

*The Alpha Female: Speech and Thought Presentation of the contemporary Filipino woman in *Magnificence**

Maria Cecilia Jhadziah Diva

Abstract

This paper sought to unravel the contemporary views on Filipino woman through speech and thought presentation using *Magnificence* written by Estrella Alfon. Speech and thought presentation is primarily concerned as to how a writer reveals the speech and thought of their characters as they interact with other characters in the literary work. As literature remains a reflection of the society, speech and thought presentation gave way to the perception of how a Filipino woman is now seen in the society. The analysis revealed the following views: an unconventional woman as a mother; an equal partner; and a ‘magnificent’ and headstrong woman. As these contemporary views on Filipino were explored, an acceptance to more progressive perspective on the Filipino women will most likely emerge in the future.

Keywords: *speech and thought presentation, Magnificence, contemporary woman, Estrella Alfon*

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About the author:

Maria Cecilia Jhadziah B. Diva is a graduate of Bachelor of Secondary Education – Major in English at Laguna State Polytechnic University – San Pablo City Campus. She is currently a student of Philippine Normal University and studies Master of Arts in Education with specialization in Literature.



1. Introduction

For years, Philippines has been considered a patriarchal country where there seems to be a special homage for the male gender. This is further reinforced by stereotypes as the male being strong, competent, and highly-active while female is usually typified as someone who is meek, submissive, and passive. Throughout the years, this ideology has been repeatedly challenged particularly in literature. For a long time, Philippine literature provided Filipino readers a well-pictured image of a Filipina in the society. As how Filipinos viewed women and their roles changed, so did how she is portrayed in different literatures specifically in the Philippines. After all, literature is a reflection of a culture and society.

Unlike other countries, Philippines is a country considered as having ‘one of the smallest gender disparities in the world’ (Casambre & Rood, 2012) mainly because, the country had two female presidents and a female Supreme Court Justice (Cecilia Muñoz Palma) even before the United States had one. How the Filipina gained its rights in the country was a long journey.

According to the National Commission for Culture and the Arts in an article published in 2015 entitled *The Literary Forms in Philippine Literature*, contemporary Philippine literature refers to the resurgence of literary works in the 1960s and 1970s and publications which emerged after the Martial Law years. It was also during this time that Filipino writers, poets, novelists, and the like became socially committed and began writing which is gender/ethnic related. As such, works published during this period would likely show and reveal how the Filipino woman is presented and how it shaped our consciousness of a *Filipina*.

One of the leading examples of literature which opened the idea of shifting gender roles in Filipino women was Estrella Alfon’s *Magnificence*. It was acclaimed as it presented how a woman, a mother, particularly challenged the patriarchal view of the Philippine society. With such view being opened and presented to readers, a stylistic analysis of the short story would unveil and uncover the contemporary view of the *Filipina* in the society of the Philippines.

2. Literature review

2.1 *The Filipino Female*

The *Filipina* has a come a long way before it received the veneration it deserves. Even so, there is still a continuous and ongoing battle as to where women should stand and where she

should be (Tarrayo, 2015). In the pre-colonial period, women in the Philippines already played an important role in the community. The most notable role given was being a *babaylan* which is similar to a seer, healer and priestess. A *babaylan* is often regarded with much respect and is considered to be next in rank to the *datu* or the chieftain.

Siftung (2001) further retold the history of struggle of Filipino women before it has reached its pedestal right now. He recounted the following:

When the Spanish colonial period came, it was believed and some historians claim that it was only at this time that women were viewed unequally which is a direct contrast to how women were treated during the pre-colonial period. However, this did not stop Filipinas from fighting the war. Some women joined the underground movement called KATIPUNAN and fought along-side with men. This allowed women to break the conventional roles given to women such as being a home-maker and care-giver that the Spanish rule imposed to the Philippine culture.

During the 1940s, which is also the time of American occupation, education also became accessible to women. Having the privilege to finally be able to study and go school, Filipina pursued their right to suffrage or right to vote. During those times, only literate men had the right to vote and hold an office. The Suffragist Movement paved the way for Filipina to finally be able to exercise their right of suffrage. Women fighting for the right to vote became the entry of feminism in the country. On April 30, 1937, after three decades and on the ratification of the Commonwealth Government National Assembly, Filipinas were finally allowed to exercise their right of suffrage.

In World War II, Filipina also participated in war. The women who fought the war were the same women who tried to participate in a post-war government, however, during this time, only few women were visible in mainstream politics. In 1951, the Filipina tried to form a National Political Party of women but got rejected. On the other hand, on the same year, a separate group assembled a Women's Magsaysay-for-President Movement to support the presidential run of Ramon Magsaysay.

The 70's was known for its Marcos' Martial Law dictatorship and many Filipina joined the resistance against the government. Women became more politicized and a number joined ideological groups while some joined rebel movements. At the climax of anti-dictatorship movement, a women's group emerged known as MAKIBAKA or Malayang Kilusan ng Bagong Kababaihan (Free Movement of New Women) with explicit feminist agenda. The organization of

MAKIBAKA proved to be of great significance in women's movement in the Philippines. Unfortunately, MAKIBAKA's agenda was soon abandoned when the Martial Law was imposed but it allied with the Communist Party of the Philippines for the nation's liberation under Marcos' regime.

In the height of Martial Law years, two feminist groups emerged. The Kilusan ng Kababaihang Pilipina (Movement of Filipino Women) or PILIPINA which had a main objective of addressing gender issues in the society. Another group that emerged was Katipunan ng Kababaihan para sa Kalayaan (Women's Collective for Freedom) or KALAYAAN with the aim of addressing gender issues in the national level.

On 1983, these women groups called for a women's march, a first in history. This event led the way for the establishment of General Assembly Binding Women for Reforms, Integrity, Equality, Leadership and Action which is also known today as GABRIELA. GABRIELA fosters women and women's group from different backgrounds and ideological leanings. Until this day, GABRIELA fights for women's right across the country and proved that women's organizations have played an important role to women to acquire knowledge, orientation, and skill necessary to advance women's interest in different fields.

2.2. Women in Philippine Literature

The changing views about female contributed to many contemporary Filipino female portraying a new perspective to a *Filipina* through literature. As literature is a reflection of the society and its ideals, the new female character was seen in a new light: autonomous, decisive, capable and professional (Dials, 2017).

Much has been said and studied as to how Filipino women were portrayed in Philippine Literature. They went from being confined to the stereotype that females are homemakers and should essentially be looking after only and nurturing their children to women who show strength of character, breaking gender roles and stereotypes, and being unconventional. Tarrayo (2015) posited that the roles women in Philippine Literature varied from being a "martyr, social victim, homemaker, mother, and fighter" and has "evolved from traditionally coy Maria Clara to the modern Filipina who is daring and committed to her endeavors."

Aside from the strong characterization given to the female characters, themes of courage, vigilance, assertiveness were also attributed to the contemporary Filipino female characters in

Philippine literature (Tiangson, 2018) in contrast to the humble, meek, and submissive women which was how, throughout the decades, the Filipino women were presented.

Throughout the years, though there is an evident struggle to defy the unequal footing of male and female in the society, women were no longer bound inside the household and no longer burdened with chores only but instead she is now accepted in the office, the factory, or in any labor that basically favors the male gender. Pura Santillan Castrence (1977) once said in a speech:

“We have shown the Filipina in the sweeping scenes of her life as heroine in the story of her country. We see her now, active in almost every field of endeavor, in agriculture, in industries both as worker and as administrator, in educational institutions, both as teacher and as head in offices, as clerks and secretaries but also as managers in hospitals, as doctors, nurses or attendants in high government and in low government positions, in foreign service, a chief or helper. She is ubiquitous, and her everywhere-ness is taken for granted. True, she is still dissatisfied with the inequities caused by sex discrimination, but she is taking these things in stride and continues fighting for man-woman equality along with her other work.” (pp. 16-17).

2.3 Speech and Thought Presentation

The speech and thought presentation model was developed by Leech and Short (1981) and it may also be known as ‘discourse analysis’. It is necessary, however, to create a border between speech presentation and thought presentation. Speech being the external discourse being spoken while thought presentation deals with how an internal discourse is presented (Zebari & Mohammadzadeh, 2021).

Leech and Short presented the five categories of speech and thought presentation. The following are the categories for speech presentation: Direct Speech (DS), Indirect Speech (IS), Free Direct Speech (FDS), Free Indirect Speech (FIS) and Narrative Report of Speech Acts (NRSA). On the other hand, the following is for thought presentation: Direct Thought (DT), Indirect Thought (IT), Free Direct Thought (FDT), Free Indirect Thought (FIT), and Narrative Report of Thought Acts (NRTA).

The following explanation and examples are elaborated by Simpson (2004):

2.3.1 Speech Presentation

Direct Speech

DS is considered as the ‘baseline’ form as it is where the other forms are measured (Simpson, 2004). DS accurately states what has been said by the character using the actual words in the reported speech.

e.g.: She said, ‘I’ll come here tomorrow.’

‘I’ll come here tomorrow,’ she said

Indirect Speech

In IS, the narrator reports the speech with changes in tense, pronouns, and deictic expressions.

e.g.: She said she would go there the following day.

Free Direct Speech

FDS is the ‘freer’ form of DS. It is characterized by the absence of a narrator and quotation marks.

e.g: I will come here tomorrow, she said.

“I will come here tomorrow.”

I will come here tomorrow. (freest form)

Free Indirect Speech

FIS is is the ‘freer’ version of IS. There is no intervention from the narrator in FIS.

e.g.: She would be there the following day.

She would be there tomorrow. (freest form)

Narrative Report of Speech Act

In NRSA, the act of speech is presented, often with a topic but offers no indication of the actual words used.

e.g.: He asked their friends for advice.

2.3.2 Thought Presentation

Direct Thought

DT is similar to DS except that the reported speech is an ‘internal discourse’ which is characterized by words that show mental activity rather it being spoken (think, decide, wonder, ponder, etc.)

e.g.: “I will speak with him tomorrow,” she thought.

Indirect Thought

The narrator reports the thoughts of the character with some shift in verb tense, pronouns, and other deictic features.

e.g. She thought that she would speak to him the following day.

Free Direct Thought

FDT shows the character’s thoughts with minimal or no intervention at all of the narrator. Either quotation marks or the reporting clause is omitted or both.

e.g.: I will speak with him tomorrow, she thought.

“I will speak with him tomorrow.”

I will speak with him tomorrow. (freest form)

Free Indirect Thought

FIS is the ‘freer’ form of IT. Like FIS, there is no intervention of the narrator.

e.g.: She would speak with him tomorrow.

Narrative Report of a Thought Act

The narrator presents the thought act but it does not show the exact words of the character/s.

e.g.: She thought about her decision.

The study of speech and thought presentation can be difficult as stylisticians make use of the different techniques for reporting speech and thought. Moreover, stylisticians also have look closely at the methods used by the author to represent a character's speech and thought and how it would affect the other characters and the array of events in a literary work (Simpson, 2004).

3. Methodology

This study examined the speech and thought presentation to Estella Alfon's *Magnificence* in order to reveal a contemporary view on Filipino women. *Magnificence* was chosen as it was published during the contemporary period of Philippine literature and it exhibited the banality of women in contrast to being in a "brutalizing, humiliating, and sexist environment" (Grow, 1990). The short story will be analyzed using Leech and Short's categories for speech and thought presentation.

The following are the steps in order to discuss the contemporary view on Filipino women through speech and thought presentation in *Magnificence*:

1. Utterances and thoughts as shown by the characters particularly the Mother and Vicente are categorized based of Leech and Short's speech and thought presentation model.
2. Utilizing discourse analysis to the text to discuss and reveal the contemporary view on Filipino women using the representative text.

Through speech and thought presentation model and categorization, the contemporary view with Filipino women may be seen and examined and contribute as to how women in the progressing society are represented.

4. Findings and Discussion

Magnificence follows the story of a mother who entrusted her children under Vicente who promised to “help solve fractions for the boy, and write correct phrases in language for the little girl”. In a seemingly harmless act to help tutor her children, the mother agreed to Vicente’s offer where he would drop by their house at night and help the children with their homework. Vicente was described as a man who “was always so gentle, so kind”. Aside from these traits, he knows to get the attention of the children by giving them pencils which were the “rage” for those days. The children loved it when he would bring them pencils as they get to brag it in their school to their classmates. As such, this bribery became a routine for Vicente and children and eventually insinuate his real cause for being a tutor to the children.

Unknowingly, Vicente’s intention was not really after helping and teaching the children after their homework but rather focused on an immensely different and unacceptable intention – sexual abuse to the mother’s daughter. An intention that was masked by his “warm” outward appearance and demeanor to the children as well as to the mother.

However, this was soon discovered by the mother who confronted Vicente and it was also the event where she showed her “magnificence” not only as a mother but also as a woman. It was also where the narrative of the story shifted from a stereotypical mother (or woman) who was submissive, meek, and passive to a female character typifying strength and even with a domineering attitude against the opposite gender.

The speech and thought presentation model of Leech and Short allowed how the mother gained complete control and how she was presented differently in the end in contrast to how she might seem a stereotypical mother in the beginning of the story. The following table shows the frequency of speech and thought presentation throughout the whole story:

Table 1

Frequency Table of Speech and Thought in Estrella Alfon’s Magnificence

Speech Presentation			Thought Presentation		
Category	Frequency	Percentage	Category	Frequency	Percentage
IS	5	13.51 %	IT	5	71.43 %
FDS	28	75.68 %	NRTA	2	28.57 %
NRSA	4	10.81 %			
Total	37	100 %	Total	7	100 %

As presented in table 1, there is a total of thirty-seven speech presentation in *Magnificence*. Free Direct Speech was the most the most used speech presentation with a frequency of twenty-eight. FDS is exemplified by the absence of either the narrator or quotation marks. In the story, FDS was presented with the omission of quotation marks and few narrative phrases. Indirect Speech (IS) has a frequency of five which is followed by Narrative Report of Speech Acts (NRSA) at four. FDS having the highest frequency molded and shaped each character's presentation in the story as these are verbalized by the character themselves without the narrator's intervention in the narrative.

On the other hand, the total thought presentation in the story was seven wherein Indirect Thought (IT) has a frequency of five while the Narrative Report of a Thought Act (NRTA) was two. As the story used a limited third-person point-of-view, the characters' thoughts were of rather limited access but there are few but significant instances which showed what could be the mental process that a character is undergoing.

To further breakdown and get the 'perspective' on the view of the contemporary Filipino women, the following table shows the distribution of the speech and thought presentation amongst the characters in the short story:

Table 2

Distribution of Speech Presentation in Estrella Alfon's Magnificence

	Mother	Vicente	Oscar	Girl	Father
IS	1	2	0	1	1
FDS	15	7	3	3	0
NRSA	2	1	1	0	0

In the speech presentation frequency table, out of the thirty-seven utterances of all the characters, fifteen FDS belongs to the mother implying that from the start until the end of the story, she has the complete control of narrative and figuratively 'oversees' everything. This proves to be true as she is a character who is head-strong particularly when it comes to be welfare of her children. Upon catching Vicente abusing her daughter, her anger masked but her still movement was expressed through the following FDS: "*she said, very low, but very heavily, Do not move.*"

Table 3*Distribution of Thought Presentation in Estrella Alfon's Magnificence*

	Mother	Vicente	Oscar	Girl	Father
IT	1	0	0	4	0
NRTA	1	0	1	0	0

In the thought presentation frequency table, four out seven thought presentations were from the daughter. As she is the youngest character in the story, it is most likely that she cannot express her thoughts well verbally so they are most likely contained as thoughts.

The daughter's thought presentations were usually signified by the following words: shyly, disturbed, and felt. However, in contrast to the daughter's confused and innocent thoughts, the mother had a thought presentation which, in a way, overcame Vicente's advances to her daughter which was expressed in the following thought presentation in IT: *the woman herself stricken almost dumb, but her eyes eloquent with that angered fire.*

Not only did the mother displayed her 'magnificence' in the story itself but rather it may be more appropriate that her character itself shows magnificence presented in her speech and thought. Moreover, as the representative text of the contemporary Philippine literature, the following perspectives on the Filipino women were revealed:

1. The Unconventional Woman as a Mother

Mothers are often portrayed as the primary nurturer of their children and it is one of the virtues that was presented early in the story. It was revealed in the thought presentation in NRTA that: *"Their mother saw them with eyes that held pride, and then to partly gloss over the maternal gloating."* It was clear that she takes pride on how she takes care of her children and how they grew up to fine young children as admired by the people around them.

However, as the story of Magnificence continues, it was also later shown that the mother was not bound in her motherhood duties only – in fact, at the beginning of the story, it was already revealed that she is the president of the association of where they are residing: *"The praise had made their mother look over them as they stood around listening to the goings-on at the meeting of the neighborhood association, of which their mother was president."*

The mother was no longer the stereotypical mother whose role is limited inside the household and whose primary task is to do the chores. The contemporary Filipino woman is now a nurturer and at the same time holds and participates in activities outside her home such as involving civic and social responsibilities.

2. The Equal Partner

In a usual Filipino household setting, it is mostly acknowledged that the father usually has the “final say” in every decision which includes family matters. Aside from being the provider, this is a revered privilege that are often given to them as the *‘haligi ng tahanan’* but the representative text actually challenged this notion by putting the mother in an equal threshold with the father. This concept was presented in the following speech presentation:

<NRSA>

And this observation their mother said to their father, who was eating his evening meal between paragraphs of the book on masonry rites that he was reading.

<FDS>

It is a pity, said their mother, People like those, they make friends with people like us, and they feel it is nice to give us gifts, or the children toys and things. You’d think they wouldn’t be able to afford it.

<IS>

The father grunted, and said, the man probably needed a new job, and was softening his way through to him by going at the children like that.

In a more traditional setting, this conversation might not have happened or the mother might not be able to say what she thinks about to her husband. However, as seen in the speech presentation in the representative text, the mother freely expressed what she feels and thinks.

3. A ‘Magnificent’ and Headstrong Woman

A Filipino woman is usually confined in the picture of being a *Maria Clara* – one who is always gentle, kind, and submissive. For decades, this has been taught to young girls where most people would dictate that this is how a woman should act but it cannot be the case always as there are instances when it is no longer appropriate which was the case in the representative text.

As the mother, she cannot and would not tolerate abuse, particularly sexual abuse to her young daughter. Her 'magnificence' shone when without any hesitation she faced her daughter's predator.

During her confrontation with her daughter's abuser, a rather symbolical interaction was presented the story: "*The mother kept coming into the light, and when Vicente made as if to move away into the shadow, she said, very low, but very heavily, Do not move.*" The mother was portrayed as someone who is in light while Vicente cowered in fear in the shadows (darkness) as she her 'light' symbolically consumes him as she gets closer.

In the final and grand display of her 'magnificent' Alfon's wordplay can be easily missed but it was a clever transformation of the "mother" to a "woman": "*Finally, the woman raised her hand and slapped him full hard in the face. With her other hand she slapped him on the other side of the face again. And so down the stairs they went, the man backwards, his face continually open to the force of the woman's slapping. Alternately she lifted her right hand and made him retreat before her until they reached the bottom landing.*"

5. Conclusion

Analyzing the speech and thought presentation of the mother in Magnificence revealed important contemporary views of the Filipino women. It was a progressive view which no longer confines women in her household chores while wearing her apron but rather now presented as an active and engaging character. The contemporary Filipino woman can be both a nurturing mother and at the same time works outside her home – a concept that was before criticized as mothers are painted supposed to be focused on nurturing her children. She is also no longer the subordinate of her husband but rather an equal partner especially when it comes to the family's affair and matters. Lastly, breaking the stereotype of passive and submissive women, the contemporary Filipino woman is ready to show her authority especially when she and her family is at stake.

As the Free Direct Speech and Indirect Thought were frequently used throughout the story, it contributed in the unveiling of the contemporary Filipino women by exposing the character's speech and thought acts to the readers. Following this, the transformation of a conventional mother into a fierce woman was seen. Though it might be a long way still to openly accept the

changing perspectives on women, the Filipino women is now freer to choose who she ought to be.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

Summary of Speech Presentation

No.	Speech Presentation	Category
1	They could remember perhaps two weeks when he remarked to their mother that he had never seen two children looking so smart.	IS
2	she said to the man, in answer to his praise, But their homework. They're so lazy with them.	FDS
3	And the man said , I have nothing to do in the evenings, let me help them.	FDS
4	Mother nodded her head and said , if you want to bother yourself	FDS
5	his promise that he would give each of them not one pencil but two	NRSA
6	for the little girl who he said was very bright and deserved more, he would get the biggest pencil he could find.	IS
7	Until their mother called from down the stairs. What are you shouting about?	FDS
8	And they told her, shouting gladly, Vicente, for that was his name.	FDS
9	Thank him, their mother called .	FDS
10	The little boy smiled and said , Thank you. And the little girl smiled, and said , Thank you, too.	FDS
11	But the man said , Are you not going to kiss me for those pencils?	FDS
12	but Vicente slapped the boy smartly on his lean hips, and said , Boys do not kiss boys.	FDS
13	And their mother had finally to tell them to stop talking about the pencils,	NRSA
14	Their mother said , Oh stop it, what will you do with so many pencils, you can only write with one at a time.	FDS
15	And the little girl muttered under her breath, I'll ask Vicente for some more.	FDS
16	Their mother replied , He's only a bus conductor, don't ask him for too many things. It's a pity.	FDS

17	And this observation their mother said to their father, who was eating his evening meal between paragraphs of the book on masonry rites that he was reading	NRSA
18	It is a pity, said their mother, People like those, they make friends with people like us, and they feel it is nice to give us gifts, or the children toys and things. You'd think they wouldn't be able to afford it.	FDS
19	The father grunted , and said , the man probably needed a new job, and was softening his way through to him by going at the children like that.	IS
20	And the mother said , No, I don't think so, he's a rather queer young man, I think he doesn't have many friends, but I have watched him with the children, and he seems to dote on them.	FDS
21	The children immediately put their lessons down, telling him of the envy of their schoolmates, and would he buy them more please?	NRSA
22	Vicente said to the little boy, Go and ask if you can let me have a glass of water.	FDS
23	the little boy ran away to comply, saying behind him, But buy us some more pencils, huh, buy us more pencils	FDS
24	Vicente held the little girl by the arm, and said gently, Of course I will buy you more pencils, as many as you want.	FDS
25	the little girl giggled and said , Oh, then I will tell my friends, and they will envy me, for they don't have as many or as pretty.	FDS
26	and held her to sit down on his lap and he said , still gently, What are your lessons for tomorrow?	FDS
27	she told him that that was her lesson but it was easy.	IS
28	Then go ahead and write, and I will watch you.	FDS
29	Don't hold me on your lap, said the little girl, I am very heavy, you will get very tired.	FDS
30	The mother said , I brought you some sarsaparilla, Vicente	FDS
31	when Vicente made as if to move away into the shadow, she said , very low, but very heavily, Do not move.	FDS
32	The mother said to the boy, Oscar, finish your lessons. And turning to the little girl, she said, Come here...Turn around...Go upstairs.	FDS
33	with a look and an inclination of the head, she bade Vicente go up the stairs.	IS
34	When they had reached the upper landing, the woman called down to her son, Son, come up and go to your room.	FDS
35	Hush, the mother said . Take a bath quickly.	FDS
36	Take also the pencils, said the mother to the watching newly bathed, newly changed child. Take them and throw them into the fire.	FDS
37	But when the girl turned to comply, the mother said , No, tomorrow will do.	FDS

*Appendix 2**Summary of Thought Presentation*

No.	Thought Presentation	Category
1	Their mother saw them with eyes that held pride , and then to partly gloss over the maternal gloating.	NRTA
2	The little girl went up to the man shyly , put her arms about his neck as he crouched to receive her embrace, and kissed him on the cheeks.	IT
3	the little girl squirmed out of his arms, and laughed a little breathlessly, disturbed but innocent	IT
4	All through that day, they had been very proud in school showing off their brand-new pencils.	NRTA
5	The little girl kept squirming, for somehow, she felt uncomfortable to beheld thus, her mother and father always treated her like a big girl, she was always told never to act like a baby.	IT
6	But the little girl felt very queer, she didn't know why, all of a sudden, she was immensely frightened, and she jumped up away from Vicente's lap	IT
7	the woman herself stricken almost dumb , but her eyes eloquent with that angered fire.	IT