The Academic Tradition of Literate Argument Making: Towards Understanding the Fundamentals of Academic Literacy and Its Instruction

Jan Zalewski
Opole University

Abstract
What defines the academic community is a special kind of meaning making, called *academic literacy* and identified here with literate argument making. Discussing literacy as a metalinguistic and metacognitive ability, I start with the historical development of literate argument making as constitutive to the modern academic tradition. In my discussion, I espouse Olson's (1991a) claim that the introduction of the printing press resulted not just in different sociocultural developments such as the Reformation and the rise of modern science, but also in a new potential for altering human cognition. Based on this claim for sociocultural as well as cognitive consequences of the introduction of the printing press, I propose a distinction between two aspects of academic literacy: the exosemiotic (that which is outer, i.e., sociocultural) and the endosemiotic (that which is inner or cognitive). Trying to better understand academic literate meaning making skills, I seek to explain why the shift from spoken to written symbols matters so much to meaning making. This focus on literacy means critiquing how the process of becoming academically literate involves increasing an awareness of the meaning making process.

Keywords: academic literacy; literate argument/meaning making; exosemiotic and endosemiotic aspects of literacy

Abstrakt
Cechą definiującą społeczność akademicką jest specyficzny sposób tworzenia wiedzy, który określany jest terminem *piśmienności akademickiej*, ponieważ opiera się na pisemnej argumentacji. Punktem wyjścia dla niniejszego artykułu, traktującego piśmienność jako umiejętność metajęzykową oraz metakognitywną, jest historyczny rozwój gatunków tekstu pisanego tworzący współczesną tradycję akademicką. Dyskusja opiera się na tezie Olsona (1991a), który twierdzi, że wprowadzenie druku doprowadziło nie tylko do takich wydarzeń społeczno-kulturowych jak Reformacja, czy rozwój współczesnej nauki, lecz zaowocowało również możliwością przekształcenia ludzkiego umysłu. Opierając się na powyższym twierdzeniu o nie tylko społecznokulturowych, ale i kognitywnych skutkach wprowadzenia druku, artykuł proponuje rozróżnienie pomiędzy dwoma aspektami piśmienności akademickiej, aspektem egzosemiotycznym (tj. socjokulturowym), a aspektem endosemiotycznym (tj. kognitywnym). Tłumacząc na czym polega umiejętność akademickiej argumentacji pisemnej, artykuł wyjaśnia dlaczego zamiana symboli języka mówionego na symbole języka pisanego jest tak istotna dla procesu tworzenia znaczeń. Wyjaśnienie fundamentalnych aspektów piśmienności pozwala zrozumieć, że opanowywanie piśmienności akademickiej przyczynia się do wzrostu świadomości procesu tworzenia znaczeń.

Słowa klucze: piśmienność akademicka, tworzenie znaczeń, argumentacja pisemna, egzosemiotyczne i endosemiotyczne aspekty piśmienności

Introduction

The Bologna Process is to create the European Higher Education Area, by making university systems within each country and across Europe converge. The intention is to increase the flexibility of university programmes and thus facilitate student mobility by giving them greater opportunity for choice and change rather than having them follow rigid academic tracks. Since under the Bologna system it takes generally less time to complete a bachelor's degree, it is expected that there will be more European students who successfully complete this degree, which means a larger pool of potential master's

students. The master's level appears to be a crucial stage for students in becoming members of their chosen academic communities, the time when their socialization into specific academic discourse practices takes place (cf. Duff 2010).

In Poland, the percentage of young people continuing their education at the tertiary level has quadrupled since the fall of communism. This significant increase (although not in terms of the number of students any more) translates into what academic teachers perceive as a dramatic drop in an average student's literacy skills. Lately, this perception may have been additionally intensified by greater student mobility, a result of the introduction of the Bologna system. Teaching master's seminars within the new system, compared to the pre-Bologna seminars, we can realize we used to be in a more comfortable situation: we dealt with students of uniform academic background and knew much better what we could expect from them. Now the students in a master's seminar may come from all kinds of colleges and have fairly different academic backgrounds. Some of them may have graduated from colleges where they have had less chance to develop their academic literacy skills. The differences in our master's students' discipline-specific knowledge point to the need to introduce them into the specific academic field of the seminar, a specific knowledge community, by a careful selection of readings. Facing this new situation, as teachers we need to consider and try to better understand what it means to develop master's students' academic literacy and to introduce them into specific academic discourse practices.

Literacy as Metalinguistic and Metacognitive

In English departments in Poland, as well as in other foreign language departments, our situation is certainly additionally complicated because our students are not native speakers of English, but the language of instruction is English and our students need to write their master's theses in English. My primary concern in this paper is thus with English-based literacy; however, literacy will be viewed and explained as a metalinguistic and metacognitive ability (cf. Bereiter and Scardamalia 1987; Olson 1991b). In the traditional view, which reduces literacy to knowledge of sound-letter correspondences, literacy instruction belongs in elementary education. Such thinking about literacy instruction in terms of elementary pedagogic practice is rooted in the long-unquestioned assumption about writing, holding that writing is just a useful substitute for speech, which is the primary medium of communication (Harris 2005). Literacy is thus reduced to the ability

to substitute speech for writing and writing for speech, and seen apart from the meaning making process. Reading and writing are then taught as mechanical encoding and decoding activities, separate from meaning making itself. However, literacy is more than the ability to read and write in the sense of meaning-decoding and meaning-encoding abilities based on our knowledge of the correspondences between phonemes (speech sounds) and graphemes (letters). Literacy is about meaning making and we need to better understand how the shift from the oral to the written medium affects the very process of making meaning and our awareness of it, that is, how it alters our cognition.[1]

In its functional sense, literacy is a complex of competences required to participate in a literate culture (see, e.g., Barton 2007). As such, literacy must be a central concern at every level of education because it involves meaning/knowledge making. The current idea of *functional literacy* is often traced back to Gray's (1956) book on literacy instruction. According to Gray, people who are functionally literate are able to "engage effectively in all those activities in which literacy is normally assumed in [their] culture or group" (1956, 24). Importantly, the functional definition makes literacy a relative (local) matter, relative to a particular social group/cultural context, rather than trying to reduce it to a fixed set of general skills, seen as the same for all kinds of contexts. Literacy will be discussed here as meaning making which involves the use of written in addition to spoken symbols. Since knowledge making of the type which essentially involves written texts is the raison d'être of academic communities, for students to enter an academic community and become academically literate will mean socialization into the knowledge making practices involving written texts. For master's students, academic literacy will critically involve increasing metacognitive awareness.

To help us see the traditional reductionist understanding of literacy and put us on a more productive track in thinking about the nature of academic literacy as a kind of meaning making, let us consider the following issue concerning literacy in English as a foreign language. Worldwide, many academics will read and comprehend their professional literature in English without quite knowing how to pronounce the words. Arguably, they come closer to being literate in academic English than those students who can read an academic text in English with native-like pronunciation but without much understanding. We must see then that literacy should not be defined around relationships

[1] Of course, the written medium does not automatically transform our cognition, as attested to by Bereiter and Scadamalia's (1987) distinction between immature writing as *knowledge telling* and mature writing as *knowledge transforming*.

between forms, namely, as substituting phonemes for graphemes or the other way round, but essentially it is about using written in addition to oral symbols to make meanings. What needs to be understood and appreciated is why the change of the medium from oral to written matters so much to meaning making.

Academic Literacy and its Origin

Academic discourse and academic literacy have been the subject of numerous publications. Elbow (1991) defines *academic discourse* (understood as discourse used by academics in publishing for other academics) by referring to an intellectual stance in argument making characterised by (a) making explicit claims, (b) giving reasons, (c) presenting evidence, and (d) setting the whole argument in an on-going debate by using references. From this definition of academic discourse, in terms of an intellectual stance in argument making, it follows that being academically literate means being able to play the role of an argument maker. G. Graff similarly claims that academic literacy involves playing the social role that he defines as "the role of self-conscious intellectualizer and contentious argument maker" (1999, 140). Thus, according to G. Graff, becoming academically literate involves becoming more aware of the knowledge making process, a process in which written texts play an essential role, which is a fundamental point to be explained here.

Let us notice that the above characterisation of academic discourse points to the fact that academic discourse is in fact written discourse. Academic culture is primarily written culture, which has developed around written texts. The rise of modern science (as empirical enquiry based on inductive logic and experimental methodology), too, is connected with the invention of the printing press and the spread of literate practices. It is the sciences that have been the prototypical academic communities, with other academic disciplines aspiring to such a scientific status, 20th-century psychology and linguistics providing such examples. The hypothesis linking the invention of the printing press, and the following development of widespread literacy, to the rise of modern science has been a major theme in literacy studies (McLuhan 1962; Havelock 1963; Goody and Watt 1963; Eisenstein 1979). In the academic tradition that started to develop after the introduction of the printing press, as Eisenstein (1979) explains, the new technology of printing provided scholars across Europe with identical copies of texts, which made it possible to scrutinize the texts, directing attention to the claims being made, reasoning

being used, and evidence being adduced, that is, to argument construction. This process of studying, comparing, and criticizing texts led to their continuous revision and updating. Thus, the technology of printing has given rise to an accumulative research tradition which has evolved around community-based (i.e., interactive and collaborative) processes and mechanisms developed for intersubjective (i.e., socially agreed upon) validation of individual observations. What appears central to this tradition is the development of the specific skill of literate argument making – a process which has taken place within an academic reading public which has been steadily growing, undergoing differentiation and specialization by pursuing different issues in an on-going debate. This continuous process has led to the development of new genres of essay prose.

As Elbow (1991) observes, the kind of literate argument making and knowledge making specific to the academic tradition shows a bias toward objectivity by avoiding personal opinions and feelings and putting stress on being clear about what claims are made, what counts as valid reasoning, and what counts as valid evidence. Many in the academic community have come to resist this bias toward objectivity (following, e.g., Polanyi 1962), claiming that it is by acknowledging our personal interest/situatedness that we in fact enlarge our vision, seeing how our knowledge is motivated. Teaching academic literacy as a specific kind of meaning making, we must face the issue of the situatedness of knowledge making. In order to do so, I will start by examining how the roots of the scientific bias toward objectivity may be traced to the existence of texts as physical objects (Olson 1991a), which brings us to a crucial point in explaining literacy.

Textual Meaning: Given or Interpreted

According Olson (1991a), in opposition to Eisenstein (1979), the two dissident traditions of the early modern times, namely, the Protestant Reformation and science, shared one thing in common, and this was literacy: Eisenstein (1979, 701) points to "the futility of trying to encapsulate... in any one formula" the consequences of the communications revolution triggered by the printing press. She has demonstrated that, with regard to the religious tradition, the printing press contributed to the spread of the gospel, additionally rendering the mediation of the Church in this process redundant, leading to the rise of the Reformation. As for science, printing resulted in the development of the process of intersubjective validation of observations. Olson (1991a) argues, however, that we are not dealing here only with different uses of printing, that is, different

sociocultural developments. The newly evolving forms of literate competence afford new ways to develop the mind. Ultimately, then, the cognitive processes of individuals are affected. Thus, Olson claims that at the cognitive level

> literacy... played much the same fundamental role in the Protestant Reformation as it did in the rise of modern science. In both cases... it permitted the clear differentiation of the 'given' from the 'interpreted.' Literacy generally, and printing in particular, fixed the written record as the given against which interpretations could be compared (1991a, 151).

Stock (1983) observes that heresy in the Middle Ages resulted mostly from literacy: literates could recognise the interpretations of the Church as interpretations, but they saw their own reading of the text not as interpretation but as expression of what the text says. The Reformation movement was rooted in the distinction between the meaning *given* in the text and the *interpretations* made of the text, Reformation theology claiming that Scripture did not need the Church's interpretation.

The same conceptual distinction between the given/objective and the interpreted/subjective underlies modern science. As Olson (1991a) explains, the conceptual metaphor of *reading the book of nature* provided the epistemological model for modern science. Importantly for my present discussion, Olson (1991a, 152) argues that "the systematic distinction between something that is taken as given, fixed, autonomous, and objective and something that is construed as interpretive, inferential, and subjective" constitutes the "link between literacy and modernity." Literacy has made us see an objective text as independent of our subjective interpretation in the same way that modern science has made us see an objective reality as independent of our cognition. The modern scientific opposition of objectivity and subjectivity has only recently started to be questioned on empirical and not just philosophical grounds (cf. Lakoff and Johnson's 1980 discussion of the *myth of objectivity*). Likewise, not until the 20th century, has the fundamental hermeneutical problem of text interpretation begun to be addressed as a problem of semiotics, that is, a theory of signs. Harris (2005, xiv) makes an observation to the effect that trying to understand literacy (i.e., our ability to use written symbols to make meanings) without understanding the nature of signs (semiotics) is like trying to understand solar eclipses without understanding how the solar system works. The question of whether textual meaning is given or interpreted calls for taking a closer look at signs.

Plato's Problem with Writing

The problem appears to be that since Plato there has not been enough appreciation for the unique way in which written symbols come to mean. As Harris (2005) observes, a simplified version of Aristotle's views on the relationship between speech and writing became received knowledge and remained unchallenged until the 20th century. This unchallenged view is what Harris (2005) calls the *surrogational model*, where writing is viewed as a substitute for speech (as mentioned earlier). Saussure (1916/1986) conserved the surrogational model of writing by putting it into a wider framework of his theory of signs (*semiology*). This view of writing is what his successors held on to. Thus, for example, Bloomfield (1933, 21) claimed that "writing is not language, but merely a way of recording language by means of visible marks," a claim that perpetuated the surrogational view of writing. Plato was the first who questioned the surrogational view, objecting to the assumption that writing can become a substitute for speech, with the additional benefit of making speech durable through time and space. He argued that, except for those who already know its meaning, a written text cannot mean like an oral text does. Plato explains that taking writing as equivalent to speaking is like mistaking a portrait for the living person. In the famous passage from *Phaedrus*, he says:

> The productions of painting look like living beings, but if you ask them a question they maintain a solemn silence. The same holds true of written words; you might suppose that they understand what they are saying, but if you ask them what they mean by anything they simply return the same answer over and over again (*Phaedrus*, 275).

For Plato, writing cannot be a reliable substitute for speech, and this is not because, to use his metaphor, a portrait may not resemble the living person, the sitter. Of course, written language is deficient in resources and cannot capture, for example, the spoken prosodic phenomena of pitches, pauses, differences in tempo and voice quality. In this sense, written language is indeed impoverished.

However, Plato's objection to writing goes deeper than that. His problem with writing, as Harris (2005, 18) puts it, is that it is not "language *in vivo*." Speech is alive because it is not severed from the situation, and it is its embeddedness in the immediate situation which makes it meaningful. Most importantly for Plato, speech is not separated from the speaker, who shares the same space and time with his/her audience. Spoken lan-

guage forms are typically so transparent that we see through them to the things they signify. This is why in the case of a comprehension problem we typically ask *What do YOU mean?* and not *What does IT mean?* In speech, we are more likely to notice a specific language form when it is meaningless to us: then, it becomes opaque and attracts attention to itself. The great disadvantage of speech is that it is transient and evanescent. Writing overcomes this limitation and becomes permanent, which is seen as its great advantage. However, Plato warns us that writing gives but a specious permanence to the speaker's words. Writing becomes permanent but at the cost of being cut off from its context, from its roots, its producer. This is why it becomes, in Harris's (2005, 18) words, a "lifeless shell." And this is why, for Plato, writing is a deception, offering to do what speech does and even more, while in fact it cannot deliver on its promise. Thus, a written text may become opaque for us: our attention gets stuck on the written forms and we cannot see beyond them. Then we ask *What does IT mean?* but cannot get any answers. For Plato, understanding arises from and can be demonstrated through dialogue, where speakers are interrupted by the question *What do you mean?* and thus forced to re-say what they mean, using alternative expressions.

How Writing Comes to Mean

The reasons why writing cannot deliver on its promise, that is, why a written text cannot mean like a spoken text, bring us to the fundamental question of how writing comes to mean. As noted, the Reformation movement was rooted in the distinction between interpretations made of the Scriptures and the meaning *given* in the text, called the *literal* meaning of the text. This distinction was in opposition to the claim by Saint Thomas Aquinas, who distinguished between levels of meaning in the Bible (such as literal, spiritual, or moral meaning) but treated all of them as given in the text (cf. Smalley 1970). Plato seems to favour the view that there is no meaning given in a written text. He says that if a writer writes a text "which he believes to embody clear knowledge of lasting importance, then this writer deserves reproach" (*Phaedrus*, 277). He explains that "at the very best [written texts] can only serve as reminders to those who already know" (*Phaedrus*, 278). These statements amount to saying that there is no meaning given to the reader in the text unless he or she already has the knowledge to make the text meaningful. This is in fact the conclusion that follows from the semiotic view of language: if linguistic forms are symbols, and as such they stand for something else (i.e., they mean what they are

not), then meaning does not reside in them.[2] Spoken language forms appear to be more prototypical symbols in that they point away from themselves, making us focally aware of the conceptual content they point to.[3] Thus, their raison d'être is to produce linguistic awareness of the experienced world (see Olson 1991b), which is different in the case of written language.

Written language forms appear to be poorer examples of symbols in that they attract more attention to themselves, and this is because writing is intrinsically metalinguistic, making us aware of linguistic form: as Olson (1991b) explains, Bloomfield's claim that writing is "merely a way of recording language" (1933, 21) indicates that "writing is by its very nature a metalinguistic activity" in the sense that it "takes oral language as its object" (1991b, 266). In other words, to represent speech, writing must involve more an awareness of linguistic form. Elsewhere, Olson (1991a) observes that "a written text preserves only part of language, the form, and the meaning has to be regenerated by the reader" (151). As Plato insisted, writing does not preserve language. What writing makes permanent is linguistic form, by turning it into an objectified text. This objectified text is autonomous, that is, independent of the writer in a way that speech can never be and separated from his/her intentions. A text is meaningful to readers who can regenerate its meaning: it is meaningless without prior knowledge. That is why Plato says writing is at best a reminder.

The increased awareness of language form in using written language brings out the problem of what is provided in the text versus what is mere interpretation, a problem which is only implicit in oral language use but becomes explicit in literacy. Harris (2005) argues that modern societies are in a transition stage between orality and full/critical literacy and it is particularly difficult for them to accept that writing cannot fix and preserve any part of what language means. In other words, there is no such thing as *basic linguistic meaning* residing in linguistic expressions, independent from the user and transcending the social-historical context or even our human-biological condition, which means no objective (absolute and unconditional) truth is communicated through language, whose interpretation is always socially/historically conditioned. The myth of objectivity has been discredited by Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) analysis of language and cog-

[2] Cognitive linguists make the point that meaning does not reside in linguistic expressions and argue for what they call "an encyclopedic rather than dictionary conception" of linguistic meaning (e.g., Langacker 1987, 154–166).

[3] On the prototype theory of human conceptualization see, e.g., Rosch and Lloyd (1978).

nitive linguists have worked to document ever since (see, e.g., Langacker 1987; Lakoff and Johnson 1999; Harder 2010). The literacy-induced metalinguistic and metacognitive awareness makes us face the issue of the situatedness and intersubjectivity of meaning/knowledge making.

Without providing the necessary ingredients, all the relevant kinds of experience/knowledge, a language user will not make any sense from the linguistic forms given in the text. Just as the same recipe will produce ultimately different dishes in the hands of different cooks, similarly different language users will generate different meanings with the same text. The more language users share as members of various discourse communities, the more their interpretations converge.

Two Aspects of Literacy and the Two Kinds of Literacy Goals

As I indicate at the start, there are two reasons for my pondering the fundamentals of academic literacy instruction: (a) the increase in the access to tertiary education in our country, which is perceived by academic teachers as a drop in an average student's literacy skills; (b) the introduction of the Bologna system aimed at increasing the flexibility of university education, which means a greater mix of students in master's programmes, where less shared discipline-specific knowledge can be assumed in the students. The problem is how best to introduce such students to the topic of a master's seminar and set them to work not only individually on their separate projects but also enable collaboration, productive exchange of ideas, and mutual support in the group so they can become their own academic community. This aim amounts to developing their academic literacy competence, literacy involving the use of written, in addition to spoken, symbols to make meanings. My present attempt at understanding the literacy competence master's students need to fully participate in academic culture points to two general aspects of literacy, which in turn translate into two major literacy goals at the master's level. I will refer to them as the *exosemiotic* and *endosemiotic* aspects of literacy.

The exosemiotic aspect of literacy focuses on the outer sphere of what literacy allows us to do (the kinds of social practice it supports), and includes academic argument making as discussed above. In this case, literacy is seen as a pragmatic tool, allowing us to do what would be more difficult or even impossible to do without it (where academic argument construction and its specific process of intersubjective validation of personal observations is dependent on written language, and enhanced by the increased

metacognitive awareness that literacy fosters). Most importantly, then, literacy allows us to understand and learn more by supporting logical, analytical, abstract, reflective, and critical modes of thinking. Literacy in the form of academic argument making is thus a very special tool for knowledge making. This is largely the view of literacy which informs the *process revolution* in writing instruction (cf. Hairston 1982). Writing is certainly a powerful learning tool which is still too often underappreciated and underused in particularly continental European educational practice (Tynjala, Mason, and Lonka 2001). In our country, students face the requirement of writing a final master's thesis often without having adequate experience in academic writing, as our academic courses rarely include an end-of-semester written paper requirement. As for the endosemiotic aspect of literacy, it focuses on the inner sphere of the meaning-making mechanisms (i.e., the cognitive and especially metacognitive processes it supports), and thus means increased awareness of knowledge-making, involving our understanding how writing comes to mean. This is the more reflective and critical aspect of literacy that G. Graff (1999) refers to in the quotation above as the self-conscious intellectual stance in argument making.

The exosemiotic aspect of academic literacy amounts to some broadly construed methodological awareness in the sense of the steps we need to take to construct a valid argument; that is, valid knowledge, which means that this methodological awareness extends to and overlaps the research methodology. On the other hand, the endosemiotic aspect of literacy amounts to epistemological and ontological awareness, that is, understanding our own knowledge and ultimately how our coming to know "entails broader changes in being" (Packer and Giocoechea 2000, 227). If oral language produces linguistic awareness of the experienced world (points to some conceptual content) and writing is metalinguistic (takes oral language as its object), then writing (as argument construction or composing) can facilitate metacognitive control of conceptual content, and so can lead us to knowing our knowledge.[4]

As these two aspects are not discrete types of literacy, the corresponding major types of literacy goals, namely, that of raising methodological awareness and that of raising epistemological awareness, are not at all discrete goals. Our study of argument and knowl-

[4] See Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987) on composing as knowledge transforming. Moreover, Ramage et al. (2009, 30) point to the key role that the study of argument making should play in the curriculum: "As we design our courses and our assignments we need to keep that role in mind and to shape our pedagogy around it."

edge making, that is, our methodological concerns with how to construct valid argument and valid knowledge, ultimately bring us to the more fundamental epistemological questions about the source and nature of our knowledge. In different academic disciplines, positivist-objectivist views of knowledge, pointing to the objective world as the ultimate source of our knowledge, have been subjected to questioning and lately replaced by intersubjective and social constructionist views, pointing to our interactions with the natural world and with one another as constitutive of our knowledge. This epistemological shift has enabled us to confront the fundamental question of how a text comes to mean, with each act of interpretation being situated in a specific discourse community.

In writing a master's thesis, our students embark on what is to be a truly academic long-term project, requiring them to make a strenuous intellectual effort, which lends itself ideally to helping them attain the two kinds of literacy goals I have been trying to expound. Traditionally, our major concern in seminar classes has been with the broadly construed methodological issues (i.e., with providing knowledge-making tools, including research methodology). However, because students in a master's programme of the pre-Bologna era used to share more academic background, there was much less need for a master's seminar to introduce the students to the specific academic field of study and acquaint them with the canonical literature. Rightly or not, we tended to assume such subject knowledge in our students.

If under the new system, dealing with our heterogeneous student population, we focus on methodological issues in our seminars, we run the risk that our students will be unfamiliar with the actual academic debates in our field and will have no shared problems to apply their research tools to. Their inability to ground a problem in relevant literature results in their inability to justify why something needs or does not need studying. We need to make acquainting our students with literature on the subject a priority in a master's seminar. Through a careful selection of readings, we need to expose them to the debates going on in our field, familiarizing them with the kinds of problems dealt with and the kinds of argument making used in our academic field. This brings us back to the fundamental question of how the texts in our discipline come to mean for us, which is the essence of what introducing students into an academic discourse community is about.

Plato tells us written texts "can only serve as reminders to those who already know" (*Phaedrus*, 278). How can they become new learning experiences for students in this light? Plato claims that understanding arises through dialogic thought. Based on this, Gee (1988, 198) observes that "there is a sense... in which writing *can* respond to the question, what do you mean? It can do so when the reader re-says, in *his* or *her own* words,

what the text means." Because what Plato means by dialogic thought is face-to-face interaction, by responding to each other's readings, students can start to see the different knowledge and assumptions they bring or fail to bring to their reading of a text, depending on their previous educational histories. This can help them understand the social nature of interpretation, the situatedness of the meanings we make.

Thus, the diverse backgrounds of students in our master's seminars can become an asset and a resource to be used in the classroom to increase the students' awareness of the social nature of interpretation (situatedness of knowledge-making); that is, how what texts come to mean for us is rooted in our personal histories. Coming to a class with their different academic histories, different topic-specific knowledge, differences in what a specific field of study means to them, and so with different expectations toward a master's seminar, our students should be made to see how these differences translate into their individual yet socially shaped readings of the assigned texts. Their discussions of the texts are to make them into a new knowledge community, abiding by a new set of conventions introduced under the teacher's supervision. It is, however, the teacher's supervision that lies at the root of the inescapable and unresolvable Platonic dilemma (cf. Gee 1988): Plato sees knowledge as stemming from a genuine dialogue, which is free from self-interested claims to authority, but at the same time insists there has to be some authority behind a text, not to engage in a dialogue with the reader but to impose canonical interpretations. This is because a text, being no more than a form whose meaning has to be regenerated, can get into the wrong hands and be inappropriately interpreted. Master's programmes must go beyond teaching the exosemiotic, purely utilitarian aspects of literacy and raise students' awareness of the endosemiotic, epistemological issues like the appropriateness of interpretation in the sense of social situatedness of our knowledge. Master's students should become more critically aware participants of the knowledge making process.

Works Cited

Barton, David. 2007. *Literacy: An Introduction to the Ecology of Written Language*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Bloomfield, Leonard. 1933. *Language*. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.

Bereiter, Carl, and Marlene Scardamalia. 1987. *The Psychology of Written Composition*. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Duff, Patricia A. 2010. "Language Socialization into Academic Discourse Communities." *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 30: 169–192.

Eisenstein, Elizabeth. 1979. *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Elbow, Peter. 1991. "Reflections on Academic Discourse: How it Relates to Freshmen and Colleagues." *College English* 53.2: 135–155.

Gee, James P. 1988. "The Legacies of Literacy: From Plato to Freire through Harvey Graff." *Harvard Educational Review* 58.2: 195–212.

Goody, Jack, and Ian P. Watt. 1963. "The Consequences of Literacy." *Comparative Studies in History and Society* 5.3: 304–345.

Graff, Gerald. 1999. "The Academic Language Gap." *Clearing House* 72.3: 140–142.

Graff, Harvey. 1987. *The Legacies of Literacy: Continuities and Contradictions in Western Culture and Society*. Bloomington, IN: University of Indiana Press.

Gray, William S. 1956. *The Teaching of Reading and Writing*. Paris: UNESCO.

Hairston, Maxine. 1982. "The Winds of Change: Thomas Khun and the Revolution in the Teaching of Writing." *College Composition and Communication* 33.1: 76–88.

Harder, Peter. 2010. *Meaning in Mind and Society*. Berlin: de Gruyter Mouton.

Harris, Roy. 2005. *Rethinking Writing*. London: Continuum.

Havelock, Eric A. 1963. *Preface to Plato*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Lakoff, George, and Mark Johnson. 1980. *Metaphors We Live By*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.

Lakoff, George, and Mark Johnson. 1999. *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and its Challenge to Western Thought*. New York: Basic Books.

Langacker, Ronald W. 1987. *Foundations of Cognitive Grammar: Vol. 1. Theoretical Prerequisites*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

McLuhan, Marshall. 1962. *The Gutenberg Galaxy*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Olson, David R. 1991a. "Literacy and Objectivity: The Rise of Modern Science." In *Literacy and Orality*, edited by David R. Olson and Nancy Torrance, 149–164. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Olson, David R. 1991b. "Literacy as Metalinguistic Activity." In *Literacy and Orality*, edited by David R. Olson and Nancy Torrance, 251–270. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Packer, Martin J., and Jessie Giocoechea. 2000. "Sociocultural and Constructivist Theories of Learning: Ontology, not just Epistemology." *Educational Psychologist*, 35.4: 227–241.

Plato. 2001. "From *Phaedrus*." In *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, edited by Vincent B. Leitch, 81–85. New York: Norton. (Original work ca. 370 B.C.E.)

Polanyi, Michael. 1962. *Personal Knowledge: Towards a Post-Critical Philosophy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Ramage, John, Michael Callaway, Jennifer Clary-Lemon, and Zachary Waggoner. 2009. *Argument in Composition*. West Lafayette, IN: Parlor Press.

Rosch, Eleanor, and Barbara L. Lloyd, eds. 1978. *Cognition and Categorization*. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Saussure, Ferdinand de. 1986. *Course in General Linguistics*. Translated by Roy Harris. La Salle, IL: Open Court. (Original work published 1916)

Smalley, Beryl. 1970. *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press.

Stock, Brian. 1983. *The Implications of Literacy*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Tynjala, Paivi, Lucia Mason, and Kirsti Lonka, eds. 2001. *Writing as a Learning Tool: Integrating Theory and Practice*. Dordrecht, Holland: Kluwer.