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UMI
From Non-literate to Literate Practice:
The process and effects of introducing a writing system
in a cultural community of the Republic of the Philippines

by

Ellen Joyce Errington

A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts
Department of Adult Education, Community Development, and Counselling Psychology
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the
University of Toronto

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Abstract

This thesis looks at the way literacy has been introduced to and applied by the Cotabato Manobo people of the southern Philippines. Literate practice for the Manobo people is set in social contexts, which help define the way literacy is used both individually and corporately.

Using a model of social organization, which ranks societies on the degree of group orientation and the degree of hierarchical structures, the Manobo people can be identified as generally individualistic. This social organization model somewhat parallels, and further highlights, Scribner's three literacy metaphors. Thus, the Manobos are found to be using literacy in line with Scribner's metaphor of literacy as adaptation.

By introducing literacy in ways that fit with the Manobo's social organization and ideology, literacy has had an impact on the community and has grown into literate practice. Becoming literate has had little economic impact, but has supported a move toward greater group cohesion.
In Appreciation

To my husband, Ross,
for our years of mutual adventures in life and in the Philippines,
and for your unselfish support of my studies;

To Miss Mila Cagape and Mrs. Nida Apang,
for your dedicated service and love of the Manobo people,
and your friendship extended to us;

And to the Manobo people,
for teaching us so much about life and learning,
and for allowing us to be a part of your community.

My deepest thanks and my prayers for God’s best blessings.
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Chapter 1
An Introduction to Literacy in Cultural Context

Egoh ké endà pa mettiig egbasa, lagà ké pa nelangap.
When we did not yet know how to read, it was like we were blind.
Lito Dalan, literacy student

A. Introduction

Introducing literate practice to non-literate communities has never been an easy task. People may not see a need for learning literate skills. Literacy may not fit their cultural grid and may even have negative effects of disintegrating communities. In other cases literacy skills may be learned initially but later forgotten for lack of meaningful contexts and reading materials. This thesis will examine how literate practice can be introduced in ways that fit the cultural context and how literacy can impact communities in positive ways.

Nearly one billion illiterate people share this planet with us. Though they possess many skills that have enabled them to function in their social settings, their lives are very different from the lives of those who have access to knowledge through print media and who are able to use the skill of literacy for self-fulfillment and advancement in their lives. Illiterates are considered by many governments as a scourge on national development, an embarrassment, less than full citizens, and lacking intelligence.

Unesco, since its inception in 1945, has been actively reminding the world of the needs of illiterate citizens. As a result, in the past several decades, a number of countries have attempted to eradicate illiteracy through large-scale campaigns, projects or programs. Some of these campaigns have had short-term success in teaching reading and writing skills, but many have met with dismal failure in meeting their stated goals of building a truly literate citizenry.
Winchester (1990:31) notes that "perhaps the deepest social assumption that the standard picture of literacy offers is that universal literacy is specially connected to cultural and particularly to economic progress." This has been reflected in the history of Unesco as well, as their main thrust for fundamental education links both their human rights and development focuses (Jones 1990:52). At the same time, Unesco's role as an international body has led to the need for political compromise.

Unesco has concentrated on finding links between literacy and development and forging approaches to literacy acceptable to governments, views that would downgrade the 'consciousness-raising' potential of literacy in favor of stressing its economic, technological, and development impact. (Jones 1990:50)

Over half of the world's illiterates are found in Asia. In Africa, 22 of 32 countries have a literacy rate of less than 50%. Approximately 60% of illiterates are women (Hamadache, 1986:12). The Philippines has been a full participant in the Education for All initiative of Unesco. Educational sectors have determined to rid the country of illiteracy (Canieso-Doronila, 1995:1). The country reported an impressive official literacy rate of 95.02% in 1994 (Philippine Star, March 4, 1996). However, education officials have set a goal of 100% literacy by 2000, targeting their efforts at the 2.8 million illiterate adults and out-of-school youth and at providing public schools for all children (Literacy Coordinating Council 1996:1).

In much of the country, however, there is little natural context for reading and writing and being literate does not necessarily lead to economic and development gains. What basic skills people might have attained are either underutilized or forgotten in adulthood. Even the basic literacy figure can be questioned. One study from the mid-80s noted a literacy rate of 85% based on the number of grade 2 finishers (Belamide, 1987:110).
Who is the illiterate person? Illiterates are people with intelligence and ambition, as shown by their ability to cope in a changing world. They are limited, however, to the world of oral communication and personal experience. They are limited by what can be remembered, either individually or corporately.

When illiterates acquire the skills of reading and writing, the horizons for expanded vision are broadened. Reading has the potential of opening up new vistas on the world and on the self-image of the learner and offering previously unknown choices. Not only the learner changes, but the family and community can be impacted as well. Communities of learners take on new dimensions. These positive effects, however, are dependent on finding the literacy fit in the community of learners.

B. Critical Questions

How can literacy acquisition best be tailored to fit community needs? What are the long-term effects of introducing literacy to preliterate and non-literate people and communities? There is a lack of longitudinal information on this topic, especially in regard to groups in the developing world. Most studies have examined individual learners who live in literate surroundings.2

One study along these lines was done by Besnier (1995), examining the literate practices on the Pacific atoll of Nukulaelae. He offers helpful insights into how people have adapted literacy skills to their own cultural norms, quite apart from how it was introduced. A more appropriate approach might be to find the literacy fit before, or possibly in the process of, its introduction.

It has further been noted that:
only in exceptional cases have [literacy campaigns] brought about a lasting improvement in formal and nonformal basic education provision. ... The widely accepted admission that campaigns have no lasting effect unless a suitable learning environment is created leads to new opportunities... It is the NGOs which have achieved success and continuity in literacy through long-term postliteracy and continuing education, linked to their production-oriented, social or health education activities. There is, in fact, the chance of developing a stable, community-oriented learning environment... (Hildebrand & Hinzen, 1996:171)

There is, therefore, a need to examine the continuity of literacy practice and what are the factors that bring it about. Where possible, studies should determine the community impact of literacy programs. Non-government organizations (NGOs) have the advantage of operating at the local level where community sentiment and social structures are more easily incorporated into the planning and implementation of the program, but there are implications as well for national level literacy efforts.

This research is important academically to better understand how literacy is culturally defined. Cultures adapt literacy to fit their own world view, in successful instances; where no fit is found, literacy is rejected either overtly or through failure to apply it. This study is also practical, to help guide practitioners in planning effective literacy programs aimed at community impact and on-going literate practice.

This thesis will seek to identify contexts that led one cultural community in the Philippines to acquire literacy skills. Those same elements, it will be seen, are significant in how literate practice is being built and supported in the community. In the process, this thesis will consider the following critical questions:
1) In what ways can literacy be introduced to best fit the culture?

2) What factors move people beyond reading toward literate practice?

3) What is the community impact when literacy is introduced and applied?

In answering these questions, a number of complex factors must be considered. Literacy acquisition, political, social, religious, and personal factors have all played a part in leading the community to make cultural adjustments. Therefore it is not the intent of this thesis to give empirical evidence that literacy alone has changed the lives of the community under consideration. Rather, glimpses into the lives of the people as a whole will be shared to see what part acquiring literacy skills might have played in the fabric of life.

Particular emphasis will be given to community impact, rather than to individuals. This is particularly relevant because of the very low level of literacy skills evident in this language community up to the early 1980s and the significantly higher levels in evidence throughout the community today.

C. What is Literate Practice?

Any number of definitions has been given to answer the question, "what is literacy." All seem to agree that literacy is more than a technical skill of decoding text. One author has stated that "[l]iteracy can function merely as the channel through which the language command is displayed, but for many societies it is also the main educational, shaping force. We exemplify in literacy the skills, attributes, character traits and thinking patterns which our society prizes, so that literacy becomes a reflection of achievement and status" (Bell, 1991:270).
As this definition illustrates, literacy means different things to different people. Truly pre-literate people, those who have had “little experience with the ways in which print is used” (Burnaby, 1990:166), do not have conceptual frameworks for how to utilize the skill. For non-literates, those who “come from societies in which literacy is commonly used for communication but who have not themselves learned to read and write” (Burnaby, p. 167), literacy may be functional but as yet it is not personally attained. Literacy does not yet fit into their personal or cultural world. For literates, the skill of reading and writing may or may not be immediately useful to them. Many literates choose not to use their skills or use them at a low level of proficiency (consider, for example, the reading level of much of the materials which arrive in our mailboxes). However, for a few societies, literacy is elevated to a sacred art, imparting personal benefits by its utilization even apart from the message being conveyed. Chinese and Hindi scripts, for example, are thought to be so empowered.3

Beginning with an understanding of literacy meanings leads the literacy provider to identify the ideological basis for introducing and utilizing literacy in any given setting, both from the perspective of the provider and the recipient. Part of understanding these foundational issues is seeing literacy in a contextual framework. Literacy emerges from talk. Literacy is framed by oral contexts and interacts with talk in group contexts.

Literate practice that grows out of oral contexts will be aided by the use of the vernacular language as a natural bridge between the oral and the written text. There is widespread support for the use of the vernacular as the starting point for literacy training, as evidenced in any number of Unesco publications from as early as 1953. In mixed language
settings, the contexts for each language domain will influence which language will be used for literate practices.

The language issue in literacy instruction, however, goes beyond pedagogical issues. It mirrors a larger debate between the use of the national language for nation building and the language rights of those who speak the lesser-known varieties. At the national level, “the main objective of literacy campaigns is to elevate the educational level of the masses, and the road to success, for the individual as well as for the country as a whole, is mostly seen to lead via literacy in the standard language or in an otherwise widely-used language” (Coulmas, 1984:8). In the process, the desires and learning needs of the illiterates are often overlooked. There are domains for both local and national varieties of language in literate practice, just as there are domains for oral and written communication, but the community must and will ultimately decide upon those domains.

Literate practice is best demonstrated during literacy events. Barton (in Besnier, 1995) explains the relationship in this way: “Literacy practices are the general cultural ways of utilizing literacy that people draw upon in a literacy event” (p. 5). Such events might include town meetings, communication over a distance, or commerce. Literate practice is culturally shaped to fit the local context.

Literate practice also implies having something to read. The ideological base for literacy provision and literacy consumption shapes what these materials will be, whether development-oriented, religious, political or otherwise. Critical issues in finding the literacy fit are what language will be used, who writes the materials and how they will be used. Though
the majority of people will only be consumers of such materials, they will ultimately decide how literacy fits their lives personally.

Community members will ultimately be in control of the learning enterprise through their rejection of it or through their support of it. Community-managed programs recognize the community members as those in control of their culture and their future. The concept of community-managed learning is contained in the teachings of Paulo Freire. Jane Vella (1996:82) summarizes the concepts behind “Popular Education” in this way:

- participation of the learners in determining what is to be learned
- dialogue between learner and teacher, and among learners
- small group work to engage learners and to make explicit their context and their understandings
- visual support and psychomotor involvement
- accountability: “how do they know they know?”
- participative evaluation of results of programs
- respect for learners and teachers
- a listening attitude on the part of teachers and resource people
- horizontal communications adult to adult, not parent to child
- learners do what they are learning

D. Personal Interests

My personal interest in this topic stems from my work in the Philippines over the past 20 years. My husband and I have worked with one of the cultural communities, living for extended periods of time in a community of rural poor people in Sultan Kudarat Province on the island of Mindanao (see map, page 9). While my husband’s main thrust was in linguistic analysis and Scripture translation, my primary focus was on community development and adult basic literacy training in particular. I worked with a team of four Filipinas who were similarly engaged for about 10 years and I also had the assistance of my more experienced colleagues in the Summer Institute of Linguistics, who had pioneered literacy efforts among the Tboli, Blaan, and Kalagan among others.
Illustration One: Map of the Republic of the Philippines
Before going to the Philippines in 1975, we received training in linguistics and anthropology, with special emphasis on skills for learning and analyzing an unwritten language. In 1976, we built a home under a breadfruit tree in a cornfield near two Manobo houses and on a major footpath leading down to the road to town. Within a short time, three other houses were built nearby, thus forming the mini-village in which we did our initial language learning.

Some linguistic analysis of the Manobo language had already been done by colleagues working in another part of the language area, so an alphabet had already been devised and was in use. The same colleagues had also prepared literacy materials and taught about 50 people the skills of reading and writing in Manobo. Within days of arriving in the community, I assumed the role of "medicine woman" for a wide geographic area, though I have no formal medical training. This was probably also part of the legacy of our colleagues.

The needs of the Manobo people, from an outsider's perspective, were many. Health care was next to non-existent, the infant mortality rate was more than 50%, farmers were unable to produce enough to feed their families adequately, only a handful of the men could read and write even a little, and barriers to children attending school were many (distance; no ready cash for paper, pencil and rubber thongs; instruction in an unfamiliar language; cultural differences which made them the brunt of teasing and ostracism).

Initial forays into assistance for the Manobos, for my husband and me, coincided with language learning. Besides basic health services, we brought in nitrogen-fixing trees to enrich the soil, we provided interest-free small loans, and planted new kinds of vegetables as a
demonstration. I modeled childcare with my own two children, breast-feeding them as infants and bathing them when feverish, etc.

We also sought to arouse interest in print materials among those who had had some exposure to literacy previously, through written messages on the blackboard on our porch and simple puzzles and games. Much informal literacy activity occurred on the front porch in the course of neighbourly visits while watching my children and their children play. Small booklets were prepared with minimal text around the themes of traditional narratives, health how-to books and a tri-language topical word list (Manobo, Pilipino, and English). All of these efforts met with only minimal success, but did serve the purpose of raising awareness of print.

In 1986, our family moved to a different Manobo community where more people had congregated. It was around this time (1983-89) that I, along with two Filipina colleagues, implemented a literacy program that has trained about 2,000 adult Manobo readers up to 1996. My primary involvement with the Manobo people ended in 1993, while my two Filipina colleagues have continued working there on a more or less consistent basis. The adult literacy classes continue in a modified fashion, under the direction of Mrs. Leonida Apang of Translators Association of the Philippines.

E. The Context for Manobo Literacy

Over 100 languages are actively spoken in the Philippines. Eight of these are recognized as major languages, or trade languages, or 'lowland'. Filipino continues to be developed as the national language. English is also an official language and is widely used in education, trade, and government, and is widely known throughout the Philippines.
The other 90 or so languages (spoken by around 10% of the population) are considered minor dialects. The government has made little provision for speakers of these languages in any official way, such as in education, translation of government documents, or access to legal services. As a result of the expanding population and modernization in many parts of the Philippines, the cultural communities have had increased cross-cultural contact. Most Filipinos speak three, four or more languages functionally and are experts at code-switching and borrowing. This increased contact with speakers of other (major) language groups has resulted in increased language shift toward the languages of the dominant ‘lowland’ cultures.

The Manobo people, speaking the dialect known as Cotabato Manobo, number around 30,000. They live in mountainous areas, only loosely connected by minimally maintained logging roads and footpaths. They are subsistence agriculturists, being forced in the last few years to cease their traditional slash-and-burn method of planting.

Social and political pressures on the Manobo people have increased in the past few decades as contact with speakers of other languages has grown. The boundaries of the Manobo area are constantly being tested by the influx of settlers from more populated areas. Also, the Maguindanaon people living along the coast are traditional rivals for goods; their paramilitary groups use the Manobo area for hiding from military patrols; and more recently their religious leaders have applied increasing pressure on the Manobos to convert to Islam. Another source of pressure is the lumber company forestry guards who patrol the land on which the Manobos live and who not infrequently clash with the Manobos. All this has led to significant levels of external stress.
In the past, the response to this external stress has been to retreat further into the mountains of Sultan Kudarat Province. However, there is no longer anywhere left to go. Literacy was introduced at a time when it could assist the community in meeting some of the serious threats to the Manobo people’s identity, lifestyle and very lives.

The adult literacy program that was developed for the Manobos with their assistance is a multi-level approach. The first step introduces the basic concepts of reading, first through pre-reading activities and then through a primer which teaches each letter of the Manobo alphabet in the order of its frequency. Reading and writing involves short sentences and stories using only the letters which the student has already studied. This phase takes about 3 months to complete. The second step is three levels of fluency building, which uses a variety of booklets in Manobo for fluency practice. Math is also taught at the second and third levels. Finally, students progress to the study of the Pilipino language and culture. Cursive writing and geography are components of the final step which are still being developed. Manobo literates were trained to teach each of these levels to small classes of their own town-mates; a few of the most successful teachers were trained to supervise other teachers.

In 1980, it was estimated that only about 2% of the total adult population were able to read and write to any degree in any language. Only a small percentage of the children were able to attend school without leaving their community, so most of them were also growing up illiterate. In 1996, approximately 25% of the population were literate. Though this is still a relatively small proportion of the total population, it represents a significant increase. Just how far the community has moved toward becoming a literate society will be examined more fully later.
The neo-literates have continued to adapt literacy to their own needs in line with their reasons for initially enrolling in a class. This has largely been in the context of groups, such as in advanced classes, in the church setting, and with small groups such as family and close neighbours. Literacy in the context of community organizations has earned community members new respect from lowland neighbours.

Literacy acquisition has not happened in isolation. Other community programs were developing at the same time. A core of 60 community health workers were trained to meet the primary health care needs of the Manobo communities. Also a lay leader training program was begun in the 1980s to train bi-vocational church leaders for small indigenous congregations. A core of eight men has been trained as livelihood (agricultural) teachers. All of these programs have given the Manobos an expanded sense of group cohesion that reaches beyond the extended family grouping to include the entire Manobo area.

F. Terminology Used

These terms and acronyms are used throughout the thesis in the following ways:

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<th>Definition</th>
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<tr>
<td>DECS</td>
<td>Department of Education, Culture and Sports, Republic of the Philippines</td>
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<td>LCC</td>
<td>Literacy Coordinating Council, created by Presidential Decree to coordinate non-formal literacy initiatives in the Philippines</td>
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<td>NGO</td>
<td>non-governmental organization</td>
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<td>SIL</td>
<td>Summer Institute of Linguistics, the researcher’s sponsoring agency</td>
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<td>TAP</td>
<td>Translators Association of the Philippines</td>
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<tr>
<td>LWC</td>
<td>language of wider communication</td>
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<td>OCW</td>
<td>Overseas Contract Worker</td>
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<tr>
<td>VHW</td>
<td>Village Health Worker</td>
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major language: the eight largest language groups (Tagalog, Cebuano, Ilocano, Hiligaynon, Waray, Bikol, Pampango and Pangasinan). Also referred to as trade languages. Speakers of these languages are often referred to as "lowlanders."

minor language: the smaller language groups spread throughout the Philippines

cultural community: a designation for a linguistically and culturally distinct group of people

pre-literate: a group which has had no contact with literate practices

non-literate: a group which has some concept of the uses of literacy but whose members to a large extent are illiterate

illiterate: an individual who has not yet acquired the skills of reading and writing

neo-literate: an individual who has recently learned to read and write

semi-literate: an individual who knows the rudimentary skills of reading and writing but who is not able to use those skills functionally

Philippines: The Republic of the Philippines

Filipino/Filipina: designation for citizens of the Philippines (male/female)

Filipino: the national language which is currently under development

Filipino: another designation for the national language which was in use until recently. It is based on Tagalog.

datu: a traditional Manobo leader

cidula: community tax receipt

barangay: town, a level of governance below that of the municipality

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1 Quotations at the beginning of each chapter were elicited in writing during a meeting of literacy project participants and leaders in the community of Elem, July 12, 1998.
2 See, for example, Shirley Brice Heath (1993).
3 See chapter 3 for a discussion of Scribner’s metaphor of literacy as a state of grace.
4 Filipino is a developing national language which includes elements of all the major languages. See chapter 2 for a fuller discussion of language issues in the Philippines.
5 Bi-vocational workers are people who carry on another occupation along with farming. The literacy teachers, health workers, church leaders and livelihood teachers are all bi-vocational and do not receive a salary.
Chapter 2

The Context of Literacy among the Manobo People

In order to understand the context for literacy among the Cotabato Manobo people, it is important to first examine the national linguistic and literacy picture. Therefore, an outline of these features will be given before looking in more depth at the local context.

A. An Overview of the Philippines

A. 1. Historical and Linguistic Background

The Philippines is a land of beauty and variety. Its 65 million people speak over 100 languages, which belong to the Austronesian language family. This chain of over 7,200 islands was named for King Philip II of Spain, as Spanish colonizers ruled the country for 330 years (Horvath, 1991:78). In 1898, the Philippines was deeded to the United States as part of the settlement of the Spanish-American War.

During the time of Spanish rule, the use of the vernacular languages and writing systems were discouraged. A Filipino elite was educated in Spanish and Spanish was the language of business and government. The colonizers did encourage the use of Tagalog as a regional trade language however (Horvath, 1991:79). At the end of the Spanish era, only 10% of the population were able to speak the Spanish language.

Even before the American era began in 1898, the issue of an official language based on one of the vernacular languages had been raised by a group of revolutionaries who sought an
independent country. Spanish was well entrenched as the language of the educated, but Tagalog, the language spoken by about 20% of the population and centered around Manila, was already seen in print as well (Gonzales, 1980:4-7).

The United States controlled the Philippines for a period of about 40 years. "One of the first tasks undertaken by the American government was the establishment of a system of primary education throughout the archipelago" (Gonzales, 1980:25). The early intent was that such education should be in the vernacular languages, but the realities of materials production and the lack of trained teachers who spoke the languages overruled such high aspirations and English was adopted as the language of instruction. The initial group of American teachers came from among military personnel, but in the latter half of 1901 their numbers were supplemented by 523 civilians who arrived on the steamship, Thomas (World Education Encyclopedia, 1988:994). This corps of young teachers was known as the Thomasites and greatly impacted the Filipino people through education, far beyond what their small numbers would suggest (Gonzales, p. 27). As soon as possible, local teachers were trained in a newly created teacher training institution, now known as Philippine Normal University, to replace the expatriate teachers.

The identification and then the full development of a common national language remained a challenge throughout the twentieth century. There was a strong desire to formulate such a language based on one of the vernaculars in order to build a sense of nationalism and to have a common language of communication. At the same time, naming any one of the vernacular languages as the national language to the exclusion of another was bound to be divisive. Throughout the discussion, however, only Tagalog was ever seriously considered and
on December 30, 1937, President Quezon proclaimed that it was to be developed into the national language (Gonzales, 1980:71). It was to be called Pilipino.

The 1971 Constitution reiterated the nation's desire to develop Filipino.¹ This Constitution was to be promulgated in Pilipino and English and in any other language of more than 50,000 speakers. The 1987 Constitution again recognized Pilipino as the official language of the country along with English.

Of the approximately 100 languages spoken in the Philippines, eight are recognized as major languages, or trade languages.² Since 1936, when the Institute of National Language was created, Pilipino has been under development as the national language through refinements and additions from others of the vernaculars (Horvath, 1991:79). English is also an official language of education, trade, and government, and is widely known throughout the Philippines.

The other 90 languages are considered to be minor languages. Speakers of these languages number between 450 (for some Ayta groups) to a million (Maguindanaon) and constitute approximately 10% of the total population of the country (Llamzon, in Horvath, 1991:78). Little provision has been made by the government for speakers of these languages in any official way, such as in education, translation of government documents, or access to legal services.

In 1945, the Republic of the Philippines was declared a sovereign state and has followed a relatively orderly succession of democratically-elected presidents up to the present.³ The Philippines is called the only 'Christian' nation of Asia, reflecting the 85% of the population which claim allegiance to the Catholic church. Another 10% of the population are Protestant and 5% follow Islam.
The large southern island of Mindanao was at one time the spacious home of the Manobo, the Blaan, the Samal, and other cultural communities like them. More recently, Mindanao has been advertised as the land of opportunity for those living in overcrowded northern provinces. Thus, the cultural communities have had to adapt to large numbers of settlers. Some, like the Manobo, have retreated to the less productive mountainous areas leaving the rich valleys to the settlers, while others have assimilated. This increased contact with speakers of other (major) language groups has resulted in increased language shift toward the languages of the dominant cultures. The exception to this has been the Samal groups, who have resisted assimilation and have been granted separatist rights in the western segment of the island now designated as the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao.

A.2. Language Policy in Education

The language of education during the Philippines’ short post-colonial history has been a reflection of the national thrust for a unified identity along with national development. During the 1800s education was only for the elite and was conducted in Spanish. When universal primary education was introduced in English, however, English transplanted Spanish as the language of the educated in a relatively short period of time. Strong political and ideological reasons of nationhood led the country to teach in Pilipino at the primary level, while English was retained as a tool for development.

In 1972, the entire educational system was reorganized. A shift was made from vocational training to industrial-technical oriented education, called for by the Philippine Development Plan (Canieso-Doronila, 1996:116). This shift supported a new emphasis in training Filipinos for work abroad as Overseas Contract Workers (OCWs). The educational system contributes to this ongoing trend by providing an English-speaking and highly flexible
labour force, with the Philippines currently being the largest exporter of OCWs of any country in Asia. The Philippines is also the biggest donor of doctors to the First World (p. 117).

The 1974 Bilingual Education Policy reflected the national language policy, in that it stated that Pilipino and English were both to be official media of instruction. English was to be used for teaching math and science and Pilipino was to be used for the remaining subjects. In regard to the vernaculars,

[The 1974 Bilingual Education Act continued to allow the use of the vernaculars as 'auxiliary languages,' but in effect downgraded these vernaculars. Previously, a department order of the Department of Education (D.O. No. 1, s. 1957) stipulated that the eight major vernaculars of the Philippines were to be used as transitional media of instruction for the first two grades of primary schooling. This was in response to the UNESCO recommendation in 1951 that the best medium of instruction for initial schooling was the pupil's mother tongue. Thus, from 1957 to 1974, the major vernaculars were not only auxiliary media of instruction but actual languages of instruction for grades 1 and 2. (Gonzales, 1980:43)

Though minor refinements have been made since 1974, this is still the basic language policy for DECS schools. No provisions have been made for speakers of the 90+ ‘minor’ languages and only minimal allowance has been made for speakers of languages other than Tagalog/Pilipino.

As was noted earlier, part of the impetus during the early 1970s for the continued use of English came from national development plans which were formulated with the assistance of the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank (Canieso-Doronila, 1996:116). Since the emphasis was on developing a work force for export, materials in English in the areas of science and math were the logical choice.

The emphasis continues to be on the economic development of the country, as noted in the following newspaper article:
President Ramos ordered yesterday the development of a mass movement to ensure ‘total eradication’ of illiteracy in the country by the year 2000. ... The President posited out that there is a need to highlight the importance of literacy and education, given the government’s vision of a globally competitive and newly industrializing country that would be better achieved with the improvement of the quality of the nation’s human resources through literacy and education. (Villanueva, 1997)

Given the fact that the Philippines is the largest exporter of OCWs in Asia as well as doctors to the First World, one would expect that English would be spoken well and widely. It is surprising then to hear other reports, such as the following from another newspaper:

A large, privately-owned university in downtown Manila ... gives an English-language comprehension test to college freshmen at the start of the scholastic year. Last year 5,000 college students fresh from high school took the test. The results: only one student out of five thousand passed. ... The university authorities have ... reached the conclusion that the shocking results come from a basic defect in an educational system which uses English as the medium of instruction but produces high school graduates who cannot use or even understand simple, standard English. (Nakpil, 1996)

What has emerged, then, is a country which highly values education, has a stated literacy rate of between 89% and 95%4, and is entranced by English as a language of international communication and commerce. At the same time, the national language, Filipino, is not widely spoken other than in a school context. Reading for pleasure or for profit is largely confined to parts of large urban centers, and basic illiteracy is still a way of life for 2.8 million Filipinos (LCC, 1996:1), most of them members of cultural communities speaking the lesser known languages.

According to the 1990 Census report, the Philippines has a labour force (15 years old and above) of 24.2 million. These have been characterized by the Congressional Commission on Education as relatively young, predominantly male, under-educated, largely rural-based, engaged in low value-added agricultural occupations and predominantly engaged in self-employment and unpaid family work (in Caniesa-Doronila, 1996:125). Again, one is struck with the contrast between these workers and the 4.1 million deployed OCWs and seamen
“who earn the largest foreign exchange for the country, and come mostly from the service, professional-technical and production process sectors” (p. 125).

B. The Local Context - Oral-Literate Continuum

In the previous section, a widely disparate use of literacy was noted. Some better-educated individuals have used their skills, especially their English language skills, to good advantage, both within the country and abroad. Many others have not yet gained access to formal education, or if they have, the skills learned are not being utilized to full advantage. For all of these individuals, but especially for the latter group, literacy is set in a highly oral setting.

Hornberger (1989) has noted that it is a misnomer to call any group oral or literate, since all groups are somewhere along a continuum. As we have noted, the officially reported literacy rate in the Philippines is quite high. In Manila, the capital, print media is abundant. National Book Store is the largest book store chain, but it is only one of several which carries a wide variety of books and school supplies. There are perhaps four or five daily newspapers in English. Getting around Manila is quite possible, with numerous signs and store designations, mostly in English. At the same time, comics and tabloids are also available in Filipino and side streets tend to be labeled in Filipino also.

As one moves out of the national capital region to the larger cities of the province, the printed page is still quite common. One or two of the same English dailies as well as a couple of the local newspapers in a trade language are in evidence. Large cities also have one or more bookstores with a limited selection of reading materials, including possibly some in the local trade language. Jeepneys and buses are labeled in big letters with the names of places serviced.
by them. Small eateries display well-worn comics, which the owner rents-to-read to customers.

Rural towns, such as Lebak in Sultan Kudarat Province, provide much less access to printed materials. The ever-present comics hang in eateries by the town market but newspapers are scarce and outdated. School supplies are sold in a variety/grocery store and purchases are wrapped in a page of old newspaper (as are the vegetables and dried fish in the market).

Salangsang is a smaller town about 30 kilometres inland from Lebak. It is reached by catching a ride on any vehicle that happens to be winding its way up into the mountains. Salangansang is a more mixed setting for literacy. There is an elementary school here (grades one to six) and most of the children have attended for some length of time. The mother tongues of these children would include one of several trade languages (Cebuano, Ilocano, Ilongo) or a ‘minor’ language (such as Tiruray or Manobo). All children are expected to learn in a second and third language, Filipino and English.

Uses for literacy here include a large selection of signs. Stores with stocks of labeled goods and buildings with signboards are also in evidence. There are several churches in the community with a range of literacy practices and languages employed. The majority of literacy demands by the community can be met by a few specialists, such as the church leaders, school teachers, store owners, and those in the local government. These specialists have all been educated beyond the level of the local school.

There are many domains for the use of oral communication. The town leader (barangay captain), for example, travels extensively to meet with the people under his
jurisdiction. He also travels frequently to the municipal office (in Lebak) to communicate with those to whom he reports. Written communication is also employed, but the lack of reliable road transport and norms of standard practice require that even written messages be sent via a trusted courier.

One of the school teachers is in charge of non-formal education for the surrounding area. These classes are aimed at adults and out-of-school youth and the content is intended to be functional. The majority of time in these non-formal classes is spent in orally discussing a livelihood or health topic and perhaps practicing a skill (Rosario-Braid, 1992), with only a small portion of class time given to actually looking at books or printed charts.

The people in Salangsang who have learned to read have few models and few contexts for reading and thus are quite likely to regress in their ability to read after leaving school (Canieso-Doronila, 1995:7). This is not too surprising for social contexts such as that of Salangsang. Learning to read is mainly a decoding task, closely guided by the teacher, with students responding in unison. Only a very few books, in languages which are largely foreign to the students, are available during school sessions. Practice outside of school is limited to signs, documents, and perhaps comics. Those who successfully complete the elementary grades can further their studies by boarding for the school term in Lebak.

Canieso-Doronila observed that education in a foreign language has detrimental effects on the learning process:

This is particularly true of the poor and less educated who have never truly mastered the new language(s) and the knowledge which it encodes. Thus, the high basic literacy rate of 89.2% has no deep roots in terms of capacity for reflective, creative and abstract thought, if done in the foreign language (English) using equally foreign materials. (1995:5)
She also quotes a 1992 study by Cortes (p. 2), which concluded that “the Philippines is a nation of fifth graders who lack proficiency in the 3Rs and skills for gainful employment…”

Along with education (that is, formal schooling), the ability to speak English is very important for a position of high status in the community. Government leaders and teachers are especially called upon to have some fluency in Pilipino and English. Church leaders also have received their training largely in English or Pilipino and translating what they have learned in those languages into the language(s) of the congregation is difficult for most. These are the languages of discourse, both written and oral, with the world outside. Literature in the vernaculars has limited usefulness, and is intended for those who are less educated.

Governments are generally concerned with bringing non-literate into the mainstream of the nation through teaching literacy skills. Generally this is tied to economic gains (Caniesa-Doronila, 1995:2). Graff (1995) notes that “[t]he general lack of recognition of literacy for the purposes it truly serves, together with its controlling assumptions, conditions the place accorded to literacy in schemes of development. It has been given a vague and superficially powerful role” (p. 51). He notes that there are many correlates to literacy in economic and political indicators, but there are no direct linkages or explanations. In many cases, such as that in Elem and Salangsang, as well as that researched by Heath (1983), there is no economic advantage for literates over non-literate.

Again we are drawn to the need for literacy to be situated in a natural and largely oral context.

Literacy learning results from understandings that grow in social settings where reading and writing and talk about language have particular uses for the people involved. It takes place when learners see models of literate behavior as other people engage in literacy activities, and when they talk and ask questions about what is happening, why and how. (Langer, 1987:11)
Dr. Shirley Brice Heath proposed that "[f]or literacy to take and hold, its habits and values have to be embedded in local needs and nonmaterialist values that link to spiritual, ideological, interpersonal, and personal growth" (1996:8). When consideration is given to the group orientation of the learning and to the context for the learning, literacy learning does not pull the individual away from the community, but rather strengthens the community through meeting a common felt need. This is a key ingredient in literacy acquisition as well as retention and functionality.

As noted earlier, the school situation for rural students may also hinder full acquisition of literacy skills. Even though education is highly valued, its relevance to real life may be questioned because of its foreign language, foreign content, and foreign context to the home and the community.

I propose that the real issue in the acquisition of literacy among the minorities...is twofold, namely, first, whether or not the children come from a segment of society where people have traditionally experienced unequal opportunity to use their literacy skills in a socially and economically meaningful and rewarding manner; and second, whether or not the relationship between the minorities and the dominant-group members who control the education system has encouraged the minorities to perceive and define acquisition of literacy as an instrument of deculturation. (Ogbu, 1987:151)

The Philippines, with its Catholic, Protestant and Muslim populations, is a nation populated by people of a Book, which serves as authority and provides guidance; but within this general context, there is much room for interpretation, discussion and variety (Street, 1984:135). Even though literacy would seem to limit ideas to the written account, it in effect facilitates reflection and discussion by those able to interact with print. Reading in this way is set in a social and oral context.

Ong (1982) points out that the Christian Scriptures also support the oral tradition. A number of rhetorical devices are evident in the text, as well as poems and proverbs which are quite natural in traditional oral discourse. "Even genealogies out of such orally framed
tradition are in effect commonly narrative. Instead of a recitation of names, we find a sequence of ‘begats’, of statements of what someone did…” (p. 99).

Many authors (Burnaby, 1985; Heath, 1983; others) have noted that often the primary use of written text is in the context of the church. In the Philippines, a range of approaches might be noted in this regard, with some churches using a trade language or English while a few favour the local language; some take more of a specialist approach to literacy in the church with only the leader and perhaps a reader needing literacy skills, whereas others encourage all church members to read the Scriptures for themselves.

C. Literacy in the Manobo Community

C.1. Overview

The Cotabato Manobo people live in the mountainous regions of Sultan Kudarat Province extending inland from the ocean approximately 15-20 miles. Much of the area is accessible only by hiking trails branching off the main roads, which were created by logging companies. They are a semi-nomadic people, their dwellings widely scattered rather than grouped into villages. There are approximately 30,000 speakers.5

Nearly all the men until recently were engaged in the swidden, or slash-and-burn, type of agriculture. They raise upland (dry) rice, corn, yams, cassava, and a few vegetables for their own consumption. Domesticated animals often include chickens with only a small number of families owning a pig, water buffalo, or horse. The swidden style of agriculture dictates that the family farm move from one plot of land to another about every two years, and where ideal conditions exist the land is allowed to rest for five to seven years between cycles of intensive use. Houses, therefore, are constructed in a somewhat temporary fashion, to last for about two
years. The family's household goods consist only of what can be carried to the new house site in one trip on the backs of the family members.

More recently, some families also raise coffee and/or corn as a cash crop. Coffee is a more stable crop and families have tended to stay closer to their land than they did previously.

Illustration Two: Map of Mindanao, with Manobo language area highlighted
though families still move about frequently. This has meshed well with the fact that it is no longer possible for crop land to lay fallow for as long between cycles of use, as land has become a scarce commodity. Also, the traditional practice of swidden agriculture is now outlawed as a result of massive deforestation throughout the Philippines.

The economic level of the Manobos remains relatively low. The rice harvest in September and the cash from the coffee harvest in October to December are generally depleted by February. Thus there is an annual cycle of food shortage, especially from April to July, and malnutrition in children is quite common. Some factors contributing to this lack are: 1) a forced change from semi-nomadic swidden agriculture to more settled communities; 2) frequent insecurity because of bandits and unfriendly elements; and 3) rising purchase costs of essentials such as sugar, salt and dried fish.

The social structure of the Manobo community is based on the traditional datu system. The community leader, or datu, is the representative of the people in his family grouping with the outside community, for example, for government business, legal disputes, or matters having to do with people from other language groups. He is also called upon to arrange marriages and settle disputes with other Manobo communities. Manobos recognize two types of datu: those who are skilled at legal matters and oratory, and those with great wealth available for trading. The possession of literacy skills is not a factor in choosing a datu.

The rank of datu is, for the most part, earned. People look to the datu in time of need and if that person is able to help, then people will remain loyal to the datu. Status accrues to the datu when more people attach themselves to his clan group. However, if the datu fails in his attempts to help people, he is quickly demoted. Manobo society is only loosely organized,
with the clan group being the most clearly defined level within which the authority of the datu is recognized (Kerr, 1988:147).

More recently, the church leaders, Lay Literacy Teachers, and Village Health Workers have been added to the leadership structure. They carry on their duties generally with the blessings of the village datu, but not directly under his supervision. These newer leaders are sometimes referred to as tukéy datu “little chiefs”, who have specific responsibilities in the community, and which happen to require literacy skills.

Health conditions among the Cotabato Manobos are generally poor. Morbidity and mortality rates among children are very high. Very common health problems are measles, parasites, diarrhea, pneumonia, tuberculosis, malaria, skin problems, and malnutrition-related diseases.

The Cotabato Manobo have experienced the same social pressures as were mentioned earlier in regard to settlers from other parts of the Philippines.

In the Philippines, the dominant national culture has expropriated vast tracts of coastal and arable hillside land from the Cotabato Manobo. Lumber companies have cut through to the last stands of timber that shelter the traditional way of life of the retreating Manobo. This is a critical time – a time of impoverishment, of epidemic disease, and exaggerated seasonal hunger. At a deeper level, the migration of lowland Filipinos and economic interests into the region of the Manobo is forcing the demise of the Manobo traditional political-judicial system and the weakening of their basis for manipulating and maintaining harmony with the spiritual powers (Lynip, 1988:2-3).

On the coastal side, the settlers of 40 years ago were mainly Tagalog and Ilocano speakers from Luzon; they established large logging operations in the virgin forests. Maguindanaon speakers have been their traditional coastal neighbours; and more recently Cebuano and Ilongo farmers, settling in the rich rice-growing areas, have been added to the linguistic and cultural
mix. Other traditional neighbours are the Tiruray to the north and the Tboli to the south. The Manobo have been squeezed to the hilly slopes.

The educational level of the Manobos is low. In 1980 less than 2% of the adult population could read or write independently. Only a small percentage of the Manobo children lived within accessible (walking) range of a public school. In the last 15 years, access has increased somewhat with the addition of two or three small schools, but more than 70% of the children are still not able to live at home and attend school through the elementary grades.

The Manobo language has had a written form for about 40 years. The alphabet utilizes roman script and is quite similar to that of Filipino.\textsuperscript{6} It contains 22 characters, including six vowels, and two symbols for marking glottal stop. Apart from the two additional vowels and the final glottal stop, only two letters are different from Filipino -- the letters ‘p’ (a bilabial fricative) and ‘r’ (which is absent in Manobo).

Elem is the community in which my family lived between 1986-89. It is fairly typical of a Manobo village,\textsuperscript{7} though it is one of the largest, with 172 families claiming Elem as their home during census-taking for draught relief in July, 1998. It is reached by walking the rugged trail for about two to three hours from Salangsang (mentioned earlier). A community about a 40-minute walk away from Elem built a short, grass runway so that the SIL single-engine plane could land there, making our commutes into the village much easier. Elem is also somewhat accessible by road.\textsuperscript{8}

A few of the Manobo men were sent out of the community as children to attend school in a lowland community, but most men and women have been introduced to literacy through the adult non-formal program, which began in 1983. For example, in the community of Elem,
more than 75% of the adults have learned to read through the program. Also, a public school was begun in the community in 1994 to teach grades one and two. The highest literacy level of anyone in the community is first year high school (grade seven). Only four have been to high school and seven others completed the elementary grades. Virtually all communication in the village is done in Manobo, except for occasions when a non-Manobo visitor arrives or when trading at one of two or three small stores on the fringe of the village, where Cebuano or Ilongo storeowners conduct business.

Most communication in the community is done by oral means. People love to visit and a walk of two to four hours to another community for the purpose of visiting or a special event is common. Relationships are an integral part of the culture and these are maintained by visiting over a cup of coffee or a plug of betel nut. The traditional *antang*, or bargaining process, is employed for settling legal cases, buying prestigious items such as a horse or gongs, and setting a bride price. The *antang* employs a special vocabulary as well as specialized non-verbal clues.

C.2. Program Description

Clearly there was a need to help in the area of basic literacy. In 1983, a revised adult literacy program was instituted by SIL. Adults (over 15 years old) were targeted because of SIL's contract with the DECS, which places our activities under the Bureau of Non-formal Education; children are the domain of the formal school system. The natural outgrowth of the adult literacy program, however, is that Manobos desire to see their children educated as well.

Several factors came together in the early 1980s to create an interest in learning to read. Some of these have already been alluded to above, such as a growing tension from the more powerful groups settling in the area and increasing economic distress. Other factors
were: 1) a growing interest in the Scriptures that were being translated into Manobo and put into print form; 2) classes which provided a socially acceptable way to gain prestige in the culture without accumulating wealth (which is taboo); and 3) their love to socialize. Attending a class was a good way to get together.

The literacy program consists of three levels: the pre-primer, the primer, and the fluency level, which is further divided into three phases. The pre-primer teaches pre-reading skills, such as left-to-right orientation, top-to-bottom orientation, auditory and visual discrimination, writing strokes, and number recognition and writing to ten. Students complete this level in about five days.

The primer teaches the six vowels, 14 consonants, the glottal stop, and some punctuation marks. It contains drills teaching auditory and visual discrimination, writing letters and spelling, and stories followed by comprehension questions. This level takes a minimum of three months to complete with many classes taking longer. When students complete the primer, they are able to read and write anything in the vernacular language. A supervisor tests the student at this point for decoding skills, comprehension, and spelling, based on a short text which the student has not seen previously. Students who pass the test can proceed to the fluency level, but those who do not pass review or repeat the class. Classes are taught by Manobo Lay Literacy Teachers, who gather classes of 5-10 students each from their home communities. During the 1980s the teachers were paid an honorarium for each student who passed the test. More recently, students pay a flat fee to the teacher or the community supports the teacher in other ways. The fluency level uses a number of vernacular publications to help students improve their reading and writing skills and to develop the habit of reading. The minimum time for this
level is six months. Phases one and two each contain twenty lessons and phase three contains ten lessons. Reading materials include traditional narratives, native-authored stories, the story of Tariri (a head-hunter from Peru), Old Testament stories, hymn book, the Manobo New Testament, a math book, three health module books and a phrase book in Manobo, Filipino, and English. A teachers' manual was prepared for this level with students using the books mentioned and practicing their writing in notebooks. During phase one, classes meet three times a week, phase two classes meet twice a week and phase three classes meet once a week with more emphasis on reading outside of class.

A teacher's manual for teaching Filipino composes yet another level beyond the fluency level. A cursive writing manual and a book on geography (in Manobo and Pilipino) are still under development for use at this level.

In the early 1980s the teachers were drawn from the few Manobos who had learned to read and write in school or who had learned independently. In the late 1980s some of the teachers who were trained were those who had completed a literacy course themselves and were then trained to teach others. Likewise, some of those trained as VHWs were previous literacy students who went on to learn new skills.

In the early 1980s, about the time the program was being implemented, I was joined by four Filipina members of the Translators Association of the Philippines, a national NGO with similar aims to those of SIL. Each of the two teams consisted of a nurse and a literacy specialist; they were located in other distant communities of the language area. Thus three main hubs of activity were formed, with frequent joint ventures for teacher training seminars, VHW and church leader seminars, and times of fellowship. This strategy increased interaction
between Manobos from far-flung communities tremendously and raised the self-awareness and confidence of the Manobos.

A model developed in several locations where a village formed with the indigenous Bible Church\(^{10}\) at the centre of the community. The literacy program, livelihood assistance, and health services were auxiliary components of the church program though not limited to church adherents. The Manobo literacy instructors, livelihood teachers, and VHWs were all accountable to the church leadership for their moral conduct and the carrying out of their duties. The literacy classes were begun each day with Bible reading, chorus singing and prayer. The dispensing of medicines and care of the sick were often accompanied by prayer as well. This model reflects the holistic way the church sees itself ministering to community members in both body and soul.

A number of immediate results of the literacy program were noted. First of all, attending class was prestigious and class members tended to dress up to attend. Secondly, those who learned to read had an immediate outlet for their newly gained skill through participating in small group Bible studies in which everyone who was able to read took a turn reading a verse. Thirdly, there was a desire for more classes and more new reading materials. Fourthly, those who had been to school and were semi-literate showed renewed interest in practicing their skills.

In one community, several teens who had completed the basic and fluency levels successfully, desired to enroll in the formal school system about 15 kilometres away. The DECS has a standard placement test to handle such cases as theirs, so they took the test. Almost all of these students were placed in grade 5 of the DECS system. As teen-agers, they
were more able to cope with boarding away from home than were younger children and some have now completed high school.

Ketin is a young man who lives about a one and a half-hour hike from Belanga, one of the hub communities of the program. He had heard many things about the literacy and other programs going on at Belanga, but was afraid to go there because of traditional fears and age-old animosities between neighbouring communities. Then a Belanga pastor visited his village and prayed for his father who had been bed-ridden for three years. He recovered remarkably overnight, and Ketin and his brothers decided to check out the Belanga situation. The villagers were quite surprised to see Ketin and his brothers arrive for church fully armed for battle! One day he was selling coffee beans in the market town and met some of the Belanga men who asked to see the receipt from the sale of his coffee. As they had suspected, Ketin had been cheated; they went with him back to the coffee dealer who promptly corrected the error when it was pointed out to him. Ketin decided to attend literacy classes so he wouldn't be cheated again. Soon after completing the course, he was trained to be a literacy teacher for his own community. Though only five students are normally allowed in the class of a first-time teacher, 16 people passed the final evaluation! They just couldn't wait for the next class.

Goody (1968) points out that reading and writing is normally a solitary activity (pp. 59-60). In light of that, it is interesting to note the group orientation of Manobo literate practice. To read to oneself is to be selfish, just like playing a radio softly is selfish. Manobos read at church, with the family or in small groups, or in a class setting, and when done alone, it is done aloud in order to share it with others. Heath (1983:191) also noted that reading alone in the community she referred to as Trackton was viewed as anti-social. Reading alone was the sign of someone who could not make it socially. Corson (1992) reminds us that in Europe,
"literacy was [historically] an oral and even a collective activity" (p. 492). Westerners have grown away from this model while many other cultures retain it.

Between 1983 and 1991, a total of 72 Manobo lay teachers taught basic literacy classes. In that time, 250 classes were held with a total of 1137 people learning to read and write. More recently records have been kept in a less formal manner than previously, but it is estimated that 2000 people have learned to read and write up to 1997.

Summary of the Chapter

In this chapter Manobo literacy has been set in context. At the national level, a high degree of commitment to education for economic development was noted; this has led to a policy of English language instruction for the technical areas along with Pilipino for the nation-building aspects of education. The result has been a large number of highly employable overseas contract workers.

The situation at home has been quite different, however, with the majority of people living in poverty and being under-educated. Most of these reside in the rural areas, where English and Pilipino are not well known and the formal curriculum is less relevant. Literacy is acquired and adapted in a highly oral setting. Contexts for literate practice are limited.

The Manobos have recently been introduced to literacy in their mother tongue. The results are tied more closely to affective goals and with emphasis on maintaining social cohesion. Learning to speak, read and write in Pilipino is the final step in the literacy program.

Though various writers have different terms for it, such as residual orality (Ong, 1983:115), contemporary orality (Rao, 1992:4), and "addition, not alternative" (Goody,
1968:68) all agree that no culture is purely oral or literate. All groups of people are somewhere along the continuum between oral and literate.

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1 Authors are not consistent in their use of the terms Filipino and Pilipino. Generally Filipino is the conglomerate language still under development and Pilipino is the designation for the Tagalog-based language, in use until very recently.
2 These are Tagalog, Cebuano, Ilocano, Hiligaynon/Ilongo, Waray, Bikol, Pampango, and Pangasinan.
3 From 1946 to 1965 the country was led by a series of one-term presidents. Ferdinand Marcos was elected in 1965 and served until 1986, half of that time under martial law. In 1986, Mr. Marcos was ousted from power amid allegations of massive fraud after declaring himself the winner in presidential elections. The administration of his successor, Corazon Aquino, was rocked by a number of attempted coups, but national stability has generally improved in recent years (Encyclopedia of the Third World, 1992).
4 Literacy rates are arrived at through various surveys and census data, each with their own standards and procedures. These procedures range from simply asking the head of the house how many in the household can read, to noting what grade level was attained, to a simple test of reading.
5 Some of the material in this section is taken from the "Report on Progress for CIDA Grant to Cotabato Manobo" November 1, 1991.
6 The Filipino alphabet more recently includes all the letters of the English alphabet. These are not included in the Manobo alphabet at the basic level.
7 See page 93 for a discussion of newly forming communities.
8 The road was constructed by the logging company in the process of a reforestation drive and at the expense of some Manobo crops and land, thus it is a sensitive issue of whether to use the road or not. The most frequent users of the road are drivers of "skylabs" (motorcycles which have been extended at the back in order to carry four passengers).
9 The literacy program was funded by the Canadian International Development Agency for several years as the program was being developed. When those funds ended, a new way of compensating teachers was needed. Teachers received about C$5.00 per student for the entire basic course.
10 See page 94 for a fuller description of the Association of Manobo Bible Churches.
11 From the report to CIDA. 1991.
Chapter 3
A Literature Review

Egpesalamat kë diyà si Nemula enù ka petow dé nelegdawan sa penemdem kë danà kë nekebasa owoy neketiig egsulat.
We are thankful to God because suddenly our thoughts were shone upon as a result of being able to read and knowing how to write.
Dulin Belag, pastor

Various authors have addressed literacy meanings and motivations toward becoming literate; fewer authors have related these topics to considerations of social organization and the assumptions of both literacy learners and literacy providers. This chapter will first of all offer a model of social organization, which aids in an understanding of different motivations toward literacy by different groups of people. Following this discussion, assumptions around the functions of literacy will be presented, based on Scribner’s literacy metaphors. On this basis, definitions of literate practice, situated in social contexts will be explored. Finally, reading materials for the neo-literate will be discussed in light of all the factors discussed in the chapter.

A. Social Structures

In attempting to design literacy programs which will be sustained, a clear understanding of the social context is important. One approach to this is presented by Barber (1995), who has proposed a grid-group model of social organization, based on earlier models by Douglas (1982), Thompson, Ellis and Wildavsky (1990) and Lingenfelter (1992, 1995). In his social organization framework, societies are ranked as to the degree to which they operate individually or as a group (weak or strong group) and as to the “demands of status and role” (low and high grid) (p. 1 of summary). A weak group-low grid society, therefore, is highly individualistic; societies which are strong-group and low-grid are egalitarian; others which are
weak-group and high grid are bureaucratic; while societies which are strong group and high grid are hierarchists.

Illustration Three: Social Organization Model

Applying this framework to the Manobo community\(^1\), we find a low-grid and generally low-group (moving more toward group orientation in certain circumstances) society. As noted in Chapter 2, the primary social units are the extended household, with groups of two or three houses scattered at a distance throughout the hilly terrain. The people under a certain *datu* might come together for a specific, short-term project, such as carrying a house to a new location or helping to harvest the rice crop, but generally the units are autonomous.

With regard to literacy, the Manobos are motivated for mostly individualistic, personal reasons. Literacy is of instrumental benefit and may serve to raise prestige or personal well-being. The interests of the larger group must be kept in mind but primary direction does not come from them.
The motivations for acquiring literacy skills are different for each type of society. In the Ngbaka literacy program in Zaire, for example, motivation building “generally happens through a communal process headed or at least initiated by some kind of authority, much more than through an individual expressing his personal opinion” (Gfeller, 1997:106). This suggests a more hierarchical arrangement of the society than is noted among the Manobo. However, eight themes were identified by Gfeller as motivations for joining the literacy program. In ascending order of importance, these were: classes as a social event, intellectual curiosity, to keep secrets (that is, to read and write letters without a scribe), a responsibility (that is, for teachers who want to help others learn, and for women to help their families more effectively), development activities, strengthening self-esteem, a substitute for formal education, pride in one’s own language, and to be able to read the Word of God independently. The final items having to do with internal motivations were by far the dominant reasons that were cited by the Ngbaka literacy program participants, but the prompting of another person was the factor that actually got them into a class. In this particular literacy program, the focus was adjusted to the specific situation while structuring the program to fit the society.

So we see that understanding the social organization dynamics of a particular group of people will aid in identifying both motivational forces and constraining forces. For egalitarian societies, a more group-oriented approach toward literacy will provide a better cultural fit; for hierarchical societies, the literacy provider will do well to identify who in the community has the authority to influence potential learners. For individualistic societies, immediate, personal gains provide the best motivation.
B. Ideological Foundations for Literacy Provision

Literacy providers are often unaware of their own motivations and assumptions regarding the place of literacy. In order to find the cultural fit, providers must first articulate what literacy means to them, and specifically what literacy can mean in the lives of the learners.

B.1. Literacy in Three Metaphors

Scribner (1997) offers three metaphors as a way of understanding literacy application and its provision. The first metaphor is literacy as adaptation. This metaphor "encapsulates the survival or pragmatic value of literacy" (Goldman, 1989:2). A significant feature of viewing literacy from this standpoint is examining the uses which people find for literacy and how literacy answers the felt needs of the individual. It is the functional components of applied literacy that are in focus. There is an implied message that everyone needs literacy.

Scribner’s second metaphor is literacy as power. From this viewpoint, literacy is seen as “a necessary tool for socio-political and economic advancement” (Goldman, p. 2). There is the assumption that the group or community will be empowered, or advanced. The level of literacy attained by individuals will impact both their own standing within the community and the lives of others in the community. This is a common notion of development-based literacy programs, but also of social reformers, such as Paulo Freire. “Paulo Freire bases his influential theory of literacy education on the need to make literacy a resource for fundamental social transformation” (Scribner, 1997:209).

Rao (1992) has noted that literacy increases social inequality (p. 8). As certain community members become more fluent, or perhaps continue their education in the formal school system, the result can be that individuals become endowed with power or status.
Scribner and Cole (1981) noted that literacy in Vai syllabics did not have this hierarchical effect on their society. "It is striking how transmission of the Vai script occurred in such a way as not to transform the social relationships among individuals into a formal teacher-learner relationship" (p. 65). Unlike literacy instruction in English or Arabic, which were taught in a formal setting, the usually one-on-one tutoring between adults on a voluntary basis did not lead to social stratification. Literacy in Vai fits the metaphor of literacy as adaptation, while literacy in English and Arabic better fit the metaphor of literacy as power.

Street (1984) asserts that many formal literacy programs single out some community members for training. "Unesco programmes, being related to economic growth models and productivity, tended to be selective: they were not trying to make everyone literate but selected out those most likely to be productive, which tended to be those in a stable political structure and who already had some skills" (p. 186). This was the case with the Experimental World Literacy Project in Tanzania. Literacy was closely linked to industrial, agricultural, and craft training and focused on individuals most likely to turn literacy into productivity (Gillette, 1987:204). This again exemplifies the literacy as power metaphor, but with the focus on individuals and not on communities.

Scribner's third metaphor is literacy as a state of grace. "This individual has access to the accumulated knowledge of humankind and enjoys a favored intellectual status among the populace, the majority of whom do not possess such skills" (Goldman, p.2-3). Following this metaphor, the literate is seen as a specialist, one who possesses a skill that is unattainable to the rest of the community members. Scribner notes that reading holy books, such as the Qur'an in Islamic traditions and the Scriptures in post-Luther Protestant groups accrued a
certain benefit, almost apart from the content of the text itself (p. 210). Similar powers were noted in secular writings and practices of such ancients as Plato and Aristotle. Perhaps "The Great Divide" theories of Goody and Ong also find their place in this metaphor.

Elitist status may also be linked to the language of literacy, such as in the case of schools in the Philippines where Filipino and English are used. As mentioned previously, these two languages of instruction are not the mother tongue for 80% of the students in the country; virtually all students are language learners in the early grades. A widely held assumption, then, is that the motivation for learning Filipino is integrative, that is, for national identity, while the motivation for learning English is instrumental, aimed at international travel and business and for access to academic knowledge. For a percentage of the students, however, learning English has an integrative function as well, "in the sense that learners wish to identify with the elites of Philippine society who are conversant in English" (Gonzales, 1991:40).

In examining these three metaphors, it becomes clear, as Scribner notes (p. 214), that all three are needed to adequately describe any one situation. At the same time, setting the metaphors along-side the social organization matrix, some parallels can be drawn. For example, individualistic societies tend to use literacy along the lines of the adaptive metaphor. Even when literacy acquisition is potentially universal, not all may choose to learn. As with the Vai literates, cited by Scribner and Cole (1981), and the Arabic literates, cited by Street (1984), making literacy the possession of all is not so much the issue as making literacy accessible to all (in both these examples, however, literate practice was largely the domain of men).
In the same way, egalitarian societies best fit the *literacy as power* metaphor. There is the greatest chance of group impact as a result of literacy acquisition in this arrangement. The group is in control of the learning enterprise and the group is seen as benefiting equally from any new knowledge gained by individuals.

However, if power accretes to individuals, then the *literacy as a state of grace* metaphor would be applicable. The focus is on individuals and their place in the society, even apart from the content of their learning. Such may be the case, for example, when a community member attends a seminar or specialized course, or completes a level of formal schooling. When literacy benefits increase social stratification, the *state of grace* metaphor seems appropriate.

The role of literacy specialists in a community is important to note here. Literacy specialists may fill such roles as scribes and readers in the church (Burnaby, 1985:65). They may refine their skills for commerce or trade (Scribner and Cole, 1981:90). They may become song writers or radio announcers (Valentine, 1995:98). Specialist roles, however, might fit into any of the three metaphors, depending on the benefits accruing to the individual, as opposed to the group. Each of these demonstrate the metaphor of *literacy as a state of grace* in the sense that the individual possesses a higher status by virtue of being able to read and write functionally. But if the skills are ‘owned’ by the group, then the *literacy as power* metaphor is operative as well.
B.2. *Ideological Orientations of Literacy Providers*

How the literacy provider views the target community and its needs will impact the type of program they will offer. Their literacy programs can also be described in large part by one of the metaphors discussed above.

Street (1984) notes that the basic premise for the great majority of national literacy campaigns in the past 50 years has been the functional uses to which literacy can be applied for economic gains and nation building. Unesco originally saw literacy as a neutral technology, but since 1975, critics have pointed out that their campaigns were “tied to a particular developmental and economistic ethos. It subserved the interests of foreign investment and multinational companies on the premise that productivity and profits could be raised if ‘literacy levels’ were raised” (p.184). Street takes this political stance one step further when he points out that some literacy training “may be used to disguise the fact that some forms of literacy programme actually impair criticalness and that what is being imparted is not a technical skill but an ideology” (p.186).

“A political theory of literacy for development” was proposed by Bhola (1989:443). He suggests that, depending on a given country’s development ideology, three different approaches might be utilized: a project approach uses a motivational-development model, which results in gradualist gains; a program approach uses a planned development model and grows out of reformist intents; and a campaign approach uses a structural-development model and grows out of revolutionary vision.
Such approaches clearly demonstrate the metaphor of literacy as power. The assumption is that the community, and the whole country, will benefit economically and socially from the acquisition of literacy. But as Mundy (1993) has noted, Bhola’s analysis “underestimates the importance of international factors in both shaping and limiting national efforts at literacy” (p. 405). Furthermore, Mundy aptly points out that the analysis tends to overestimate “the ability of the state to act in the best interests of its own citizens” (p. 405).

Agnihotri (1994), writing about a campaign in India, further notes

... campaign based models will invariably be characterised by an overwhelming initial euphoria which is likely to disappear fast as the realities of the situation tighten their grip. Even in the case of Ernakulam we do not have any substantial evidence of how what may have been achieved educationally and socially has actually been sustained. (p. 50)

A recent special edition of the International Journal of Educational Development (1996) carried articles relating to the World Bank’s 1995 “Priorities and Strategies for Education.” It was noted that the Bank’s principle mission is to reduce poverty worldwide and that the Bank provides 25% of the external funding for education in developing nations. The Bank sees its main contribution as advice (p. 254) and, to support that, it fields a team of educational researchers. Critics of the Bank see the use of this research as political, in order to support their own programs, and cite a lack of self-criticism and assessment. Furthermore, linkages to organizations such as Unesco are lacking (p. 267). The Bank has in many respects taken over the role of Unesco in educational advancement world wide, and from a highly economic viewpoint.

There is growing evidence that literacy tied to development is not realistic. The Philippines seemingly follows a world trend where the level of education needed to benefit
economically continues to rise. The value of a high school education a few years ago can now only be attained with two years of college. This perhaps partly explains why, in a country where 60% of the population has completed elementary school, 70% of the population lies below the country's poverty line (Foundation for Continuing Education, 1996:2). Education alone is not the key to economic progress.

This is not new information. In the United States, the Office of Education aimed government Adult Basic Education courses in the 1960s at economic independence (Weber, 1975:150). However, “as has been shown elsewhere in the world, education does not create economic prosperity, but rather follows on it” (p. 150). These programs were missing the mark as far as understanding student motivations as well, since participants “do not share the concern for employability that the legislation expresses. Two-thirds of the students surveyed in ABE-OE programs in 1967 gave self-improvement as their main reason for taking a course…” (p. 151).

From a different perspective, Street (1984) cites Freire’s literacy campaigns as explicitly ideological (p. 202). Freire was concerned with bringing people to a point of codifying their own experiences in personally meaningful ways. Learning to read and write was to be tied closely to the people’s own experiences of living. However, Freire, too, as Street points out, had an implicit agenda, which cannot be separated from the process of literacy acquisition.

Bhola (1989) notes that “adult literacy in the development of nations can be best understood as a political process within a policy-making context” (p. 442). At the same time, national and international campaigns are fraught with difficulties of conflicting ideologies,
strategy and cooperation. Smaller, more local efforts seem better equipped to bring literacy to communities. "...[T]he NGO’s strength lies in its community roots and its responsiveness to community decision-making" (Lind & Johnston, 1990:55-58). Such efforts are more likely to follow the metaphor of literacy as adaptation. But even on the local level, the provider should examine personal assumptions and the ideological base for the context of literacy.

In considering the ideological base for the work of SIL, for example, the following statement by Clinton Robinson is offered:

SIL believes that every language and culture are of value in themselves and that each language is important as the means of daily communication of a particular group of people. SIL adopts a people-centered approach to development and to the educational process. Founded on Christian principles, SIL sees development as a process in which people have increased opportunities to reach their full, God-given potential. Working with the local community, linguistic research enables a writing system to be developed; this results in the possibility of literacy in the local languages, as well as in the national language.

As a service-oriented organization, we see ourselves as facilitators and partners in project goals. We seek to work with all religious and political sectors of a community. We serve in a non-political and non-sectarian manner.²

In summary, then, it is important to identify the assumptions of the literacy provider in order to determine how closely they relate to the assumptions of learners. Government agencies tend to follow a literacy as power ideology, which may or may not fit the cultural grid. NGOs are in a better position to respond to local social structures, but they also must articulate their ideological framework in order to discern how it relates to the local situation.

C. What is Literate Behaviour?

Defining what literate behavior is ties closely to one’s ideological stance, which in turn relates to social organization. This section will examine several definitions in light of Scribner’s metaphors and social context.
C.1. Various Definitions

A number of authors have defined literacy. Most definitions, like that of Unesco in 1978, focus attention on the needs of the illiterate to be a full participant in his/her society and emphasize the utilitarian nature of literacy from a developmental point of view.

A person is functionally illiterate who cannot engage in all those activities in which literacy is required for effective functioning of his group and community and also for enabling him to continue to use reading, writing and calculation for his own and the community’s development. (Unesco, 1983)

Another definition, which looks specifically at the technical skills involved, is that offered by Gudschinsky:

That person is literate who, in a language that he speaks, can read and understand anything he would have understood if it had been spoken to him; and who can write, so that it can be read, anything that he can say. (1973:5)

A comparison of definitions points to a number of assumptions and levels of usage.

One assumption made by the Unesco definition is that the society as a whole is literate and will support literate practice. As the Manobo situation illustrates, this is not always the case.

It seems to be true that illiterate people with little contact with the doings of literate societies experience small need or desire for literacy. Indeed, it may be the case that the greater the degree of illiteracy in a society, the less will be the concern of the illiterate about being illiterate. (Oxenham, 1980:6)

A second assumption, which in light of the earlier discussion can be questioned, is that the community is operating as a unit. In highly individualistic societies, such as the Manobo’s, the community as a whole does not exert a high degree of influence; influence may be limited to a small grouping of extended family members.

Gillooly (1973), in discussing the influence of writing systems on reading fluency, divides readers into three levels of reading proficiency: beginning readers, intermediate readers and mature readers. He notes that beginning readers are aided by an alphabet with a
predictable grapheme-phoneme correspondence. Readers at the intermediate level are aided by being forced to read increasingly larger chunks of text. Mature readers take little note of the smaller units of text and concentrate on even larger chunks, such as the phrase and sentence.

Returning to the definitions of literacy given above, Gudschinsky's definition seems to focus on the level of Gillooly's beginning reader. Gudschinsky's context was that of newly alphabetized languages, which tend to use a predictable grapheme-phoneme correspondence. Thus, as in the case of the Manobos, literacy can be acquired by adults in a relatively short period of time. Progression to mature reading levels is not a given; in fact it is unlikely because of the social context.

The Unesco definition goes beyond the beginning reading level and implies mature reading practices for functional uses. Will the neo-literates of the Unesco scenario be reading in their L1, or will the reading needs of the community require the L2?

Unesco has stated, "[i]t is axiomatic that the best medium for teaching a child is his mother tongue" (Unesco, 1953:11). However, there are also any number of reasons why L1 instruction does not occur, such as political, linguistic, educational, socio-cultural, economic, financial, and practical reasons (Bhola, 1989:442). The reality, then, is that literacy is often tied to the acquisition of a second language (L2).

This practice of using the L2 does not concord with the large amount of literature which supports initial literacy instruction in the L1. For example, Elias states, "[c]learly, then, the linguistically and culturally determined factors must be controlled in order to facilitate the child's learning to read. In the main, it will only be in their L1 that most children will have that necessary competence" (1977:45).
Robinson (1994) notes that there are three strands to this debate: the educational perspective, which favors the L1; the development perspective, which increasingly employs participatory methods and implies the use of L1; and the economic and political perspective (p. 70). While acknowledging the common reasons for rejecting the use of lesser known languages, such as there being only a few speakers, lack of a written tradition, and the lack of materials, he concludes that “... while there are relevant considerations, they can generally only lead to the conclusion that a minority language is not worth bothering with, since only a few people speak it and the effort of developing it would be prohibitive. This is to ignore all but the economic and political strands of the debate” (p. 71).

Mey has observed that:

... prestige language is bound up with social class. Not only are we accustomed to associate different varieties of language use with different social strata, but our associations are mostly superficial. Judgments such as ‘ugly’ vs. ‘beautiful’, ‘virile’ vs. ‘effeminate’, ‘sing-song’ vs. ‘clipped’, ‘guttural’, or ‘harsh’ have little to do with actually observed phonetic phenomena. Rather they reflect a (positive or negative) social identification on the part of the persons making those judgments. (1985:239)

Heath (1996) has noted that “… literacy in the local language may carry strong ideological value if it becomes associated with religious or social convictions tied to institutions and small-group needs” (p. 3). These are clearly outside the interests of national governments and will be manifested most likely by the interactions of community members with NGOs. An example of this seems to be the community of Lynx Lake, as reported by Valentine (1995), where a syllabary style of writing was first introduced by church leaders. This writing system is highly valued by the community, being taught in the school. Syllabic writing in Ojibwe or Cree is closely connected to their identity as Christians and it has been adopted for intra-group communication as well (p. 98).
Gudschinsky included in her definition of literacy the element of comprehension. Thus for learners working through their L2, literacy may or may not be attained, depending on the level of comprehension that ensues. In the case of Quechua students, for example, Homberger noted that “pupils are pronouncing the words in Spanish with little or no inkling of what they are reading about” (1988:195). According to Gudschinsky’s definition, these students are not literate, even though they are able to decode text, because they are not reading with comprehension.

Again, comparisons can be drawn to Scribner’s literacy metaphors. Gudschinsky’s definition of literacy fits well with the adaptive metaphor because it leaves the most room for individual application and adaptation. Use of a comprehensible language is implied, but transfer to other functional languages is not excluded. The Unesco definition emphasizes group development, which clearly illustrates the literacy as power metaphor. Use of a comprehensible language is of secondary importance since larger (national) goals are in focus.

C.2. The Social Nature of Reading

Beyond a basic definition of literacy, a support network for literate practice is necessary to encourage its use in meaningful ways. Again groups will operate differently in this regard, but each has the potential for reading and writing in context.

More recently, authors have examined the social nature or context of reading. “It would be more productive to view literacy in a broader sense, ...that incorporates social practices, conceptions of reading and writing, and literacy as a way of thinking into the definition of literacy” (Langer, 1987:2). However, it is quite possible that the literacy provider and the literacy learner will have different conceptions of literacy: for the learners, literacy
might imply community development or assistance in community programs, while for the provider, it might imply introducing new technologies (see Street, 1984:196).

There is always a social context for reading, whether a supportive one or otherwise. Reading is not so much an individual activity as a group one that reflects values, aspirations and felt needs.

Literacy learning results from understandings that grow in social settings where reading and writing and talk about language have particular uses for the people involved. It takes place when learners see models of literate behavior as other people engage in literacy activities, and when they talk and ask questions about what is happening, why and how. (Langer, 1987:11)

Shirley Brice Heath (1996) proposes that "[f]or literacy to take and hold, its habits and values have to be embedded in local needs and nonmaterialist values that link to spiritual, ideological, interpersonal, and personal growth" (p. 8). Again, consideration is given to the group orientation of the learning and to the context for the learning. Literacy learning, then, does not pull the individual away from the community, but rather strengthens the community through meeting a felt need. This is noted as a key ingredient in literacy acquisition as well as retention and functionality.

A child who is pulled out of the home culture to attend school in another cultural setting and in an unfamiliar language will no longer have the social context for learning and will be at a loss for appropriate models. Scribner and Cole (1981) noted that formal education for the Vai, using the national language, English, was more a rite of passage which led out of the community than a means of gaining technical skills and status in the community (p. 71).

Thus the acquisition of literacy for children, but also for adults, can be seen as a threat to group identity. The way literacy is introduced and used can either enhance or break the social bonds. How this actually works out in practice will depend on the social organization of
the community: for individualists, *literacy for adaptation* can be seen as meeting felt needs and validating their identity; for egalitarian societies, *literacy for power* can further group goals and development; for hierarchical societies, literacy can provide the means for status within the group.

The expectations which people bring to the literacy learning task are varied and depend to a large degree on the models of literate behaviour available to them. Heath (1983) explains that the children in a white working-class neighbourhood (Roadville) bring very different ideas about reading to school than do children in a black working-class neighbourhood (Trackton); both of these are contrastive to the children of a middle-class neighbourhood (townspeople). Roadville writing is somewhat formulaic, being used for writing notes, lists, financial forms and maintaining relationships (p. 218), whereas in Trackton, literacy is highly functional with very young children reading signs and labels for information. Reading is almost always in the context of immediate action (p 191) while writing is generally a memory devise (p. 199). Young children living in the town, however, have a much richer experience of discussing print and creating meaning around the text.

In Trackton, reading is a social event, not a private one (p. 196). Written materials are discussed and the meaning negotiated. Print is used to gain information and to maintain relationships and to gain support for beliefs or attitudes (p. 198). In these contexts, reading is an active stimulus for discussion and action. However, when children enter school, this active interaction with text is not encouraged.

Expectations for literacy among the Cree (Burnaby, 1985:60) depends on the language in which one is literate. In the indigenous syllabics, literacy is learned informally as an adult
when the skill is immediately applicable. Uses for syllabic literacy are largely in the context of
the church, some booklets published by the band office, and for some symbolic uses (signs and
labels). These expectations are changing, however, as Cree syllabics has recently been
introduced to the elementary school as the language of instruction.

How the literacy provider defines literacy will influence the aims of a literacy program.
“Education is not a goal in itself. It is a tool to reach development goals. These goals may be
social, political, or economic” (van Riezen, 1996:86). However, examining the learners’
concept of literacy is even more valuable. Huebner suggests that “…the types of knowledge
valued in preliterate society and types of literacy introduced may influence the degree of
success of the introduction of that skill” (1987:179). He cites Spolsky as saying that the
“perceived utility of literacy by traditionally influential members of the community and the
establishment of native functions for literacy” is one of the key ingredients for illiterates to
desire to learn (p. 180).

These functions of literacy become even clearer in societies which have developed
their own writing systems. Burnaby (1985) cites the case of the Cree, in which literacy in Cree
(syllabics) carries a different meaning than literacy in English and French (roman script).
Literacy in Cree carries the meaning of a specialist role for use in the church, and as a means
of communication over distance. Literacy in English and French carries the connotation of
economic advancement and contact with the larger world outside the community (pp. 65-69).
Scribner and Cole (1981), reporting on the uses of the traditional script among the Vai of
Liberia, noted that literacy was defined in terms of its usefulness for communicating over
distance and for record keeping in business. It was learned by young adults who found an immediate context for it (p. 89).

These uses for literacy in the everyday life of people provide individual support for literacy retention. On a community level, creating contexts for literate practice provides institutional support. This might include advanced classes, new organizations, or new publications.

With regard to language use, Fishman (1989) describes a society in which both bilingualism and diglossia are present.

This is a societal arrangement in which individual bilingualism is not only widespread but [also] institutionally buttressed. ‘Membership’ in the culture requires that the various languages that are recognized as pertaining to such membership be implemented in culturally ‘correct’ contexts. The separate locations in which L [local] and H [formal] are acquired immediately provide them with separate institutional supports. (p. 185)

This type of an arrangement is illustrated by Franco-Ontarians as well. Though they live in an English-speaking province, the community supports French by teaching it in school, through French community organizations, and by encouraging its use in the home. “...it is clear that Franco-Ontarians have now reached a level of institutional support for their ancestral language that makes it both possible and attractive for those who wish to maintain French to do so” (Mougeon & Beniak, 1994:124). In this regard, note the role of literacy in the L1 as supporting the use of the mother tongue.

In summary, then, identifying or building a social context for literate practice provides institutional support. Where reading and writing have meaningful uses, both to the group and to individuals within the group, literacy has a chance of being sustained and of impacting the
community in positive ways. A social context for reading within the community means that attaining literacy skills does not alienate one from the rest of the group.

C.3. Contemporary Orality

Literate practice is best set in an oral context for all four types of social structures outlined by Barber. Both modes of communication serve community members in different contexts. Rather than the dichotomy proposed by Ong (1982), in which societies operating apart from the printed page are seen as cognitively different than societies which utilize print, a more balanced approach might be to place oral and literate practices on a continuum (Hornberger, 1989).

Goody (1982) refers to three sources of knowledge in an oral culture: experiential knowledge, learned by imitation; traditional knowledge, learned by repetition of the teachings of the elders; and spiritual knowledge, imparted supernaturally, generally to only a select few in the community (pp. 201-5). These learning strategies are not limited to pre-literate cultures, however. Canadian children, for example, learn to speak and act in socially acceptable ways by imitating their elders; they learn nursery rhymes and multiplication tables by repeating them; and they learn spiritual knowledge by listening to pastors and teachers, who expound from holy books.

For a society which is emerging from a pre-literate state, print has limited usefulness. “Contemporary orality is a fundamentally oral culture that retains the characteristics of primary orality through the use of speech as the dominant medium of communication. It acknowledges the presence of other media but the construction of cultural codes is bound to that which is spoken” (Rao, 1991:4). Even though people are minimally literate, their society
operates largely in the oral mode. The role of the printed page is still limited. Reporting on the literacy practices of the Severn Ojibwe, Valentine (1995) notes:

Clearly, the people of Lynx Lake hold literacy as an ideal which virtually all adults achieve; but conversely, they fit the traditional profile of an ‘oral’ society, where face-to-face interaction is primary and where myths and history are part of a spoken discourse. At the same time that these people lived on traplines, hunting and gathering, they were also reading and writing letters. (p. 102)

Goody (1968:40), however, reminds us that literacy takes several centuries to become “the common property of the people at large.” While that process is still going on, even literates may find it easier to use oral strategies for meeting the everyday information needs, and communities will develop literacy “specialists” to fill roles requiring more skill. The question arises, however, as to whether literacy has truly become the “property of the people at large” for developed nations such as Canada, with a 24% functionally illiterate population (Southam report, in Burnaby, 1992:158).

Reading is not so much an individual activity as a group one that reflects values, aspirations and felt needs. Heath (1983) noted that children from two neighbouring communities in the United States started school with very different expectations of the reading task. Children in Roadville saw what they read as unquestionably true and containing a moral. Trackton children, however, focused on context and looked for the oral interpretation of the written code. This reflected how adults in their respective communities interact with text in the group, not individually. In school, Roadville children struggled with imaginative storytelling, while Trackton children had difficulty with listening passively to a story being read. Their communities had programmed the children into the social expectations of reading (see pp. 11, 196, 234).
Another model of the oral-literate balance may be portrayed in this way:

Illustration Four: A Model of the Oral-Literate Balance

In portraying literacy in this way, we acknowledge that it is largely an extension of the oral interactions already a part of the society. Literacy also extends the functions of oral communication, such as when lists are made or histories written to extend the memory of an individual. Though literate practice is best situated in the cultural context, it also has the capacity to cross cultural boundaries and explore beyond those limits.

D. Reading Materials for Neo-literates

The discussion thus far has highlighted the complex nature of facilitating literacy acquisition. As literacy providers investigate social structures, consider the appropriate level of literacy to be offered, and work through the implications of various ideological frameworks, they are further faced with the challenge of knowing what materials will best integrate all of these factors into a workable program.

Hamadache cites the four basic principles of Unesco literacy programs as being functionality, participation, integration and diversification (1986:29). Keeping in mind the economic development paradigm of Unesco, he notes that “[l]iteracy and numeracy are
useless accomplishments unless these basic skills are put to actual use in everyday life” (p. 33). Skills learned are easily forgotten if not integrated into daily practice.

This was also a problem for a literacy program in Zambia:

I saw that while the need to read was high there was a general lack of reading materials except for primers on health and agriculture. Lack of reading materials would continue to be a problem for the literacy programs as long as literacy is treated as an isolated educational enterprise without connection to other educational institutions... (Mwansa, 1993:254)

Keeping in mind the economic constraints of literacy programs, which limit the amount of materials that can be published, it is important to remember that few learners join a class in order to become wealthy. Literacy students cite affective motivations for attending a class including “urging by a friend, to overcome feeling of shame ... fear and sense of insecurity, ... to learn new skills, desire for personal independence, and participation for the sake of their children, spouses and institutions to which they belong” (Mwansa, 1993:207).

These should also be reflected in the materials which they read.

The absence of the people’s way of life in the primers and practices of literacy programs, except for spontaneous songs and dramatic skits, in both rural and urban areas, was conspicuous. ...Though the approach has paid some social and economic dividends it has created an erroneous impression that knowledge came from external people and their books. Without due attention to the things that constitute the world view of learners, literacy is contributing to the cultural poverty of the rural communities. (p. 265)

A number of learning needs should be considered in preparing a literacy program for adult members of cultural communities. First of all, they need to know what reading is. “It is of primary importance that people who are to learn to read KNOW WHAT READING IS” (Gudschinsky, 1973:60). A clear demonstration of fluent reading along with its uses and applications will help the learner bring purpose to the learning situation. One way to move learners from a three dimensional world to two-dimensional print is through the use of
experience stories transcribed on the blackboard or large sheets of paper (Hamadache, 1986:41).

Heath (1987) notes that

...the ways in which children learn the oral language of the society can affect their orientation to written language. If the society has ways of taking language apart and holding it up for examination for its own sake rather than keeping it exclusively embedded within the stream of communication, then members of that society seem to adjust more readily to learning to write in formal schooling than do members of societies who do not take language apart in such ways. (p.100)

She notes that these bits and pieces of language can be identified and practiced in traditional oral forms, such as puns, parables, riddles and rhymes (p.101).

Sustainable reading implies that there will be materials to read. For those who learn to read in a mother tongue that is not supported by a literary tradition, this will require one of two approaches: either neo-literates will be trained to write, edit, and produce reading materials of interest to the community, or a transitional program of reading in the LWC must be developed. Ultimately the community members themselves will decide what materials will meet their learning needs and how they will be incorporated into the individual and group life of the community.

Summary of the Chapter

In this chapter, social organization has been discussed with reference to how this affects literacy acquisition and use. The community may be weakened by inappropriate literacy strategies or the community cohesiveness may be enhanced by literacy which meets community felt needs.
Three metaphors of literacy were considered: *literacy as adaptation*, *literacy as power* and *literacy as a state of grace*. These three metaphors loosely correspond to forms of social organization, as illustrated by how literacy is applied in each society.

The ideological foundations of literacy providers and programs help to determine who the target audience will be and what the aims of the program will be. Governments and international agencies assume the functional nature of literacy in terms of economic and development goals. Since literacy is not a neutral technology, NGOs and grass roots providers must also consider their ideological base for literacy.

Several definitions of literacy were considered; these are further enlightened by viewing them through the three literacy metaphors. Salient features of various definitions deal with the functionality of literacy, the language of literacy acquisition, and comprehension. Beyond the mere mechanics of decoding, the social nature of reading and writing must be defined in terms of the literacy learner. Part of the social nature of the role of literacy in a community is how print media interacts with and extends oral communicative practice.

Providing reading materials for new readers is a complex task, requiring the literacy provider to take into consideration the social structure, the aims and ideologies of the program and the felt needs of the community.

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1 Analysis of the Manobo society using the grid-group theory was done by Douglas Fraiser of SIL.
3 For example, see Audrey Thomas (1989) "Definitions and Evolution of the Concepts."
This chapter will detail how the current study was carried out through informed ethnographic observations. It will also seek to demonstrate the trustworthiness of the research findings through the application of criteria outlined by Lincoln and Guba (1985).

A. Ethnographic Perspectives

The intent of this study is to describe and interpret a few aspects of the Manobo culture as they relate to the use of literacy skills. In order to gain such insights, an ethnographic method is employed which draws heavily on naturalistic observations. “The first aim of an ethnographically informed approach to literacy is descriptive: before claiming to understand the general meaning of literacy for a particular social group, one must characterize the range and diversity of literacy experiences and contextualize each one of them in its historical antecedents, its contemporary associations and its links to other forms of literacy” (Besnier, 1995:5). As this thesis highlights literacy practices of the Manobo people, the focus is easily drawn to how literacy has become an integral part of the lives of many, and by extension, how literacy has impacted their traditional culture.

The research for this thesis was carried out both intuitively and informed by previous training. Over the course of more than 20 years of contact with the Manobo people, I have had many opportunities to observe their lives, participate in their celebrations, and struggle jointly with them in times of community needs and insecurities. I was more than an observer
in their midst; rather they assigned me a role (first as lay medical worker, then as literacy teacher, as well as a few shorter-lived roles) and offered me their friendship.

Training in linguistics, anthropology, language learning, literacy, and translation principles also formed the foundation for actual fieldwork. Another aspect of our training involved surviving in primitive conditions, such as how to build a fire, how to preserve food without refrigeration and the use of home health care techniques. This too was invaluable to our life with the Manobo people.

Hymes (1980) points out that it is not enough for the ethnographer to just make contact with the people group being studied. Insights, intuition and training combine to bring meaning to what is observed. “It has to do with the systematic, comparative knowledge of phenomena and systems like those under study which the ethnographer brings to the description and interpretation of the particular case” (p. 73).

It would be ideal to be constantly recording one’s insights and observations as they occur. But as Hymes notes, this is often impossible and inappropriate. “One works in situations which require the trust of others, accommodation to their activities, participation in ways that often preclude writing or recording at the time” (p. 74). In my own situation, the daily demands of community social life, filling my work role, and caring for family and home precluded detailed writing of my observations until a formal time was set aside for it, such as in the context of attending a seminar, preparing a presentation, or formulating a thesis.

Hymes carefully differentiates the work of the anthropologist from that of the ethnographer in that the anthropologist seeks to isolate the culture from contamination and to
describe a static reality. The ethnographer, on the other hand, sees culture as “...inherently adapting and changing, recreating and reinterpreted by individuals in their own lives and in relation to the experience of the group as a whole” (p. 76). This dynamic characteristic is what lends vitality and reality to the study of any culture. It also implies that a study of this nature is never really finished, but rather only one point on a continuum is captured by the study.

The use of stories in this thesis is an important strategy.

We are continually trying to give an account of the multiple levels (which are temporally continuous and socially interactive) at which the inquiry proceeds. The central task is evident when it is grasped that people are both living their stories in an ongoing experiential text and telling their stories in words as they reflect upon life and explain themselves to others. (Connelly and Clandinin, 1990:4)

Stories of experiences and reflections are offered in the context of this study to give a voice to the Manobo’s perspectives. And in so doing, I also recognize that my story in part has become intertwined with theirs. “...[A]s researchers, we become part of the process. The two narratives of participant and researcher become, in part, a shared narrative construction and reconstruction through the inquiry” (Connelly and Clandinin, p. 5).

Letter writing is one form of dialogue between the researcher and the participants. “For many narrativists, letter writing is a way of offering and responding to tentative narrative interpretations” (p. 6). The written responses, which I elicited from the literacy project participants and leaders following the community meeting in which I presented the tentative draft of this thesis, proved to be very beautiful testimonies to the place that literacy skills have found in the lives of people.
In the course of the current research, I have tried to follow Hymes’ model that the study of a culture should be descriptive plus objective plus conscious of values and goals (p. 104). The presentation of thick description is intended to aid the reader in understanding the context and in analyzing the findings. Recognizing that my observations may be less than unbiased, the reader is referred to the following section on criteria for building trustworthiness. Personal values and goals will undoubtedly be noted in the research findings as well, but again, the aim has been to check these with other authors and with co-workers in order to minimize the impact of a single viewpoint.

B. Checks of Trustworthiness

Lincoln and Guba (1985) propose five criteria for checking the validity of a naturalistic inquiry. These criteria are: 1) credibility, 2) transferability, 3) dependability, 4) confirmability, and 5) the reflexive journal.

B.1. Credibility

Credibility for a naturalistic study is built by prolonged engagement (p. 301). The researcher must experience the culture in general before focusing on any one facet for in-depth analysis. Prolonged engagement is also necessary for allowing trust to be built between the researcher and the people.

I have been privileged to have had prolonged engagement with the Manobo people. From 1976-1979, 1980-1984, and 1985-1989, my family and I lived for an average of five months of each year in the Manobo community. From 1990-1993 and 1994-1997, we have lived for two or three two-week periods each year in the community.
Credibility is further enhanced by *persistent observation* (p. 304). The researcher must be able to sort out the irrelevant data. Along with the first factor of prolonged engagement, this factor helps focus the study in one area of the culture. One danger is focusing too soon, before the general features of the culture are well understood.

The questions posed in this thesis have been the focus of my observations since 1993. Each visit to the Manobo community, I have discussed and observed literates and community organizations as they relate to the questions posed.

*Triangulation* (p. 305) is a third factor in building credibility. By using several sources and methods, conclusions can be checked and validated. Furthermore, credibility can be gained by comparing the findings of multiple investigators.

In the context of the present research, I am able to draw on the research of several colleagues who have also worked with and observed the Manobo community in addition to my own data. These colleagues have studied ethnographic features, community organization features, and the values and beliefs of the Manobo people.

The process of *peer debriefing* (p. 308) has many benefits to the researcher. One benefit is that regular debriefing provides a sounding board for ideas and a way to test hypotheses. It also helps to keep the researcher honest about what is happening personally, relationally with those people being studied, and academically.

Each year SIL holds a review and planning session with each field team, which functions as a form of peer debriefing. The purpose of this review is to assess what is happening and to help determine any "course corrections" in the strategic plan which has
been developed for working with the particular cultural community. These review and planning sessions are conducted by seasoned colleagues who are in a consultative role, not strictly peers. Personal and relational issues are handled in a separate setting, that is, during the yearly personnel review session.

"Negative case analysis may be regarded as a 'process of revising hypotheses with hindsight.' The object of the game is to continually refine a hypothesis until it accounts for all known cases without exception" (p. 309). Though it is difficult to account for every exception, especially in the case of dynamic cultures, the closer the researcher comes to reducing the number of exceptional cases to zero, the more credible the data.

I have not attempted to account for individual differences in this thesis. Rather I have noted community trends and initiatives, which include significant numbers of community members.

By demonstrating that different analysts can reach similar conclusions given the data which emerged during the research, credibility is enhanced (p. 313). This is known as referential adequacy.

References are made in this thesis to similar situations in other parts of the world, which also illustrate the point under discussion. Though no two cases are exactly alike, similarities have been noted from other programs, which further validate and inform the findings among the Manobo.

Member checks are carried out with the stakeholders in the study. Informally checking with respondents throughout the study to ascertain the correctness of the information and the
validity of the conclusions is a crucial step in building the trustworthiness of the research. As well, a more formal check whereby knowledgeable individuals are invited to provide feedback to the research findings is important, though the researcher "is not bound to honor all of the criticisms that are mounted..." (p. 315).

A preliminary draft of the thesis was sent to our SIL colleagues and to the two TAP women who are actively working with the Manobo people and their comments solicited. Also, a group session was held in the community of Elem on July 12, to which all local literacy graduates and teachers and community leaders were invited. About 100 men and women attended that meeting. The purpose of this session was to review the contents of this thesis and solicit comments regarding it. One of the Filipinas was present to verify the comments, to take notes, and to interact with the community and the research findings.

B.2. Transferability

Transferability is a second criterion for trustworthiness of the naturalistic inquiry. In the strictest sense, this is improbable, for "... the naturalist can only set out working hypotheses together with a description of the time and context in which they were found to hold" (p. 316). Thus it is important to provide the descriptive material needed for readers to draw their own conclusions as to the degree of transferability to other situations.

Descriptive material and a number of anecdotes are provided throughout the study to help readers appreciate the context of the study. Readers can extrapolate for themselves the applications of the research findings to similar situations. As well, similar studies are noted to suggest the transferability of the findings to other settings.
B.3. Dependability

Lincoln and Guba suggest that dependability can be established first of all through the techniques outlined in relation to credibility (p. 317). Another approach is the replication of research findings, but this is a difficult process in the naturalistic inquiry. One other technique for establishing dependability is the inquiry audit, which examines the process by which research findings have been drawn, along with the product of the research, for its accuracy.

Again, with regard to this research, perhaps the best measure of its dependability is the degree of accountability to which field workers are held within SIL. Yearly reviews of field methods, goals and outcomes aid in this process.

B.4. Confirmability

Along with the technique of triangulation and the keeping of a reflexive journal, the major technique for establishing confirmability is again the audit (p. 318). A number of documents are possible sources of information for the audit.

Included in the documents which might be considered the paper trail for the current research are: Background Study and Database information, Strategic Planning documents (1979, 1989 and 1996), yearly Program Planning and Review Session write-ups, and reports to CIDA.

B.5. The Reflexive Journal

Lincoln and Guba suggest that the keeping of a journal or diary can aid in establishing trustworthiness in all of the areas mentioned above (p. 327). The journal should contain information about the researcher as well as about the methods employed. Alternatively, such
a record could be divided into two parts: the daily schedule and logistics of the study; and a personal diary, which deals more with personal reflections, values and interests.

I have not kept such a journal or diary over the past 20 years, but I have written letters to my parents on a weekly basis. My mother has collected all of them into tidy notebooks and so they are also available as a resource for this research and for a further test of trustworthiness.
Chapter 5

Research Findings

Before there were not many people who grouped together because of bad customs and bad actions. But today there are now many people grouping together and believing in God because they are able to read the teaching concerning Jesus.

Venancio Apang, literacy teacher

Literacy has found a meaningful role in the Manobo community. This chapter looks at how literate practice has grown out of personal motivations. Consistent with their uses for literacy, the skill level has remained at a low level, with some community members, that is the specialists, having developed their skills to a higher level in line with their community roles.

The introduction of a writing system and subsequent literacy activities and usage have impacted both the language and the community in significant ways.

A. Finding the Literacy Fit

The literacy as adaptation metaphor well-describes how the Manobos have been motivated toward literacy for individualistic reasons and how those goals have been actualized in how and what they read and write. A combination of external pressures and individual personal goals has resulted in a fairly wide-spread acceptance of literacy as a desirable avenue for personal development.

A.1. Motivations for Literacy Acquisition

It is well known that times of change and stress are also optimal times for learning. As noted earlier in this thesis, the Manobo people are experiencing unprecedented threats to their very existence through the loss of traditional land and lifestyles. Because the arable land has been reduced, they are forced to reuse agricultural land before the optimal rest period of five to seven years has elapsed; this has led to decreasing yields. They are not able to grow enough rice
on the land available to them to feed their families until the next harvest arrives and so they have sought out more land-intensive crops, such as coffee and fruit trees, which require new technologies for which they were not first adequately trained.

The government grants of traditional lands to lumber companies have reduced the Manobos to ‘squatters’ with no legal rights. Not only have these traditional lands been largely denuded of the virgin forest, but reforestation projects since 1990 have also been carried out with little regard for cultivated fields. The Manobos have been prohibited from practicing swidden agriculture and have been forced to adopt the use of water buffalo for plowing. This has been a tremendously expensive proposition for many.

With the arrival of Filipino settlers, a new legal system was also imposed. The settlers brought a national, regional, provincial, municipal, and barangay (town) government, which is overpowering the datu system described earlier. However the rights and responsibilities of citizenship are only slowly being felt in the Manobo community. For example, most of the men now obtain a cidula, or tax certificate, yearly because of its usefulness in other legal matters and many of the Manobos vote in elections (in the last two municipal elections, the mayoral candidates campaigned in Elem). Recently, contacts have been made with the Municipal Agriculture Office for procuring fish fingerlings and fruit tree seedlings. However, other functions of the municipal and barangay offices are difficult for the Manobos to access because of the use of trade languages, the levels of literacy skills required, and unfamiliarity with the process.

In April, 1998, a campaigning congressman supplied four Manobo villages with cell phones, which could be used to make contact with the municipal office. These were much
needed and much appreciated. However, during the severe El Niño draught of 1998, the Manobo leaders wrote letters and petitioned government officials for relief food supplies, which were reportedly available from international aid agencies. However, the government was not able to give them anything.

The early Filipino settlers also brought different religious beliefs. Though the arrival of people of Catholic and Protestant faiths challenged their animistic belief system, their message had minimal impact on them because it was presented through trade languages prior to the Scriptures being translated into the Manobo language. For example, in about 1984, my husband was working with a Manobo man on translating the book of Hebrews into the Manobo language. The portion under consideration dealt with the fact that Jesus died to pay the penalty for people’s sins. The Manobo man said that he had heard in the town that Jesus had died, but he didn’t know who Jesus was. Also in the mid-1980s, a Protestant group began to hold Bible studies in a neighbouring community, but the Manobos would not attend because they could not understand well the language being used.

Another external factor affecting the motivation for literacy seems to be the hierarchical nature of Philippine language groups. Though it is not formalized, one can discern the status of various languages by noting which language is spoken when speakers of the two languages come into contact with each other. For example, when a Manobo speaks with a Tiruray, Tiruray is generally spoken; when a Tiruray speaks with a Cebuano, Cebuano is used; and when a Cebuano meets a Filipino, then Filipino is spoken. In other words, Manobo is a low-status language and few non-Manobos go to the trouble to learn it. However, to have books written in Manobo has raised the status of the language and its speakers significantly.
Lolon, a VHW in Belanga, is not ashamed of her language. She attended high school in a coastal town and noted that there were not many books in Maguindanaon or Cebuano. There are many titles in Manobo, however, and even though she is fluent in Filipino and Cebuano, she is proud of her Manobo language. The status of the Manobo language is also raised as a result of the non-Manobo project team (our TAP co-workers who are Cebuano and Ilocano speakers and we who are Canadian and American) learning to speak Manobo fluently. Recently, while on a trip with TAP colleague Mila Cagape and a couple of Manobos, we were overheard in conversation by some Cebuano neighbours. The Cebuanos were laughing and commenting to the Manobo companions about our use of the Manobo language. They had never bothered to learn it.

As well as external forces, which have played a part in making literacy acquisition attractive to the Manobo people, a range of personal factors have further motivated them to learn. These personal factors are especially significant in light of the individualistic society in which the Manobos operate. It is impossible to separate a desire for literacy from the other changes that have occurred, however, such as a move to new community organizations and the acceptance by many of Christianity. Literacy has played a role in each of these, as will be seen.

When asked to comment on the difference he sees between the time before people knew how to read and write and after they acquired these skills, Militun Belaga, a pastor, listed these items:

Before:  1- We couldn't read the word of God
         2- We couldn't write when we voted
         3- We couldn't read the news
         4- We couldn't read the writing on medicines
         5- We couldn't read any kind of writing
         6- We couldn't write what we wanted to
After:  1- Now we can read the word of God
2- Now we can write whatever we want to
3- Now we can write when we vote
4- Now we can read it if someone writes to us
5- Now we can read any kind of writing except only for English
6- Now we know how to read numbers

As mentioned earlier, the belief system of the Manobos was challenged through increased contact with settlers from other parts of the Philippines. Added to this, the traditional animistic belief system of the Manobos has always been a delicate balance of explaining what happens and manipulating the spirit world. Even as the main function of the datu is to maintain peaceful relations among people, so the main function of the shaman is to maintain peaceful relations between people and the spirit world. Since serious illness is generally attributed to offended spirits or the use of magic, the shaman’s role in restoring balance to the ill person is central.

These central beliefs have been challenged by the advent of modern medicines, which are effective against illness, and by a redefinition of God’s character through the translated Scriptures. However, there is the inclination to add penicillin and prayer to God to the shaman’s ‘bag of tricks,’ creating a syncretistic system of belief. Even the Scriptures occasionally become just another sacred object with perceived power in and of itself.

The largely individualistic Manobo social structure allows for individuals to become literate or accrue other benefits of their hard work without group pressure to conform, as long as one is not stingy in sharing the resulting gain. Becoming literate is a personal choice with personal benefits. In actuality this seems to have happened, but on a large scale, as the success of some in learning to read has inspired others to join a class also. There is also a sense of clan pride, which encourages everyone in the family group to become literate. For example, the
community of Tinagdanan (an extended family group) set a goal that everyone would become literate. They were able to accomplish this goal in a period of 2-3 years by first sending two of their young men to Belanga to learn to read and then later to be trained as literacy teachers for the rest of the community.

Many community members have chosen to join literacy classes for personal reasons, such as economic advancement (for example, so they won’t be cheated when selling their crops), social benefits (for example, so they can join in a fun group activity with their neighbours and so that they can read during Bible studies), or spiritual instruction (that is, so they can read the Scriptures for themselves). Being able to read the Scriptures is by far the most common motivation the Manobos have for becoming literate. People readily admit to not understanding other languages well. They are proud of their own language, which defines their identity.

In summary, both external and internal pressures have led to a new receptivity to change and adaptation. Literacy has followed the metaphor of literacy as adaptation. The loss of traditional lifestyle, the need to participate in the wider political system, the challenge to their traditional belief system and their awareness of low social status all created an atmosphere for positive change, including the acquisition and use of literacy. Though the individual reasons are varied, success of a few in learning to read and write led to many others attempting to learn as well. Poverty and unsettled living conditions, on the other hand, were hindrances to the spread of literacy.
A.2. What Need Does Literacy Fill?

Though limited literacy acquisition occurred prior to 1980, the conditions for its large-scale acceptance seemed to be ripe during the decade from 1983-93. Literacy met several areas of need, both in the practical sense and in the affective sense.

For the Manobos, to see their language in print was a positive experience. To have a written form of the Manobo language validated it; to learn to read it lent dignity to their personhood which contradicted the opinion of lowland neighbours, who considered them as less than fully human. To be able to read the Scriptures offered them an alternative explanation for the world and their place in it. Having all this available in their own language seemed to break down the barriers of distrust and misunderstanding.

As the Manobos have surged from 2% literate in 1980 to perhaps 25% literate in 1997, they have found many uses for literacy. One application for literacy skills was to the Manobo literature, which was produced to address the felt needs of the Manobo people in such areas as health, agriculture and numeracy. In cases where literature has been of a more pedagogical nature, oral transmission has maintained a role alongside literate practices.

The literacy providers soon learned that these books had little practical impact alone, based on the number that were sold and people’s general reaction and application. Each one needed to be introduced in the context of an oral learning experience. The health materials were demonstrated first in small group settings; the math book became part of a fluency curriculum; and the agriculture materials were taught to a group of livelihood teachers, using a demonstration project, before they returned to their communities to model and thereby teach the lessons to their neighbours.
Through trial and error, we have found that book sales are also best in the context of an event. Few people seek out a book independent of something happening. That is why the pastors’ seminars are the best time to sell Scripture and related materials and health seminars are the best time to sell health materials, etc. The key, perhaps, to increasing book sales is facilitating more events.

These books are generally used by community members who have become specialists of some kind. The health booklets and the book on medicine dosages are owned and used by the village health workers; the agricultural books are owned and used mostly by the men who have been trained as livelihood teachers. The books are generally not used as a primary source of information, but as a reminder of the oral training that has previously been given. This is an important function, but perhaps not the one the program planners had envisioned when they were first produced.

Thus the oral-literate continuum still is weighted toward the oral end of the spectrum in the area of physical/economic/social information needs. The transfer of information is still by word of mouth and taught through example and trial and error. However, there are sources of information available to community members as reference materials, and certain specialists have been trained to fill the information gap in selected areas. Graff (1995) confirms this historically as well in relation to Western literate practices.

The written and then printed words were spread to many semiliterates and illiterates via the oral processes; information, news, literature, and religion were spread far more widely than purely literate means could have allowed. For many centuries, reading itself was an oral, often collective activity and not the private, silent one we consider it to be. (p. 13)

Recently an SIL pilot flew three visitors into Elem for an overnight visit. While everyone was involved in a meeting, the pilot, who didn’t understand the language of the meeting well,
decided to catch up on some reading on the porch of our house. He was barely settled with his book when Manobos started coming by to see if he was hungry or in need of anything. They couldn’t quite figure out why he would enjoy being alone with a book.

The greatest individual use of literacy skills is seen in the use of the Scriptures. In Elem, nearly every home has a Manobo New Testament and often the individual family members will have a personal copy. There is a high correlation between those who have become literate in the past 15 years and those who have become associated with the Manobo Bible Church. A desire to read the Scriptures for themselves is the most frequently cited reason to attend literacy classes.

This was quite evident when literacy graduates were asked the question, “how is your life different since you learned to read and write?” Uwas Kalabaw answered:

When we couldn’t yet read, my gall bladder/heart was really dark and it was like I was lost and the living of our old people was spread apart and like they were enemies because each person was also just alone. When the word of God arrived it was like the night became day in my gall bladder/heart, and my old gall bladder/heart is changed as a result of my being able to read the word of God. (translated from written response, July, 1998)

The use of the Scriptures seems to be in contrast to the use of the community development materials mentioned above in that the Scriptures are more often read individually. This is true to an extent, but a group forum for oral instruction of the written Scriptures, that is, the church service, is also conducted weekly. Additionally, individual reading is augmented by reading in small groups, such as in the context of the family group or the Bible study group. The lay pastors also receive the support of a larger group in an oral context through periodic training and fellowship seminars, led by the board members of the Association of Manobo Bible
Churches. So, again, oral transmission plays an important part in forming the basis for the subsequent use of the printed page as a reminder and as a foundation for further study.

Materials have also been produced in Manobo to support the church association, including: the New Testament, a book of Bible background information, outlines from previous training seminars, a topical index of Scripture references, and selected portions of the Old Testament. These materials are equally available to all, but generally only those who are church leaders own and use these books, other than the New Testament and the hymnbook.

Historically, the church has been the main force for literacy in many countries. The literacy movement in Sweden in the seventeenth century, for example, was a direct result of the church’s desire for every person, both male and female, to become literate in order to read the Bible independently. Literacy instruction took place in the home, with local priests responsible for regular examinations of all family members, both in reading and in knowledge of the content (Lutheran catechism). In this way nearly universal literacy was gained by a very poor country, totally apart from economic development (Graff, 1987:149-150).

The Manobos use their reading and writing skills in a variety of other individualistic ways as well. They are becoming especially adept at writing letters. These letters fulfill functions such as maintaining family ties and informing others of an upcoming event. One use for letters became very evident to me during my July, 1998, visit. I received several letters from people inquiring if I had brought any food aid for their respective village. The letter, written by someone I knew and who was presently in Elem, was carried by a friend. Putting the request in writing was a way of avoiding embarrassment and softening a request (see Sample A below).
A second type of writing, which is frequently used, is the making of lists. These range from shopping lists to census figures. Sample B, below, illustrates a letter containing a list of names of men who carried sacks of rice into the village and how much rice each should receive in payment. Sample C, below, is an accountability listing of those who carried out a particular request for which I was paying them.

Sample A:

Oh Mother of Kathy, good afternoon to you or whatever the hour is when you read this letter of mine to you.

Oh Mother of Kathy, I am writing to you regarding the way of your helping each of the villages, concerning our difficulty in our villages as a result of the draught. Oh Mother of Kathy, that is not the reason I am writing if I would force you by begging, but I am only asking if there is still some for the village of Tudi. We are really having difficulty also because of the famine.

Now, that is all I have to say.

Thank you for reading this letter of mine. I am Pastor Jose Aba who is writing this.

Illustration Five: Samples of letters and lists
Sample B:

Oh Mother of Kathy,
Those who carried
rice need their wages
now because they will
cook this morning.
Two gantas is the
right amount.
Thank you,
Militun Blag

List of those who
carried
1. Luni Blag (1) sack
2. Lubin Mat (1) sack
3. Kelot-Klot (2) sacks
4. Kima (1) sack
5. Dodong (1) sack
6. Beki (1) sack
7. Tatà (1) sack
8. Sami (1) sack
9. Ligal (1) sack

Sample C:

These are the ones who
cleared the airstrip
1. Lisito Kalabaw
2. Kebog Kalabaw
3. Wili Landay
4. Latin Landay
5. Fitel Tinagdawan
6. Danilo Matog
7. Linato Matog

Illustration Five (continued): Samples of letters and lists
In summary, three main types of reading and writing activity can be noted in the Manobo community: development materials, which are normally taught orally first and remembered or reinforced by written texts; the Christian Scriptures, used both individually and corporately; and individual uses for communication purposes. Literate practice is set in an oral framework as well as a cultural one. Literacy is again seen to be adaptive in the ways materials have been used. In the context of the church, there is a strong push that all members be able to read the Scriptures for themselves.

B. Is Reading Becoming Literate Practice?

The literacy providers attempted to build a bridge from initial literacy learning to literate practice by implementing a structured fluency program. However, this program is only one of the stepping stones on the road to meeting the goal of fluent, individual, sustained literate practice.

The fluency program, which follows after the basic literacy program, reinforces the functional uses of literacy. This level is extremely important because literacy learners are not yet fluent readers at the end of the basic literacy level. Thus the fluency level, which includes about 100 hours of instruction over a six-month time period, assists the literacy learners to use their skills independently. Texts are those which portray their own culture and settings. Some are interesting stories and some are development oriented. Writing practice is also given, beginning with words and sentences, building up to collaborative story writing and then individual writing experiences. Silent reading is also taught. An additional program level to teach Filipino language and culture follows the fluency level.

The reading and writing activities of the Manobo communities fit well into Scribner’s (1997) metaphor of literacy as adaptation. The literacy program answers the felt needs of
individuals and is not a means of creating social inequalities. Literacy is available to all and individualistic motivations are in focus. Written materials and literate practices within community organizations provide individuals with choices, but not all choose to participate.

The literacy program is focused at a basic skill level, which also reflects the *literacy as adaptation* metaphor. There are no demands or rewards for fluency or speed in reading because of the individual uses of literacy. Writing demands as well are confined to fairly uncomplicated lists, letters and mathematical equations. Note the samples of writing below.

**Illustration Six: Samples of written responses**
A basic skill level was also the focus of literacy on the island of Fiji in the mid-1800s. Clammer (1976) cites the experience of the Wesleyan church missionaries who introduced literacy alongside of Christianity, with the aim of literacy instruction being to impart the ability to read the Scriptures which were being translated into the major dialect of the islands (p. 54). A low level of instruction was considered adequate and was highly valued by the people and widely accepted (pp. 68-70). Only much later did more technical and theoretical training become available in Fiji, when such skills were supported by the changing context of the community in the colonial era.

Those Manobo community members who have been trained for specialized roles in the community, such as the literacy teachers, the VHWs, and the lay pastors, have had more opportunity to practice their reading skills and have reached an intermediate skill level. They have more contexts for both group reading, such as during training sessions, and for individual reading of materials relating to their specialty.

One factor that will influence future literate practice is whether new reading materials will be available to community members. Reading materials in Manobo are still quite limited. Up to the present, almost all printed materials have been prepared by the SIL and TAP personnel and printed outside of the community. Printing within the community has been problematic for a number of reasons, related both to practical realities and to social organization.

Barriers to print literacy production in the community include the remoteness of their mountain home from a source of printing supplies, lack of ready cash for buying printing supplies, the difficulty of distribution to the many scattered communities, and pragmatic
considerations for storage facilities. A second barrier is the educational level of potential authors. None have been trained to write for a general audience, including the skills of editing and manuscript preparation, though a few have learned to type.

An even more significant issue is the Manobo social structure. In a highly individualistic society, it is difficult for people to put themselves forward as speaking to a wider group and what is written may be acceptable to only a narrow audience of close relatives. To write for others implies an authoritative voice and a knowledge or skill greater than those of other people. This problem is compounded if the written materials are offered for sale, since an individual is seen as benefiting. It is possible that a group effort, such as a newspaper containing articles by a number of people, would be better accepted by the wider community, but the editor would be in a delicate position of leadership and/or censorship in such a venture.

Two anecdotes illustrate these barriers. The president of the church association was urged by the expatriate team to write a general letter to the churches following one of their training sessions in about 1991. He wrote the letter long hand and then it was typed up and printed using a silk-screen press. The letters were hand-carried to the various communities by the lay pastors and read to the congregations. The team felt that they had demonstrated the potential for written communication, but no further interest was expressed and no other letters of this nature were written. Another man, one of my husband’s translation assistants, showed great promise in his work. My husband asked him to draft selected Old Testament verses independently, using the trade language version Bible as a source text. It was not until we had talked to the church association board members and solicited their support for his efforts that the man felt free to undertake this more authoritative role. Perhaps partly as a result of having
this more prestigious work, he was elected as vice president of the church board in September of 1997.

In early 1998, our co-worker located a used mimeographing machine, which he donated to the Elem community. He demonstrated the use of the machine to a few leaders and livelihood teachers by producing a three-page document, which he had prepared in collaboration with them, on the topic of marcot plant propagation. The plan was to make 25 copies for each livelihood teacher to distribute in their villages. The project was delayed, however, because the stencils were old and did not make a clear copy. With our co-worker out of the village for the next few months, it will be interesting to see if the men actually are able to carry through with a re-run, using the new stencils and paper which I brought into the village in July.

A second option for additional reading materials, which is already open to people, is to bring reading materials in from outside the community. Again, this option faces barriers, in that people are not fully literate in the trade languages, cash for such “extras” is not readily available, and the selection of reading materials available in area towns is extremely limited.

In summary, there is evidence that literate practice is growing. The literacy program and the introduction of materials through group, oral interaction around the topics of the written materials have provided contexts for reading which have met a felt need and mesh with cultural practices. A few literacy specialists have had opportunity to develop skills beyond the basic level because of their increased contact with text, both in oral and written contexts. The production of more reading materials is a crucial need, but one that faces numerous barriers.
C. The Community Impact of Literacy

Literacy has impacted the Manobo language, as well as the Manobo community. As will be seen, these changes were introduced by the literacy providers, but have become widely accepted as a result of how the Manobos have adapted literacy to their needs.

C.1. The Effects of Writing and Literacy On the Language

The existence of a written form of Manobo in the past 40 years has had an impact on the language itself. Up until 1980, informal adult literacy efforts had impacted only about 50 people and perhaps another 100 had learned to read to some extent in Pilipino and English through the school system. Thus not many people had exposure to the written form of the language until the 1980s.

Starting in 1980, the Manobos began to have much more discourse with other people from various parts of the language area. Training seminars drew people together who previously had had little contact with one another. One of the natural consequences of this was that they discovered the core words of their language. The people from boundary areas became increasingly aware of the borrowings which they had incorporated from neighbouring language groups. Furthermore, the Manobos on the inland portion of the language group discovered that their language had terms dealing with ocean travel and the sea that they had forgotten through lack of context.

Though word borrowings are perfectly legitimate for everyday discourse, a standard form was needed for written materials in order that everyone would be able to understand them. It was thus especially helpful to the project that one team was located on the inland side, and another in the coastal area, with my family located in the northern portion of the language area.
In this way, we were able to pass materials between us and check for comprehension by people from each segment.

In this way the Manobo vocabulary has become more regularized through the use of written materials. Some minor variations still exist, but there is a high degree of agreement throughout the whole language area.\(^3\)

It can be anticipated that with continuing contact with neighbouring language groups, the orthography system will also come into question at some point. Currently the Manobos have accepted it, except for names which contain borrowed spellings; but, as has been the case with other language groups in the Philippines, when the Manobos reach a higher level of language awareness and education, they may desire to make changes in spelling conventions.

The process of writing down what was previously spoken has introduced a new language genre, but one that resembles the oral mode in many respects. Early attempts to record and transcribe traditional stories produced many sentence fragments and much repetition. For example,


*So, said Wan Pugut, I will travel now, said Wan Pugut. This great hardship of mine is that I don't have any clothes, said Wan Pugut. I will look for where I will work, said Wan Pugut. Next he will travel. Next he is far, in Wan Pugut's going traveling. Next he will arrive at the place of King.*\(^4\)

In this example, a great deal of repetition can be noted, which is an oral device to assist the listener by slowing the introduction of content and by keeping personal referents clear. The last part of a sentence is often repeated in the first part of the following sentence. For the reader,
this repetition of elements and choppy content is a distraction. However, in the material which new literates encounter first, that is, the first reading material of the fluency curriculum, some elements of the oral style are retained as a transitional feature. The health and agricultural books, for example, are more direct, while still taking into account that the introduction of new information must be metered. The oral features are especially helpful in traditional narratives, which are well known to the reader. An example from the traditional story book follows:

Agulé lumikù dé Sabandal i. Tumebow ki kenà i Sulutan dé. “Na, Sabandal, ngadan iya wé eggemenan da i Bekékéng?”
“Endà duen di, gaa, Sulutan,” guwaen i Sabandal.
“Hinawidan ko pa kagda eggemen?”
“Enù,” guwaen i Sabandal.

Then Sabandal returns. We arrive at the place of King. “Now, Sabandal, what is it that Bekékéng is laughing at?”
“Nothing, reportedly, King,” said Sabandal.
“Did you forbid them to laugh?”
“Sure,” said Sabandal.

In this example, note that the inclusive pronoun “we” is retained and that present tense is used. These are features that draw the listener/reader into the action of the narrative and are important discourse features in this genre.

In summary, introducing a writing system has affected the language in several ways. The vocabulary has been somewhat regularized to find words which are common to all areas of the language community. The orthography used is unique, but very close to that used for other Philippine languages. Finally a new language genre was introduced when previously oral texts were reduced to writing.
C.2. The Effects of Literacy On the Culture and People

Again, it is important to note that becoming literate is only one aspect of change that has impacted the Manobo people in the last 15 years. Accompanying changes in the political system, the belief system and in livelihood also must be considered. Culture change is taking place at the rate of a speeding train.

One of the outstanding changes that can be noted in the Manobo community in the past 15 years is increased group cohesion. It was noted earlier that the traditional settlement pattern was to live in small family groups of two or three houses, each a 10 to 20-minute walk from the next such settlement. A datu was responsible for the extended family group and when extra hands were needed for a project, participants were largely drawn from that source. Manobos were afraid to travel to the limits of the language area, for fear of attack from unknown, and therefore unfriendly, Manobos (older friends are able to tell us the right size of arrows to use for shooting people!).

This has changed in part as a result of the joint training seminars. Manobos have made acquaintances to the extent that there is always someone they know along the planned route. As well, several larger villages have been created of between 40 and 80 households. These tend to be somewhat transitional in that family groups tend to occupy a common section of the town site. Within the village of Elem, for example, there are four or five family groups, each with their own datu.

Literacy has played a role in supporting newly formed community organizations; these, in turn, have supported the role of literacy in the community. Three community organizations
which illustrate this are the Association of Manobo Bible Churches, the VHW, and the federation of tribal associations. Each will be discussed in turn.

*The Association of Manobo Bible Churches.* Beginning in 1983, sporadic training sessions were held for a group of men who wanted to study the Bible more in depth. The first training sessions involved about 20 men. Over the next few years, some of these men were sent in pairs as colporteurs to more far-reaching communities in which they had relatives. They carried backpacks containing a few books for sale and a cassette player (a specially designed model that does not require batteries but is powered by operating a hand crank). As the men traveled to these communities, they played the Scripture tapes and sold books (in the few places where there were readers). In this way several new communities were contacted, including Elem.

In 1986, these men, who were now leading small groups of believers in their respective villages, requested our help in creating a church association that would be legally recognized in the Philippines. They desired this so that they would have an answer to non-Manobos who were questioning the legitimacy of their gatherings. It was important to them to belong to a group. Since there were no other denominations working in the Manobo area, my husband assisted them with the legal documents, which were modeled after a similar association on Luzon Island. First the documents were translated and discussed in Manobo, then my husband prepared the resulting documents in English. These were then duly signed and submitted to the Securities and Exchange Commission in Manila. The whole process took about 18 months because of the difficulty of gathering people in the mountains, trips to the municipal office to obtain current *cédulas*, and submitting papers in Manila 1000 kilometres away.
The Manobo Bible Church is a Protestant denomination which grew out of the Bible translation process. Up to 1985, contacts with other denominations were sporadic at best, with a Catholic priest visiting some mountain communities once a year and a few Manobos visiting other Protestant churches on trips to the lowlands or coastal areas.

Eleven churches were charter members of the Association of Manobo Bible Churches, Inc. A seven-member board of directors was chosen to lead this group, including a president, vice president, treasurer, and secretary. Besides the spiritual leadership that these men assumed, they also were called on to perform literate practices which were unfamiliar to them. The president is responsible to make yearly reports to the Securities and Exchange Commission, including a financial summary; the secretary must record the details of meetings and handle correspondence related to the Association; and the treasurer must keep financial records. A very important symbolic use of literacy is the church signboard (3/4” plywood board painted white and hand lettered in black), which is in English. Each member church displays a sign prominently and with great pride. Many other functions of the board are carried out orally, such as discipline of lay pastors (for example, in cases of moral lapse), evangelistic outreaches, and conducting church business during board meetings. The president also presents a 30-minute weekly radio program, which is broadcast locally.

The board is also responsible for gathering the lay pastors together twice a year for training seminars. The location of these seminars is rotated among the three “hub” villages of Elem, Belanga, and Kelusoy, in order that no one community is overtaxed with the preparation of food for the 100-150 participants and so that leaders will have easier access, at least once a
year. The board members and their designates do all the teaching for these seminars, based on previous seminar notes and their own study.

The lay pastors are all literate at least to a basic level, having attended formal school or been trained through the literacy program. During the seminars, they take notes in personal notebooks and prepare sermon outlines, which they practice in small groups. None of the lay pastors receive a salary; they are all bi-vocational, combining farming with leadership of a church. It is not uncommon for the lay pastor to also be a literacy teacher.

In 1998, the Association includes 98 member churches. It loosely supervises the literacy program, the VHWs and the livelihood teachers. The lay pastor is a key leader in his local community. The Association is the most cohesive organization among the Manobos and has gained great respect both from the Manobo people (churched and unchurched) and from the lowland community. Key components of their strength include a commitment to the vernacular Scriptures and a reading public.

The experience of one man from the community of Agsam illustrates this basic commitment to the written Scriptures. He visited a church in the lowlands and saw a pastor speaking and quoting scripture from memory. In recounting the incident to some people gathered on our porch, he wondered if the pastor had quoted the scripture correctly, since he had not said the reference for the verse and was not even using his Bible. His conclusion was it was much better to read from the Bible and tell everyone where the verse is located so they can look it up as well.

*The Village Health Workers*. Pasita Labaro and Melita Bawaan, members of the Translators Association of the Philippines, were assigned to work in the Manobo area in 1982
and 1983, respectively. Both nurses, they set about to train interested community members in basic health care practices. Their work in Belanga and Kelusoy was augmented by Gret Kaiser Jordan, SIL, who was assigned to carry out similar training in Elem during 1987-89.

The work of these three women was carried out collaboratively but implemented separately for the early years of the VHW program. Participants were trained by observation and imitation, using the small health booklets as a reminder of what they were learning. Many of the health practices were new and contradictory to their traditional beliefs, such as giving drinking water to a person who is having diarrhea. Therefore learning was carefully monitored.

In 1991, funds became available to gather the health workers together for a time of retraining and fellowship. Though the health workers were functioning well in their respective locations, the difficulty of their task and the resistant attitude of community members to change often discouraged them. As well, the TAP nurse-trainers were actively working to have the Manobo VHWs recognized by the government on a par with the government’s similarly trained VHWs, so that the Manobos might be included in training programs and other community activities. They also needed a way to gain access to national immunization campaigns.

The Manobo VHW program gained the recognition they desired in 1993. In 1994, they were further recognized by being awarded the HAMIS\textsuperscript{6} bronze medal by the Department of Health. Through the cash prize of the HAMIS foundation, the Manobo VHWs have been able to continue yearly refresher courses utilizing outside consultants and to expand certain services to Manobo communities, such as immunizations, and proactive programming, such as building outhouses. The Manobo VHW program, under the leadership of TAP member Mila Cagape,
was presented the HAMIS silver award in September of 1997, bearing witness to the strides the community is making in meeting its own health needs.

Literacy has supported the VHW program in a number of ways. All of the workers are literate, many of them graduates of the adult literacy program. Written materials in Manobo are an important component of the program, including the health topic booklets, the book of medicine dosages, and a diagnostic flow chart. Each of the three hub areas has its own elected officials and are responsible for maintaining communication, channeling questions and coordinating events such as immunization drives. Each hub area has maintained some autonomy in the way clinics are organized. For example, the clinic in Belanga is centralized with the workers taking rotations, but the clinics in Elem are located in the homes of the VHWs with each one maintaining a personal supply of medicines and serving his/her own extended family group. All of the VHWs are bi-vocational and receive no salary.

The VHW program parallels the way other small-scale development activities are taking place. Ansadan, for example, is a datu’s daughter and she is leading women in development enterprises in four villages. Training, such as in planting gardens, takes place in a communal plot in the village, where everyone can see and practice, and where the women can socialize. Then the women return to their individual plots to apply what they have learned. Problems often arise when Manobos try to handle funds jointly; but in this model, each person is responsible for their own project. It also is attuned to the Manobo’s social organization patterns, that is, group work is important but kept brief, and each person works through the application individually.

*Manobo Tribal Associations.* SIL has had no role in these organizations, other than interested friends of the key players. These associations are being nurtured by a Filipino NGO
that is assisting the Manobos to apply to the Philippine government for Certificates of Ancestral Domain. The Manobos were directed by government officials to form five secular organizations, one to relate to each municipality in which they reside, instead of the preferred single organization representing the whole area, which would relate to a provincial level bureaucracy. The Manobos have overcome this perceived barrier, however, by forming themselves into a Federation of Tribal Associations in order to regain their common voice. Each of the five associations has an elected leadership consisting of a tribal mayor, vice mayor, secretary, treasurer, and auditor. The same NGO has also assisted the Manobo Tribal Associations in presenting cases of human rights abuses to the appropriate government agencies. The legal process is ongoing.

These tribal organizations are of interest in this study because they represent organizations specifically formed to deal with lowlanders. Though oral in-group communication is handled in Manobo, written documents and interactions with the NGO and government officials are carried out in a trade language. Perhaps for this reason, when choosing the officers, men who had experience in the public school system and/or who could speak the trade languages more fluently were elected.

Leaders in the tribal associations have had opportunity to travel to other parts of the country to attend meetings and training sessions. Several have traveled on Mindanao and one tribal mayor has visited Manila with the help of the NGO, which is giving them financial assistance, legal advice, and training. These trips have given them increased exposure to people from other language groups with similar struggles and to government bureaucracy. It has also heightened the profile of the Manobos in the rest of the country; at one point a tribal mayor was
interviewed on radio as a means of "going public" with the slowness of the government agencies to respond to the Manobos' case.

A question might be posed as to whether these three types of organizations have changed the social structure of the Manobo community to a more egalitarian arrangement. The answer seems to be both yes and no: yes, in the case of the tribal associations which were established to represent the whole community in negotiations with the government; and no, in the case of the church association and VHWs. Organizations other than the tribal associations are voluntary and loosely tied to community services. Individuals can choose to participate or not to do so, thus reflecting an adaptive, individualistic stance. The tribal associations are less voluntary and represent a unified community voice.

In addition to literacy's supportive role in facilitating group cohesion, a second effect has been on the formation of new levels of leadership. As has been seen, literates have been sought out for leadership roles in the new community organizations and these leaders in turn have had the most opportunity to develop their literacy skills. As well, literates are sought out to fill other community roles, such as officers of the school parent-teacher association and as village secretary. These newly-recognized leaders, including the village pastors, the literacy teachers, the VHWs and the livelihood teachers, are occasionally called on to fill some of the traditional roles of the datu as well, such as dispute settlement and interaction with the non-Manobo community.

In chapter two, the role of the datu was discussed. It is interesting to note that the new leadership figures among the Manobos have patterned themselves along similar lines. Just as the datu is most significant to the clan group in time of need, so too, people look to the health
workers, teachers, etc., in their times of specific need. People respect and follow their datu as long as he is able to meet their needs; so too, people respect the new leadership as long as they see them fulfilling their responsibilities capably. Just as a datu’s leadership is confined to his own clan group, so too, the new leadership must be mindful of clan loyalties when moving in the wider sphere. Manobo datu are not paid or supported materially by those they lead but rather maintain their own farming plots; so too, the new leadership is not paid a salary but support themselves by farming.

Joel Kalabaw, a VHW in Elem, learned to read in 1986 at the age of 16 and was trained as a VHW in 1987-89. Though his home-based clinic is very unassuming, he has gained a great deal of respect for his skill in treating people and especially in accompanying people to the hospital for more complicated treatment. He provides for his young family by farming, but is often called upon by municipal health officials to lead the community in an activity; likewise he is called upon by Manobos to assist them in accessing municipal services, such as immunizations, birth control and acute care.

Among the barriers for literacy noted by Leap (1987:18-48) in regard to the Ute in northern Utah were the implicit new models of social organization and a reversal of traditional leadership patterns. Though it is true that literacy among the Manobos has accompanied the move to a greater degree of group orientation and new leadership patterns have emerged, this has not seriously upset the traditional social structure. Two factors which have influenced the positive acceptance of literacy have been that literacy has met group needs at a time of social stress and that literacy has not resulted in the type of personal power implied in Scribner’s third metaphor, that is, literacy as a state of grace. Though some community members have taken on
specialist roles, which are a form of leadership, they are not personally benefiting in an economic or development sense, since all are bi-vocational. There is a degree of status attached to leadership roles, however literacy is not the key factor in obtaining it, but rather the manner in which they carry out their responsibilities.

There are a handful of Manobos who have been educated beyond the high school level and it is possible that Scribner's third metaphor of literacy as a state of grace might be applied to them. One young man was sent to Bible school by a denominational church; he has lost some of his credibility in the Manobo community, however, because he is considered to be too "lowlander." Another young man was educated by a local teacher; he has also lost his credibility in the Manobo community for similar reasons. Others, however, such as a man in his 20s who attended college for two years, have come back to the community and have been incorporated into the emerging leadership structure. Therefore, advanced education in itself does not yield status.

One of the factors which has aided the acceptance of new social structures and leadership patterns, and which has helped to maintain the low-grid society, is how the better-educated core has included the traditional leadership in key ways. In October 1997, for example, an economics seminar was planned for the tribal mayors and vice mayors and the church association board members. However, some of those involved in the planning decided to also invite various datus and other important traditional leaders, even though they are generally older men who have not gone to school. While the younger, better-educated leaders are taking the leading role in interacting with the lowland community, the traditional leaders are not being ignored.
The reader has perhaps noted that the leadership structure of the Manobos is highly male-oriented. This reflects traditional role definitions of the man as protector and decision-maker, while the woman is in charge of domestic matters and food production. This is only slowly changing. Women make up more than half of the literacy graduates. They are also well represented among the VHWs. Of the 75 literacy teachers, three teachers are women. As yet, no women lead a church group, though they are often called on to lead the song service. In Elem, two women who have completed the elementary grades have taught a six-week preschool program for children entering grade one. Women, especially the literate ones, are increasingly involving themselves in community level development projects, as the anecdote about Ansadan, related earlier in this chapter, indicate.

Summary of the Chapter

This chapter has examined the way literacy has found a place in Manobo society. Motivations for literacy were both from external and internal pressures, which prepared them for changes in the community and personally. Literacy met felt needs for the people through applying the new skill to practical reading materials and especially to the Scriptures. Generally these literacy activities have taken place in group contexts, but people have also applied literacy skills in personal situations, such as in making lists and letter writing.

Reading is becoming literate practice among the Manobos, but generally at a low level of proficiency. Their literate activities best fit the metaphor of literacy as adaptation. Though some community members have become specialists and have greater opportunities for applying literacy skills, these skills have not been used for personal power.
Literacy has affected both the language and the people. The language has become more regularized in its written form and a written genre has been introduced. The people have been affected through increased group cohesion, as new community organizations and leadership structures have emerged. However, both organizations and leadership have emerged in an individualistic way, which does not overtly affect social structure. Literacy has supported new structures, and as well, they have been supported by the new uses for literacy within the organizations.

1 Elicited during the community meeting held in Elem on July 10, 1998.
2 Interestingly, Clammer (1976) noted social structure as a barrier to literature production as well, only in a more hierarchical setting (pp. 155-156). He noted that a writer would have needed a patron to sponsor a literary work. Possibly those most capable of producing literature were the young who were still without proper position in the community to be speaking to others. Besnier (1995), reporting on an egalitarian society, notes that letter-writing was a primary use of literacy. The social structure influenced the type of writing carried out.
3 This has not been the case in other parts of the Philippines. With many small groups living in close proximity and occasionally with long histories of inter-group conflict, this is often a problem.
4 From a traditional story written around 1965. Personal archives.
5 From Ini Sa Medoo Telaki, a traditional storybook in Cotabato Manobo. Published in 1986.
6 Health and Management Information Systems. This is funded by a grant from the German government and the Philippines Department of Health.
7 Personal correspondence from SIL colleague Douglas Fraiser, February 20, 1998.
8 This was graphically illustrated for me early in our stay with the Manobos. Whenever the family travels together, the man walks ahead with his long knife at the ready, choosing the trail and clearing it of snakes. Then the children follow, with Mother bringing up the rear carrying a baby on one hip, a bundle on her back, and perhaps an umbrella.
Chapter 6

Conclusions

Ini sa kenà di nesetigesa sa metiig owoy sa endà metiig eg sulat owoy egbasà. Endà mesetiig ké ok ngadan sa egkebaelan sa duma ta dutu mediyù dò apay di pa mebuga ké. ... Endà ma metiig an ki duu sa eg tulonen sa sulat ne ke uma diyà kenami, ataw ka duen medaet, ataw ka duen kepionon tunebow.

This is how the one who can read and write is different from the one who does not know. We don’t know what our companion who is far away is doing/experiencing even though we are missing one another. ... We also don’t know what a letter that comes to us says, whether if something bad or good will come to us.

Elvit Lebeg, kindergarten teacher

A. An Overview of the Context

The Manobos, the subjects of this thesis, live in the southern part of the Philippines. Education is highly valued and widely available in the Philippines, but is conducted in two languages which are foreign to the Manobos. Furthermore, few schools exist in the Manobo area.

About 40 years ago, a written form of the Manobo language was devised and a few people were taught to read using that alphabet in the years following. However, since 1980, the literacy rate has grown from 2% to about 25% of the total population of 30,000.

Literacy acquisition for the Manobo people has taken place without appreciable economic benefits and while the people have lacked many of the basic human needs, such as food and safety, often associated with providing the environment for learning according to Maslow’s hierarchy of needs (Cranton, 1992:8). The learning that has occurred has been motivated from the higher levels of self-esteem and self-actualization, while set in a rapidly changing social context.
Literate practice continues to grow in a highly oral context. This is realized through group interactions around text. Just as the group strengthens literate practice, so too, literate practice has strengthened the group. Literacy has been one component of increased group cohesion among the Manobo and has interacted with the rapidly changing social context in positive ways. Literacy continues to be practiced in individualistic ways that reflect the metaphor of literacy as adaptation.

This final chapter will place the research findings in the context of the critical questions raised in Chapter One. Some implications for literacy programmers will be drawn and some directions for further research will be suggested.

B. Summary and Discussion of the Findings

B.1. In what ways can literacy be introduced to best fit the culture?

For the Manobos, literacy was an option for several years before people actually showed interest in acquiring it in a large-scale way. Though the people are highly individualistic, the success of a few grew into the desire of many to learn literacy skills. Literacy became a do-able achievement for both men and women.

The analysis of social organization using the grid-group theory helps to explain how societies work in regard to new innovations such as literacy. For the individualistic Manobos they did not look to a leader to tell them to join a class and they did not wait for the group to mediate literacy for them. Instead, literacy provided a way for them to adapt to changing conditions. Literacy followed the metaphor of literacy as adaptation.

Manobos live in a time of rapid change. They face many threats to their society, identity, belief system, and even their very lives. Some facets of the literacy program which address the pressures they are facing are: 1) it is conducted in their own language, giving them
renewed self-worth and making the learning task comprehensible; 2) it gives them direct access to the Scriptures, which address their spiritual dilemma; 3) it has facilitated and supported a greater sense of group cohesion. Each of these is a source of renewed personal identity, as well as aiding them to find strength in a wider group identity. As Manobos initially became literate and as the church association and related programs grew, the attitude of non-Manobos toward them also became much more positive, on the whole.

Literacy acquisition for the Manobos occurred in an atmosphere of change. While a variety of pressures were shaking the foundations of their livelihood and beliefs, vernacular literacy and a new sense of group cohesion helped to give control and purpose to their lives. It offered them choices and alternatives to previous systems. These change factors were largely beyond the control of literacy providers. Part of finding the fit for literacy in the Manobo community was being at the right place at the right time.

In summary, then, literacy found a place in the Manobo community because it met current felt needs during a time of cultural stress and change. The program was aimed at an individualistic society, while supporting group cohesiveness through the choice of new community structures.

B.2. What factors move people beyond reading toward literate practice?

This research points to the disparate uses of literacy, depending on one’s role in the community. In large measure, literacy skills are at the basic to intermediate level and are used in a way that fits the metaphor of literacy as adaptation. Literacy is practiced in a functional way that benefits the individual in a particular setting, whether that be a storekeeper making a shopping list, a VHW reviewing a health manual, a church treasurer recording the offering, or a tribal mayor preparing a report for the sponsoring NGO.
Those who have become specialists of one kind or another have much more opportunity to practice their literacy skills and are therefore more likely to retain, and even improve their skills. They have already moved into literate practice and are likely to continue reading and writing, especially within their specialty.

Community members who do not have specialized roles may or may not find ways to nurture literate practice. Many are likely to continue to use literacy in reading the New Testament and can practice reading in the context of group literacy events, such as Bible studies and church services, as well as individually. Non-church-goers have fewer options for practicing literacy skills, and may eventually lose them. Children who have attended grades one and two in Filipino and English are the most likely to lose what skills they have learned because there is no local context to support literacy in either of those languages, though with help, some may be able to apply what they have learned to Manobo texts. Continued reading will depend on literature that meets their felt needs and on contexts for reading.

It is an established fact that the ability to read will be lost if the skill is not applied (Müller, 1997:56). Therefore, one consideration for nurturing the reading habit is having adequate supplies of interesting and relevant reading materials. The materials produced for the fluency level of the literacy program have met this need temporarily, but the variety of books is still very limited in scope and number. The materials that have been produced have been done by non-Manobos and were printed mostly outside the community.

The need for additional literature is not yet being met. As yet, no one in the community is expressing the need or attempting to produce materials. It may be some time until individuals or organizations find ways either to produce more printed materials
themselves or find ways to import meaningful materials from outside the community. The role of the literacy providers is to be ready to assist when the community is ready to move.

B.3. What is the community impact when literacy is introduced and applied?

Literacy has had an impact on the Manobo language and on the community structure. Regarding the language, introducing literacy has contributed to the standardization of the spoken form for intra-group settings and the formulation of a written form, though spoken forms co-exist with various dialectal adaptations. The process of standardization has been largely controlled by the program (non-Manobo) leaders, with the Manobos in an advisory and assisting role, but standardization was greatly facilitated by the increased contacts of Manobos from different parts of the language area. As the particular issues were raised, however, much of the decision-making regarding the spoken and written forms of the language has rested with them:

It is likely that the national language trends will continue to influence the Manobo language. Languages, like cultures, are not static and more changes are anticipated. At this point, the Manobo language is highly viable within the community. All children learn to speak it and all communication within the community is in Manobo, except when non-Manobos are present. However, contact with other languages is increasing with the introduction of an elementary school, radios, and increased political activity. The Manobo language still serves both instrumental and affective functions, but increasing contacts with lowlanders will give impetus to adopt other languages in certain contexts.

Though the economic advantages of speaking a trade language may eventually cause the Manobo language to lose its primary role, Trudell (1993) cites Edwards as noting that “there are a few cases in which economics are overridden: when a group’s religion is tied to
its language or when retention of the mother tongue does not lead to material loss...” (p. 30). This may well be the case for the Manobos for some time to come. Literacy and Christianity have both come through the mother tongue and seem firmly tied to it.

Literacy has had a large impact on the Manobo community because of its supportive role in newly formed community organizations. Literacy practices within these organizations have strengthened the role of literacy in the community. The Association of Manobo Bible Churches, for example, began as a small-group study and has honed reading skills, interpretive skills, outlining skills (in sermon preparation and note-taking), special functions of the board members and even the technical skills of forming a corporation. The VHWs read to remember oral teaching and to be able to follow directions, and they write prescriptions, directions, and letters. On another level, the tribal associations are learning to interact with outside entities, to interpret and apply the laws of the country, and to participate in training seminars with written materials in trade languages.

The Manobo communities are providing institutional support for literacy and for the use of the vernacular through the new organizations which have resulted from societal changes. These organizations have given additional contexts and validity for the use of both the vernacular and for literate practices. Participation in these organizations is mostly a matter of individual choice and adaptive in the sense of meeting personal felt needs.

While literacy has accompanied societal changes and increased group cohesion, it has had minimal impact on social organization. Communities have moved a degree toward greater group orientation as a result of the new structures and they have also moved somewhat toward a more hierarchical arrangement through the addition of new leadership. However, leadership has not followed the metaphor of literacy as power. Literacy has not led to stratification of the
society or to socio-political and economic advancement (Goldman, p. 2). Status may accrue to those who fill positions of leadership which require literacy skills, but only as leaders carry out their duties in a culturally approved manner in line with traditional leadership norms. Scribner's third metaphor of literacy as a state of grace may apply to a small number of Manobos who have had more formal schooling, but only as these individuals retain their Manobo identity and demonstrate other needed social skills do they have credibility within the community.

Thus, the predominant metaphor for literacy among the Manobos is literacy as adaptation. Literacy skills have been honed in the context of immediate need and in individualistic ways. At the same time literacy has played a role in bringing people together in organizations that serve the whole community in new and exciting ways.

C. Implications for Literacy Program Planners

This research has pointed out the importance first of all of knowing the target audience. A study of social organization and community felt needs is foundational to finding the literacy fit.

A second foundational issue is to understand the assumptions of the literacy provider/agency. This will help to determine what level of literacy is being targeted, what segment of the community is being targeted, and what the focus of literacy is to be (that is, literacy as adaptation, power or state of grace). Agencies such as Unesco, as reflected in their definition of literacy, for example, aim at a mature level of literacy, target the whole community, and see literacy as power. However, in practice we have noted in samples of their literacy programs that only potentially successful portions of the community are targeted. To
examine one's ideological base is to ask oneself, "Why am I here and what do I hope to accomplish?"

A discrepancy between the ideological base of the literacy provider and the community's views and uses for literacy, which is tied to social organization, is one of the reasons that many national and international literacy programs and campaigns have not met their goal of sustained literate practice. A style of literacy that does not fit the culture and community will either be rejected, forgotten, or modified. Besnier (1995), for example, documents how literacy and Christianity were introduced in a hierarchical manner on the Polynesian atoll of Nukulaelae, but the people themselves reshaped both literacy and Christianity to fit their egalitarian social structure.

A related implication that can be drawn from this study is the importance of following the community's lead in decisions regarding the literacy program. The community must retain ownership of who will teach, who will lead, what language will be used, how literacy will be used and who will benefit from literacy. These factors help to assure the proper literacy fit. When these factors are not considered, programs become irrelevant (as in the case studied by Mwanza, 1993), learning is curtailed (as in the EWLP in Tanzania, as noted by Gillette, 1987), neo-literates quickly revert to illiteracy (as noted by Agnihotri, 1994) and unnecessary barriers are erected (as Leap, 1987, reported).

Another important issue that this study has highlighted is that literacy acquisition takes a long time. Literacy programmers must allow for periods of relationship building, for motivational factors to come together, for group dynamics to play out, for literacy skills to be acquired and then for those skills to become literate practice in relevant contexts. This cannot be done in two or five or perhaps even ten years. It is a long process.
D. Suggestions for Further Research

This thesis has examined only a few of the ways Manobos use literacy. Much more could be said about individual uses and adaptations. As well, literate practice has been examined over a relatively short period of time (15 years) and another look involving a greater lapse of time would be appropriate. It will be especially interesting to observe how the tribal associations fare, since they have been set up in a more egalitarian way and reflect the literacy as power metaphor. They also serve to link Manobos with non-Manobos in new ways. The present research is limited in its scope and therefore there is room for further investigation and analysis.

There is a continuing need for ethnographic studies of how literacy has been received by non-literate and pre-literate communities. Successful programs, especially in terms of the longevity of the neo-literate, are still not well documented. Such studies require a commitment of time to observe the process over a period of years. They also require the researcher to learn the language and culture in order to interpret what they are observing.

Additional research into appropriate programs for communities representative of the four types of social organization would also be of interest. What type of program would be most effective in an egalitarian society, for example, as opposed to a hierarchical society? Throughout this thesis, I have not emphasized teaching methodology, but perhaps this also could be part of a study focused on social organization. The relationship of the teacher to the learner would be important in such a study.

Another direction for further study might be approaches to developing community writers, editors, and publishers to meet the need of neo-literates for interesting and
informative reading materials. For third world settings, economic considerations would also need to be part of the research.

Conclusion

Though literacy is widely recognized as a human right and necessity, its acquisition and retention have been much less clearly understood. Development programs aimed at illiterates have often missed the mark because the context, motivations, and social organization of the targeted communities are not considered in the planning design.

Literacy can be a valuable tool in the hands of previously illiterate people. As has been shown through this research, with appropriate attention to a cultural fit when the literacy program is introduced, and with materials and structures that support the reading habit on a continuing basis, the learning needs of illiterates can be realized. As Gillette (1987) reminds us, “[l]iteracy … cannot be reduced to behavioural conditioning. It endows people with skills that they can … use to receive and emit messages of an almost infinite range, a range that in any event largely escapes the control of those who imparted literacy to them. Literacy is potential empowerment” (p. 215).

_Duen doo sa kenà di nesëtigesa enù ka amuk egdagang a egkelipol a ataw ka egkelapis a._

_Dodoo igoh endà dé, enù ka metiiq a dé total owoy metiiq a ma dé eglista sa beliyen ku._

There truly is a difference, because when I was selling I would be overcharged or be cheated. But now it is not like that, because I now know how to figure the total and I know how to list what I am going to buy.

Peter Insam, literacy student
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