualized or decontextualized thinking.

In the deductive reasoning component of the study, the adult participants were given nine verbal deductive reasoning tasks. All the reasoning tasks were in story form and followed a simple syllogistic form. Three of the nine problems related to situations in a fishing environment, three to situations in a farming environment, and the rest to situations in an urban setting. All the stories ended with a question answerable by yes or no. The adult respondents were asked to answer the question and explain their answer. (Those interested in details of the respondents and the method may refer to Bernardo 1998.)

For this reanalysis, the respondents' answers were first coded in terms of whether they seemed to follow a contextual mode of thinking. The following are examples of responses under this category.

For the item, *Sagana ang tabako sa Norte. Ang Ilokos ay nasa Norte. May tabako ba na tanim doon?* (Tobacco is grown abundantly in the North. Ilocos is in the North. Is tobacco grown in Ilocos?)

From Anselmo, 39, literate scavenger from Payatas, Quezon City:

"Meron dahil yung kapatid ng asawa ko nagtatanim ng tabako, may kubo sila, doon niluluto." (There is because my wife's sibling plants tobacco, they have a hut where they smoke or dry the tobacco.)

From Antonio, 64, literate fisherman from Cardona, Rizal:

"Komo't kami'y hindi nagpupunta ryan, ang hirap sagutin." (Since we have not been there, it is difficult to say.)

For the item, *Parating may traffic kapag baha. Tuwing tag-ulan, bumabaha sa Maynila. Nagkakaroon ba ng traffic sa Maynila tuwing tag-ulan?* (There is always heavy traffic when it floods. There are floods in Manila whenever it rains. Is there heavy traffic in Manila when it rains?)

From Leonora, 54, literate, housewife from Cardona, Rizal:

"Naku palagay ko. Yung aking anak ay dumating dito hatinggabi na sa trapik." (Oh, I think so. My child arrived here at around midnight because of heavy traffic.)

From Juan, 38, literate, fisherman from Cardona, Rizal:

"Naku, tinanong mo pa! Kahit nga hindi baha may trapik." (You had to ask! There's heavy traffic even when there are no floods.)

From Rommel, 44, literate, fisherman from Cardona, Rizal:

"Hindi lang naman baha ang rason doon. Makitid ang daan, walang disiplina ang mga drayber, sobra na ang mga sasakyan." (Floods are not the only reason for heavy traffic. The roads are narrow, drivers do not have discipline, there are too many vehicles.)

For the item, *Sa Barangay Sta. Ana, hindi nakakahuli ng isda tuwing panahon ng habagat. Ang buwan ng Oktubre ay panahon ng habagat. May nahuhuli bang isda sa Sta. Ana kapag Oktubre?* (In Barangay Sta. Ana, there can be no fishing activity when there are strong winds. There are strong winds in the month of October. Can there be fishing activity in Sta. Ana in October?)

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From Ines, 43, literate housewife from Irosin, Sorsogon:

"Sta. Ana? Saan yung Sta. Ana? Sa Pampanga? Napapadaan lang ako doon, pero hindi ko alam yung mga buhay-buhay nila. (Sta. Ana? Where is that? Is it in Pampanga? I pass there occasionally, but I do not know about their way of life there.)"

In all the above responses the respondent seems to have been answering the question based on actual contextual information they know. In cases where such contextual information was absent, the respondents declined answering the question.

On the other hand, some responses seemed to be based on a consideration of the information provided in the statements independent of the material or actual realities pertinent to the item. These responses were coded as decontextualized responses. The following are examples of such responses.

For the item, *"Maunlad ang mga tao na nakakapagtayo ng sariling negosyo. Sa Baryo San Roque, walang nakakapagtayo ng negosyo. Maunlad ba ang mga taga-San Roque? (Communities that have many businesses are progressive. There are no businesses in Barrio San Roque. Is Barrio San Roque progressive?)"*

From Carlito, 55, literate, fisherman from Cardona, Rizal:

"Hindi dahil walang nakakapagnegosyo." (No because no one has been able to start a business.)

From Ines, 43, literate, housewife from Irosin, Sorsogon:

"Kung walang negosyong natatayo sa San Roque, kahit hindi ko nakikita, palagay ko hindi maunlad." (If there are no businesses that have been started in San Roque, even if I have not actually seen it, I suppose that they are not progressive.)

For the item, *Ang tilapia ay nabubuhay sa tubig-tabang. Ang lawa ng San Marcos ay tubig-alat. May tilapia ba sa lawa ng San Mateo? (Tilapia grows in fresh water. San Marcos is a salt-water body. Is there tilapia growing in San Marcos?)*

From Joey, 41, illiterate, scavenger from Payatas, Quezon City:

"Tilapia ay nabubuhay sa tabang. Kung merong alat, hindi puwede." (Tilapia only lives in fresh water. It cannot live in salt-water.)

Some of the responses were clearly metalinguistic in nature:

For the problem, *Sagana ang mangga tuwing tag-init. Sagana ang atis tuwing tag-ulan. Mayroon bang panahon na sabay na sagana ang mangga at atis? (Mangoes are harvested during the dry season. Atis is harvested during the rainy season. Is there a time when mangoes and atis are harvested at the same time?)*

From Lito, 33, literate, farmer from Kiangan, Ifugao:

"According to the statement, mangoes can only be harvested during the summer, atis can only be harvested during the rainy season. So it is not possible."

For the item, *Ang tilapia ay nabubuhay sa tubig-tabang. Ang lawa ng San Mateo ay tubig-alat. May tilapia ba sa lawa ng San Marcos? (Tilapia grows in fresh water. San Marcos is a salt-water body. Is there tilapia growing in San Marcos?)*

From Lito, 33, literate, farmer from Kiangan, Ifugao:

"It can't grow in San Marcos because tilapia, according to the statement, grows on fresh water."

These two responses from the same person were easily coded as showing decontextualized, metalinguistic processing as the phrase “according to the statement” explicitly indicates that the statement was understood and accepted as the object of discourse.

In order to determine whether the tendency to give the two types of responses might be affected by literacy skills, all the participants in the study were categorized into three groups: illiterates, non-formal literates, and formal literates; the difference between the last two lies in how literacy was acquired (i.e., either through non-formal literacy education programs, or through formal schooling; the readers are referred to Bernardo 1998 for details related to this categorization). There were 48 illiterates, 35 non-formal literates, and 52 formal literates from the five communities studied. For each of the groups, the proportions of responses that were coded in each of the two response types are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Proportion of Responses Across Literacy Groups

	Response Type	
	Contextualized	Decontextualized
Illiterates	58.51%	30.62%
Non-Formal Literates	64.07%	28.88%
Formal Literates	56.40%	37.19%

The responses for each response type were not analyzed using inferential statistics, and are only described in terms of trends and patterns. Clearly, there were more contextualized responses from all the participants; treating the statements in the deductive reasoning problem as objects of reflection or thought independent of immediate realities seems not to be intensively practiced in the communities studied. The proportion of contextualized responses is highest among the non-formal literates. On the other hand, the tendency to give decontextualized responses seems to be higher for the formal literates compared to the other two groups. Interestingly, the unschooled literates and the illiterates seem to be at the same level when it comes to giving such responses. So in the case of the respondents in the communities studied, decontextualized thought may be associated with schooling rather than the acquisition of literacy skills *per se*. The findings simply reflect the basic findings of the 1998 study that showed that literacy acquisition *per se* does not seem to lead to any differences in cognitive performance, which further disproves the original version of the literacy hypothesis.

The responses were then analyzed comparing the responses across the different communities. The proportion of contextualized and decontextualized responses across the five communities is summarized in Table 2.

The stronger tendency to use contextualized thinking is again apparent in the distribution of scores across the five communities, although it seems that there is a stronger tendency to use decontextualized thinking in some communities. In particular, the participants from Ifugao seemed to be more likely to use decontextualized thinking relative to the other communities. This particular result is interesting, considering that the literacy rates in Ifugao were among the lowest in the country, thus disputing once again the supposed link between literacy and abstract thinking. What makes the result even more interesting was that most of the respondents from Kiangang opted to answer all the questions in English, even if native speakers of their language were interviewing them. The fact that the language of the statements they were processing was English might have made it easier to think about the statements remotely and independent of their immediate experiences, and to treat the statements as objects for reflection.

Table 2. Proportion of Responses Across Communities

	Response Type	
	Contextualized	Decontextualized
Cardona, Rizal	72.65%	19.86%
Payatas, Quezon City	62.77%	31.38%
Irosin, Sorsogon	51.68%	35.30%
Loob-Bunga, Zambales	54.47%	38.49%
Kiangan, Ifugao	52.73%	42.98%

The results from the participants of Cardona, Rizal also seemed to be distinct from the rest. Adults from all the other communities seemed inclined to use contextual thinking most of the time, but those in Cardona seemed to do so more intensively (and also, they tended to use the decontextualized mode of thinking less). Again, this result is interesting as the literacy rates in Cardona were relatively higher compared to the other communities. I speculate that the reason for this strong tendency to use contextualized thinking stems from the nature of the community activities in Cardona. Many residents of the fishing community of Cardona are members of a very active people’s organization called CALARIZ. The main aim of this people’s organization is to develop the community by way of empowering the fisherfolk in matters that effect their livelihood and well-being. CALARIZ organizes many different activities like discussion groups, newsletters, study groups, and so on, all of which encourage the fisherfolk of Cardona to reflect on how policies, laws, and so on affect their livelihood. One could surmise that the people of Cardona are strongly urged to reflect on their present realities in relation to social forces and institutions, among others. Hence, there is a strong tendency to look at and reflect on their immediate realities. In this light, there might be no need to reflect on language as such.

There seems to be no notable or outstanding trend involving the other communities, other than the already noted fact that there is a stronger propensity to use the contextualized way of thinking compared to the decontextualized way.

Interestingly, the salient trends in the data do not seem to be related to literacy acquisition. Across literacy groups, the only difference in the pattern of the data seems to have been brought about by formal schooling. Across the communities, the salient differences might be related to the use of a foreign language and in the encouragement of specific thinking practices in a community. So we have not found any strong evidence for the literacy hypothesis, especially for the original version.

However, we could still make sense of the trends in light of other theories regarding the development of metalinguistic and decontextualized thought. Narasimhan (1991), in particular, asserted that levels of literacy and literateness in a community should be reckoned with in consideration of the cognitive level and nature of the articulation and reflective processes in a community. In other words, Narasimhan states that what will determine the level of literateness (i.e., decontextualized reflectiveness) in a community is not literacy *per se*, but the level of higher forms of reflection required in the community activities.

In a broader treatment of the development of decontextualized thinking, Denny (1991) asserts that this mode of thinking seems to be a by-product of developments in industrialized societies. According to Denny, the forms of social interactions in industrialized societies involve large numbers of people, most of whom are “strangers” who are likely to live lives entirely different from each other. In such a context, there is a strong requirement to provide “self-contained” information to people who may not share background information with one another. Literacy practices may enable this way of thinking and communicating, according

to Denny, but decontextualized thinking is essentially a product of changing forms of interaction in a society.

Even the original proponent of metalinguistic thinking as a product of literacy practices, Olson (1991) was careful to state that the development of metalinguistic thinking is a possible, but is not an inevitable, consequence of the characteristics of literacy practices.

If this is so, then it is possible that the low levels of metalinguistic and decontextualized thinking among the literate adult participants in the study may be due to the nature of the literacy practices and other activities in their communities. That is, the level of reflection and thought required and/or characteristic of these activities does not engender these ways of thinking.

To summarize the results of this rumination on the relationship between literacy and thinking, it seems that although literacy may enable or facilitate the development of certain higher forms of thinking, this is only possible if the activities in the community afford and/or require these ways of thought. The levels of thought achieved by members of a community depend on the levels of thought required and engendered in the community. If literacy practices are used to promote these ways of thinking, then literacy will lead to these higher levels of thinking.

In the book *Literacy and the Mind*, I made the rather simplistic but distinct statement that if we wish to use literacy development to yield corresponding growths in the information-processing abilities of people in a community, we will need to develop the communities first. In particular, the activities in the community need to be restructured so as to allow for the practice of higher levels of thought. Only within the context of such community activities will literacy be a potent tool for advancing thinking. These points are only reinforced by the analysis.

4. IMPLICATIONS FOR THE INTELLECTUALIZATION OF LANGUAGE

In other works, I have discussed the implications of such theoretical formulations on how to define and assess literacy development (Bernardo 2000; in press) and on literacy development and education (Bernardo 1998). In the remainder of this paper, I will discuss the implications of these ideas on how we understand and think about the intellectualization of a language for purposes of language planning and language development in the Philippines.

Among Philippine writers on the intellectualization of language, the definition provided by Havranek (cited in Garvin & Mathiot 1968) seems to be the most popular. Intellectualization is defined as the "adaptation [of a language] to a goal of making possible precise and rigorous, if necessary, 'abstract statements'".

In the conclusion of her paper on the parameters of intellectualization in the Philippines, Bautista (1988) cites a personal communication with Sibayan in which he strongly notes that intellectualized language is written. If I may paraphrase this thought to suit my purposes, intellectualized Filipino, for example, means intellectualized literate practices in Filipino. In a later paper, Sibayan (1991) himself develops this point and even underscores the importance of publishing as a means of intellectualizing Filipino. From this point, I hope that the readers will see the possibility of linking the discussions on literacy and thought to the matter of intellectualization of language.

Sibayan (1991) noted that intellectualization in the Philippines has been addressed mostly in relation to the development of Filipino as a medium of instruction. Education is one of those areas of activity that Sibayan refers to as *controlling domains* of a language.

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The main obstacle to the use of Filipino in education and in other controlling domains is the perceived inadequacy of the language. It is in this regard that intellectualization is perceived to be the solution.

Sibayan (1991) also relates Ferguson's (1968) concept of modernizing language to the issue of intellectualization. Modernizing language involves "the development of intertranslatability with other languages in a range of topics and forms of discourse characteristic of industrialized, secularized, structurally differentiated modern societies" (Ferguson 1968:28-29, cited in Sibayan 1991). But Sibayan is careful to note that modernizing a language does not result in intellectualization. He argues that a language may be modernized but not intellectualized, and cites the Filipino used in entertainment as an example.

It seems to me that this issue of intellectualizing a modernized language will need to consider the issues involved in the relationship between literacy and thought. For example, we could consider what it means to intellectualize a language and link this matter to literateness, metalinguistics, and decontextualized thought.

Writers on the intellectualization of language posit that this process seems to primarily involve developments in the lexicon of the language, and also in the grammatical structure. Garvin and Mathiot describe this process as follows:

In the lexicon, intellectualization manifests itself by increased terminological precision achieved by the development of more clearly differentiated terms, as well as an increase in abstract and generic terms. In grammar, intellectualization manifests itself by the development of word formation techniques and of syntactic devices allowing for the construction of elaborate, yet tightly knit, compound sentences, as well as the tendency to eliminate elliptic modes of expression by requiring complete constructions. (Garvin & Mathiot 1968:368, cited in Bautista 1988)

Interestingly, Garvin and Mathiot's description of the grammatical manifestations of intellectualization resonates well with some of the known indicators of decontextualized and metalinguistic thought. For example, Perkins (1980, cited in Denny 1991) asserts that relative clause formation is an indicator of decontextualization. This argument is based on the work of McNeil (1976, cited in Denny 1991) which suggests that relative clause formation "express[es] part of the conceptual structure that otherwise could be available only by relying directly on the context for support" (p. 211, cited in Denny 1991). Denny (1991) elaborates on this point by stating that "Relative clause formation amounts to decontextualization because it allows contextual information to be included in the message instead of being added from context by the recipient" (p. 74).

Another indicator of decontextualization in literate practices is the avoidance of coordinating conjunctions (Ong 1982; Chafe & Danielewicz 1987, both cited in Denny 1991). Denny asserts that "the coordinative joining of sentences means that each one is equally important and that each one is contextualized by all others" (p. 81). He adds that in literate practices, "a partial decontextualization is achieved by backgrounding some sentences with subordinating conjunctions so that a main sentence is partially isolated" (p.81).

As regards the lexicon, decontextualized and metalinguistic thought is also manifest in the elaborate use of terms such as *believe*, *infer*, *hypothesize*, *assume*, *conclude*, among other devices for referring to speech acts (Olson 1991). Perkins (1980, cited in Denny 1991) also claims that the use of spatial deictics, for example, English words like *here*, *there*, *this*, and

that is lower in decontextualized thought. The use of spatial deictics is very dependent on context, and is incongruent with decontextualized thinking.

As Bautista (1988) and Sibayan (1991) observed, efforts at intellectualizing the Filipino language seem to be focussed on developing the lexicon. I would like to suggest that we also look at the lexicon and the syntactic affordances in Filipino that allow for decontextualized and metalinguistic cognitive processing, as these will most likely contribute to the full intellectualization of the language as defined by Havranek, and as it is required in the various controlling domains of language.

How do we try to push for these developments? Sibayan has written extensively about his ideas on intellectualization as part of language planning (see e.g., Sibayan 1985, 1988, 1991). To his general prescriptions, I wish to add that we should also aim to require higher levels of thinking in the various controlling domains of language. The fact that a domain of activity is considered a controlling domain does not ensure that thinking and language use in the domain actually involves decontextualized and/or metalinguistic thought. If thought and language in these domains do not aim to engage the thinker and the language user in the highest levels of reflection, that language will never be fully intellectualized.

Developing a reflective culture, one that fully utilizes decontextualized and metalinguistic thought, is not something that is done by caveat. There are parameters in the development of societies and communities that need to be addressed, and a number of writers have summarized these. Narasimhan (1991), for example, notes that societies that have achieved this level seem to put emphasis on three classes of literacy practices in the development of their intellectual history; these are:

1. Concern with the interpretation assignment process that is involved in assigning meaning to a text; articulating one's conceptualizations of this process as a system of rules, verificational procedures, and so on; building on aids to assist this process...; devising appropriate vehicles to communicate the meaning arrived at...; in short, a general concern with method.
2. Concern with printing technology; publishing and distribution of books involving literate activities...; consequent creation of an increasingly large, informed, and literate reading community.
3. Concern with schooling and the instructional process, especially as this process applies to teaching engineering practices; conceptualization relating to these processes; and so on. (p. 190)

Olson (1991) makes remarkably similar prescriptions for the development of higher literacy and reflective practices. He enumerates four conditions. First, there must be some devices for "fixing" and accumulating texts. By fixing texts, Olson refers to ways of making texts the object of reflection. Second, there must be social or community institutions for using texts (a notion that sounds remarkably like Sibayan's concept of controlling domains of language). Third, there must be social or community institutions for inducting learners into those institutions that use texts. Finally, Olson asserts that there must be an evolved oral metalanguage that permits people "to refer to a text, its properties, its structure, as well as to its meaning and appropriate interpretation".

Where is the Filipino language community in relation to these prescriptions?

First, let us consider how we are in terms of assigning meanings to text. Are we concerned with the methods of fixing, verifying, and communicating meaning? In our country, supposed to be respectable newspaper columnists write about anything *confidentes* whisper to them without verifying the facts. The readers obligingly accept whatever their

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favorite columnists say. The situation is probably worse with movie and entertainment writing, and tabloid journalism. Teachers and scholars unquestioningly accept whatever they read, no matter how incongruous the assertions are to our present reality. In scholarly publications, it is rare that there are adequate systems for peer review. We can go on and on, and the answer to our question is that we are still quite poor at the methods of assigning meanings to text.

What about the existence of printing and publishing institutions? Yes, the publishing institutions do exist. But is there an accumulation of texts, which is essential for updating and further reflection on the subject and object of texts? Many institutions are working on this concern. There is also no rigorous editorial process in most cases, and respected book critics are generally ignored. Thus the printing and publishing institutions do not necessarily promote the practices that will allow for high literacy practices.

Do the institutions or the controlling domains of language use texts as objects of reflection? This question can be answered by future empirical studies, but casual observation would suggest that most texts in the various institutions that utilize texts are merely used to record. There is probably not much care about reflecting on texts as such, but as I said, this needs to be ascertained empirically.

Do our schools induct learners to ways of reflecting on text? The casual observation that most school administrators, teachers, and students lack critical thinking abilities does not bode well for this concern, and we need not elaborate on that.

5. CONCLUSION

In this paper, I attempted an exposition on the issues about the relationship of literacy and thought, and tried to emphasize the significance of metalinguistic and decontextualized thinking as by-products of literacy practices. I proposed that metalinguistic and decontextualized thought be added as criteria for intellectualizing language; and discussed the prospects for developing communities that would sustain these ways of thought. Even before I added to the criteria for intellectualization, Sibayan (1991) already noted that as regards the intellectualization of the Filipino language, "Filipinos have to work very hard, to put it mildly". Clearly, the Filipino language community (and even the English language community in the Philippines) has a long way to go to address those concerns that allow for the development of the most reflective and/or intellectualized language and literacy practices. But as Sibayan proposed, people and language intellectualize each other. The task of intellectualizing language will clearly require a community of Filipinos who are also intellectualized. And an intellectualized community will need an intellectualized language. I am sure that we can avoid the chicken-or-egg question, and that instead we can try to focus on boosting and sustaining the intellectualization processes in whatever way we can.

NOTE

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