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Teaching ESL Literacy to the Functionally Illiterate Adult: Using Language Experience and Words in Color

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Teaching ESL Literacy to the Functionally Illiterate Adult:
Using Language Experience and Words in Color

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B.S. School for International Training 1975

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for the Master of Arts in Teaching degree at the
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This project by Kimberly Gerould is accepted in its present form.

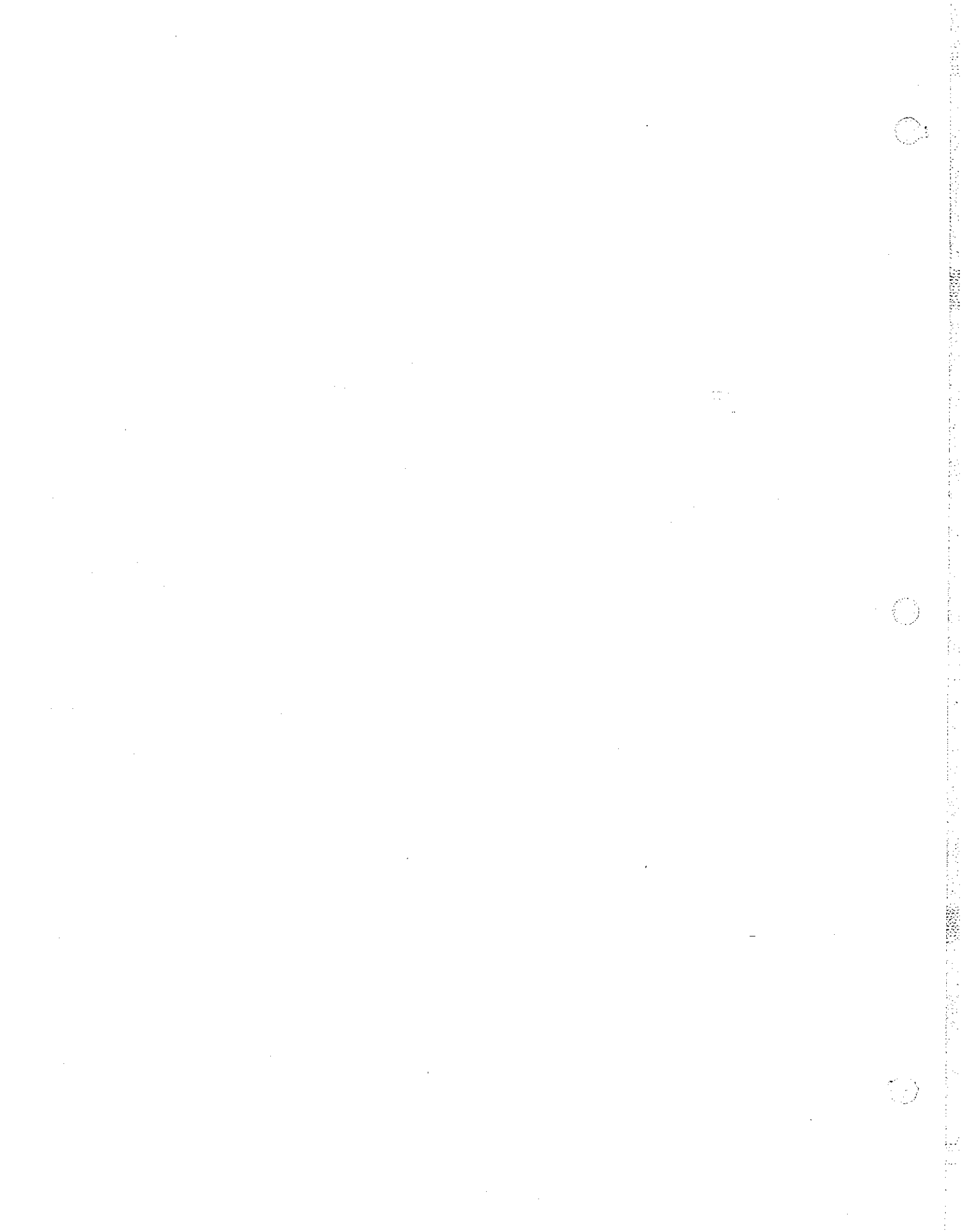
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Abstract

This thesis attempts to arrive at a personal approach to teaching reading in English as a second language to functionally illiterate adults in a multilingual ESL classroom. There is a brief review of some of the research on teaching reading and on the reading process, as well as a review of the major teaching reading methodologies. Two approaches to teaching reading, the Language Experience Approach and Words in Color, are then focused on. The author suggests ways in which these two approaches can be adapted to the adult ESL classroom and integrated with other approaches. Finally, a series of concrete activities are described which combine learning to read in ESL and developing life coping skills in a new culture.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I.	Introduction	1
II.	Goals for ESL literacy work	6
III.	Methods of teaching reading	13
IV.	Language Experience Approach and Words in Color	32
V.	In the classroom: Integrating literacy and life coping skills	63
VI.	Conclusion	87
	Notes and Bibliography	92

I. Introduction

The major goal of this study is to develop an approach to effectively teach reading in English to functionally illiterate adults in the multilingual ESL classroom. In order to arrive at such an approach, I have surveyed the gamut of teaching reading methodologies for both children and adults, in the native and second language, and have looked at the results of some research on teaching reading, all of which will be briefly described in this paper. I will also consider the nature of the students and learning environment with which I will most likely be working, and reflect on my own and others' experience in working with literacy. Besides providing a general description of the assumptions and methods of my personal approach, I will end with a series of concrete activities for its implementation in the ESL classroom. The lack of methods and materials specifically geared to ESL adult literacy, as well as the growing need for ESL literacy instruction, have influenced my decision to focus on this topic. I hope that the actual value of this study will be twofold: first, to prepare myself as an ESL teacher who will be working with literacy, and second, to share my findings and reflections with other ESL teachers who are asking themselves how best to teach literacy in the ESL classroom.

The results of this study must be considered tentative, since the test of the effectiveness of my approach will occur in the classroom and will be modified according to the

needs of the particular situation. My experience in teaching reading in English as a second language to learners who are illiterate in their native language is limited; I have had experience in tutoring an adult and a child, as well as extensive contact as a counselor in an adult basic education learning center with illiterate students, both ESL students and native speakers of English.

Much of my information on teaching reading has therefore been drawn from others' accounts. Most of the literature on teaching reading is directed toward teaching children and native speakers; relatively little has been written about reading in ESL, particularly for adult students who are illiterate in their native language. In my research, therefore, it was necessary to constantly speculate about the adaptations that would have to be made in second language reading for adults. Despite these limitations and the changes that will take place when I actually test my approach in the classroom, I expect my basic assumptions about teaching and learning to remain intact.

This study is directed toward ESL students in an urban adult learning center in the U.S. This is not to say that my suggestions for teaching reading are limited to such a setting, but that the students' needs would probably change in different types of settings. Here I will try to make some generalizations about the types of students and the nature of the learning environment that I have in mind. It is difficult to be precise, however, since the make-up of

the student population and the resources of any given learning center will vary.

The class will be multilingual and multicultural; the students' native languages could include Romance languages, Oriental languages, Arabic, Greek, Russian, etc. Many of the students may be recent immigrants to the U.S., while others may have lived here for several years. A good portion may come from the urban and rural poor in their countries, meaning their level of formal education may be low. Their ages may range from seventeen to seventy, though the majority will probably fall into their twenties and thirties.

The ideal classroom situation for teaching ESL literacy would have a fairly homogeneous group in terms of oral/aural skills in English and levels of education in their native language. In practice, however, oral abilities and the level of native language literacy may fluctuate widely in one class. The learning center may group students according to oral abilities, especially at the beginning levels, meaning that literate and illiterate students may be in the same class. A better alternative is to have separate beginning classes for students already literate in their native language and classes for students who are illiterate, or at a low level of literacy, in their native language. Where possible, one-to-one tutoring would be beneficial to a program.

Upon entering a learning center, students should be diagnosed for literacy skills. When gathering biographical

data on new students, the teacher can note if the student is able to write his or her name and address. For students with some oral/aural skills, a simple multiple choice cloze test, as well as a test to determine recognition of common words, could be administered to test reading skills. Those who were able to complete such tasks with a certain level of success could be given simple open-ended questions requiring written answers to test writing skills. It may be difficult to determine literacy levels for students who speak no English, unless there are native speakers available who can assess native language literacy. The teacher in a beginning level class will have to gradually diagnose those skills on an informal basis as the class proceeds. It may also be difficult to diagnose literacy for students whose native language is written in a non-Romanic script. While they may be literate in the native language, they may need considerable work in beginning literacy skills to be able to transfer to the English writing system.

In order to focus my study, I am assuming that the students who need work need in literacy will be in a separate class or will work as a separate group during designated times for reading work. In the latter case, they would work with the larger group on oral/aural skills. Even within this smaller group, some students may be at the beginning stages of literacy, while others may have mastered some basic reading skills in their native language or in English. I am also assuming that some basic oral/aural work would precede literacy work; further along, I will discuss

the rationale for this, as well as the need to integrate the learning of reading and writing with listening and speaking.

II. Goals for ESL Literacy Work

Functional literacy, for both native and non-native speakers, can be defined as the ability to read and write on a level necessary to deal with everyday situations. It is hard to prescribe the attainment of such a level in terms of years of education, since the objectives of adult literacy must be related to students' personal and occupational needs. The Adult Performance Level Project (APL), which advocates competency-based adult basic education, has chosen to substitute the term "functional competency" for "functional literacy", since literacy too often connotes a minimal reading level and nothing else. They define functional competency, often called "survival literacy" or "life coping skills" as "the application of a set of skills (which include, but are not limited to, reading and writing) to a set of general knowledge areas which results from the requirements imposed upon members of society" (APL, p.2). Though my focus in ESL literacy is on reading and writing skills, I am in agreement with the APL Project that these skills must be applied to the practical needs of adult life.

The concept of functional competency can be further expanded by Paulo Freire's thoughts on adult literacy. He views literacy as a means to the more primary objective of social awareness or "critical consciousness." In the development of a literacy program for Brazil, he explains:

We rejected the hypothesis of a purely mechanistic literacy program and considered the program of

teaching adults how to read in relation to the awakening of their consciousness... a program with men as its Subjects rather than as patient recipients.

(Freire, 1973, p. 43)

Freire suggests then that through the process of learning to read, students can become real actors in their learning, in cooperation with the teacher. Learning to read should become a process of knowing the world and seeing that people can have an impact on the world. Though Freire has developed literacy programs in the very different context of the Third World, many of the goals he espouses can be adapted to the urban, industrialized culture of the U.S.

Before further examining the goals for literacy work, it is necessary to explain the rationale for teaching adults to read in a second language as opposed to the native language. Many would argue that it is simpler and more desirable to teach someone to read in their native language and then have them transfer those skills to the second language.¹ Goodman, Goodman and Flores in Reading in the Bilingual Classroom review the research in bilingual education supporting both sides of the issue, though in relation to literacy for children, not adults (pp. 19-24). Some studies show the teaching of initial reading to be most effective in the native language, while others show that children who learn to read in a second language can easily transfer those skills on their own to the native language.² Despite differing results from research, the authors assert that:

From a theoretical perspective, learning to read in one's home language will be easier than learning to read a second language, particularly an unfamiliar one. The learner brings to the task of learning to read his or her native language a syntactic and semantic knowledge of the language which makes it possible to predict the meaning of the written form. (Goodman et al., 1979, p. 19)

Since there is relatively little research on the strategies that adults use in learning to read in a second language, one can only speculate that the authors' statement would apply to adults as well as children.

Even if this is the case, there are compelling social, economic and cultural factors that support teaching reading in the second language to adult ESL students. First of all, one must look at the tradition and value of literacy in the native culture. In some limited cases, there may be no written language, as in the case of the Hmong from Laos. Literacy may not be very important in the native culture and there may be limited access in the U.S. to written materials in the native language, with the exception of larger cultural groups that will have native language newspapers and literature. Probably the most important factor that needs to be examined is the adult learner's motivation to learn to read; for many, it is to be able to cope successfully in the U.S. - to have the literacy skills necessary to get a job, to utilize social services, to be informed about the news, to be able to make wise consumer decisions, etc. Learning to read in the language of the adopted country then becomes a priority.

There are also practical considerations which restrict

the possibilities for bilingual literacy for adults. The majority of adult education programs focus on ESL skills, not bilingualism; unfortunately the availability of resources and bilingual teachers competent to teach adult literacy is limited. In a multilingual classroom, the teacher will probably not be familiar with all the students' native languages. In discussing the above factors, I am not dismissing the benefits of bilingual literacy, only describing some of the pro's and con's in order to clarify the need for ESL literacy, particularly in a multilingual adult learning center.

The goals for teaching ESL literacy should not be strictly limited to developing reading and writing skills, but should be organically integrated with oral/aural skills and life-coping skills. The two forms of language, written and oral, though requiring many different learning strategies, can be seen as mutually supportive. There is much debate, however, as to how much mastery, if any, of oral/aural skills should precede the introduction of reading and writing. Most of the literature that I surveyed was in favor of intensive oral practice in English sounds and structures before introducing reading.³ Goodman et al. counter that argument with the point that "reading as a receptive language process seems to develop more rapidly than speaking, a productive process" (p.21). They remind us of the students' functional motivation to learn to read, suggesting that many students will want to begin literacy instruction along with oral/aural skills:

This doesn't mean that oral language development is not of major importance. But it does mean that the issue of when to begin instruction in reading in relationship to oral language development is not automatic. In many cases, it can begin simultaneously with oral language beginnings.
(p. 21)

My goal, in terms of sequencing, would be to establish a certain level of oral/aural skills before concentrating on literacy skills. This is not to say that there would be no exposure to the written form in these early stages; in fact, it could be a time to work on development of pre-literacy skills. The primary focus, however, would be on speaking and listening. Part of the reason for this is that it allows the students to focus on one area and gain some success before worrying about the other skills of reading and writing. The student will already come to class with some oral skills, whether it be only some sounds of the language or the ability to make simple sentences; it makes sense to start with what the student already knows. Also, as I discuss further into the paper, the establishment of some oral/aural skills before introduction to literacy is more in keeping with the approach I will be using.

Decisions about goals for the attainment of reading and writing skills and for the content of literacy should center around the needs and goals of the students. What are their personal reasons for wanting to become literate? Do they want to eventually reach a level where they can read the news and read for pleasure? Is it primarily for job purposes or to be able to fill out forms and applications? Student goals will probably change as they become more aware

of the functions of literacy. Despite different individual goals, there are two general goals I would set for teaching literacy: the development of a high level of reading comprehension and of student independence in reading. I focus on reading comprehension in the first goal since literacy skills include both reading and writing. Writing, in that it is the productive counterpart to reading and complements reading development, is also very important, though students' actual needs and desire to write may vary greatly. Also, the development of reading comprehension should focus on getting meaning from print, initially and throughout the literacy program, not on perfecting word attack skills and reading aloud flawlessly. The second goal of developing student independence in reading is equally important; many adult students are unable to stay in a learning center for a long period of time, and need to gain the tools that will enable them to continue learning when they leave the classroom.

Most ESL adults who are functionally illiterate need to learn survival skills that are particular to the U.S., especially if they are recent immigrants. These skills should be part of the literacy program, so that students can see the practical application of their new language skills to coping successfully with daily life requirements in the U.S. I find the APL Project's breakdown of the areas about which adults should be knowledgeable helpful in deciding on the content of literacy. These areas are: consumer economics, occupational knowledge, community resources,

health, and government and law. By exploring the local community and consulting students about their specific needs, I will be able to arrive at more specific objectives, using these five general knowledge areas as a framework.

III. Methods of Teaching Reading

A. Survey of methods

The range of methods for teaching reading is usually categorized into two main approaches: the synthetic approach and the analytic approach. In the synthetic approach, also called the "code-emphasis" approach, the focus is on the beginning reader mastering the phonetic code or the components of words and then building up to larger units of language. The analytic approach, or "meaning-emphasis" approach, begins with larger chunks of meaning, whether it be the whole word, phrase, or story; the components are broken down and analyzed later. It is important to point out that all methods of teaching literacy include elements of both code-emphasis and meaning-emphasis; the differences among methods lie in the emphasis at the initial stages of learning to read. In this chapter, I will briefly survey several of the methods that fall within each category and look at the assumptions behind those methods about how people best learn to abstract meaning from print. I will also discuss considerations in deciding on methods to be used.

The principal methods included in the synthetic approach are the phonics method, the syllabic method and the

linguistic method. The phonics method teaches letter-to-sound correspondence. The student is supposed to sound out each letter and blend those sounds to make words. Thus, it is the sound system that connects the written symbols to meaning, though the initial emphasis is on sign-sound correspondence, not on meaning. This makes it difficult for a student who does not control the sound system of the language. There will be additional difficulties for those for whom the sign system is entirely novel as well. For example, a Spanish speaker who can't distinguish between the sounds /i/ and /iy/ may find it difficult to correctly decode words containing the letter symbols representing those sounds. The task becomes even more difficult when there are a variety of ways to spell one sound. Another possible drawback of the method is that learners can tend to distort sounds in isolation; in attempting to blend the sounds, the learner may say "cuh-ah-tuh" instead of "cat".

Two examples of phonics methods that have been developed to overcome some of these problems by changing the organization of the alphabet are the Initial Teaching Alphabet and Gattegno's Reading with Words in Color. The Initial Teaching Alphabet modifies English to 44 characters so that there is one sound/one sign correspondence. The student learns to read with a truly phonetic alphabet and then gradually transfers over to traditional spelling. It is questionable, however, if the gains made by learning to read in a phonetic alphabet outweigh the time needed to make

the transition to the traditional alphabet. Another disadvantage is that the student will have no immediate reinforcement in reading materials encountered outside of the school.

Gattegno, in his Reading with Words in Color method, believes that the major problem in learning to read English is the imperfect relationship between sound and spelling. He has therefore arranged the alphabet phonetically through a series of color-coded charts that present 47 identifiable English sounds in color-coded categories. For example, the sound of "a" as in "cake" would also be represented by "ei" (veil), "ea" (great), "ay" (play), "aigh" (straight), etc.; these spelling patterns would be in the same column and coded in the same color. The student learns that each sign has a corresponding sound and vice-versa, and that by combining elements, s/he can create whole words, phrases, sentences or stories. Gattegno believes that through practice with manipulation of the signs, with the aid of the charts that regularize the English phonetic system, student independence in reading and writing can be developed early (Gattegno, 1962, pp. 29-30). I will describe his approach in more detail in the next chapter since I plan to integrate it into my own approach.

Another synthetic approach is the syllabic method, or the "syllabary"; it takes the syllable as the basic unit in reading, instead of the individual letter. There is some relation, in fact, between this method and Gattegno's, in that Gattegno makes clear that one cannot produce a

consonant sound in isolation but that a vowel sound must be produced along with it. Though syllables are probably easier to blend than individual letters, the complex syllable structure of English would make it difficult to learn all the syllables and their different spellings. This method has been used teaching the most common syllables; often these are useful morphemes (plurals, tense and adverb makers) that can reinforce grammar being taught in the ESL classroom (Hatch, 1979, p. 131).

The linguistic method emphasizes regularly used patterns that occur in words, with the initial emphasis still on the components of words, as opposed to the whole word or meaning. A pattern is learned and then initial or final consonants are blended onto that pattern to form new words. A sentence like "Pat sat on the fat cat" may help beginning ESL readers in learning a new sound pattern and its corresponding symbols, though such a sentence's relationship to everyday speech is minimal. Both the linguistic and syllabary methods have the drawback that the content is unnatural; they do not regularly use speech written down.

One of the most used methods that falls into the synthetic approach is the whole-word method, also-known as the "sight word" or "look-say" method. Meaning is immediately associated with the whole unit of the word, using the word's shape, or sometimes a picture cue, to aid memorization. The new words may then be repeated again and again in a reading text until they are learned. The main

difficulty with this method is its reliance on memory; after a certain point the learner can't continue to memorize and will need other strategies to recognize a word. Also, many words will be hard to distinguish by shape alone. It can be useful to a limited degree, however, since it does not rely on sign-sound correspondence, therefore being more helpful to an ESL student who can't distinguish certain English sounds. It can also aid in recognition of words with highly irregular sign-sound correspondence.

Sylvia Ashton-Warner developed an approach to teaching children to read in which she uses sight words a great deal. Her "organic reading" process was developed in her work with Maori children in New Zealand. The starting point is the key vocabulary. Every day the children ask for a word they want. The teacher writes the word on a card for them and then they are told to trace it with their finger when they are working alone. The next day, students tell one another their words in pairs. Then they go through their words individually with the teacher. Any word that isn't known is thrown away since it must not have deep meaning for the child; the others, the "one-look" words, become part of the child's key vocabulary. She states three requirements for organic reading:

First words must have an intense meaning.
First words must be already part of the dynamic life.
First books must be made of the stuff of the child himself, whatever and wherever the child.
(1963, p. 32)

The intense personal meaning of those words and personal

stories provide the basis for successful early reading experiences. Furthermore, it provides "the bridge from the known to the unknown, from a native culture to a new..." (p.26). Though Ashton-Warner is working with children, many of her insights about beginning reading and writing are relevant to working with ESL adults, particularly since she addresses the issue of bridging the gap from a native culture to a new one as part of the process of literacy learning.

Though she never uses the term, much of the work she does is similar to the Language Experience Approach, another meaning-based method.⁴ The students' own experiences become the basis for reading materials, through stories or experiences dictated to the teacher, copied down by the teacher and then read. Kennedy and Roeder, who used Language Experience extensively with adults in the Community Learning Center in Cambridge, Massachusetts, report that:

By their nature, student's own writings provide original, compelling readings that are directly related to people's lives in a way that published materials can never be... Students' writings can also provide the vocabulary and skill development that are the focus of published literacy readings. (Kennedy and Roeder, 1975, pp. 7-8)

Language Experience is particularly appropriate for ESL literacy students since they will be reading language that they control. The use of Language Experience would require then that students have developed enough oral language to relate simple events happening around them. This approach assumes that learners will be able to better understand what

He concludes from his own and others' studies that "reading is not primarily visual" and that to focus exclusively on letter and word identification is not useful; the reader must make use of meaning from the beginning (pp. 65-66).

Goodman suggests some of the pedagogical implications of this information on the reading process. The beginning reader needs to know some letter-sound correspondences, but not all of them. The sooner a beginning reader works with sentences and paragraphs, the better; the total context gives clues to the meanings of unfamiliar words, thus decreasing the reliance on individual letter and word recognition (Goodman, Process and Program, 1970, p. 33). Smith, in his essay "Twelve Easy Ways to Make Learning to Read Difficult", suggests that the mastery of phonics rules and word-perfect reading should not be a primary objective and that learners need time to make mistakes and develop useful predictive strategies. Though it may seem an oversimplification, he feels that people learn to read by reading, and that too often the teacher interferes in that process. The best thing the teacher can do is respond to what the learner is trying to do, and allow the reader to read without too much interruption (1973, p. 184). This is confirmed by my own experience and other reports on oral reading miscues in a second language; the student may encounter a new word and substitute it with another word of similar meaning or a nonsense word several times throughout the reading, yet still be able to accurately relate the overall meaning of the reading.

20

John Carroll discusses the process of learning to read for children, pointing out that it isn't just a "slow-motion imitation of the mature reading process" (1970, p. 30). The learning of the necessary component skills depends on what "a given child finds easier to learn at a given stage of his development" (p. 30). An adult will be able to master different skills at a different rate than a child, though the ESL adult is limited by lack of familiarity with the language. Some of the component skills of learning to read include familiarity with the spoken language, knowledge of the more common sign-sound correspondences, word recognition skills and an understanding of printed words as symbols for spoken words (Carroll, pp. 131-132).

The relationship between speech and print seems particularly important for the ESL beginning reader. Gattegno believes that one of the primary tasks of the reading teacher is to help "the learner to understand the connection between the temporal aspect of spoken speech and the spatial arrangement of print" (1963, p. 3). Print can be thought of as speech written down, even though it lacks many of the features of speech, such as clues we receive from stress, intonation and body language. Some other aspects of the relationship between written and oral English are the frequently irregular sign-sound correspondences and differences in style in much written and oral language, written language often being the more formal of the two. Certain grammatical structures, such as the passive voice, occur more often in written language than in speech.

Another major difference between writing and speaking is the planned organization of writing. In beginning reading with ESL adults, the students' speech can be written down verbatim, eliminating style differences between written and spoken forms during the initial stages of reading, and also limiting the language to be read to only the language that the student can produce orally.

The native-speaking adult and child learning to read need to learn many of the same skills as an ESL beginning reader, but the native speaker already possesses extensive language experience that s/he can use to make guesses and predictions about what s/he is reading. The research on the kinds of information - phonological, syntactic and semantic - that fluent readers draw upon to get meaning points again to the need to situate literacy instruction as part of the total language learning experience. ESL students need some well-established verbal repertoire before focusing on reading, and the content of reading should be controlled so as not to deviate too much from the students' oral abilities. The student can then draw upon that limited phonological, grammatical and semantic information s/he has in order to develop strategies for comprehending print.

3. My assumptions

My assumptions about second language learning and teaching are important in determining how I translate what I know about the students and the reading process into methods

30

in the classroom. First, I believe that adult students must recognize the relevance of the classroom work to their lives. Secondly, in order for students to engage in meaningful communication in the classroom, in writing as well as speech, a secure environment is necessary. Such security allows students to explore the new, often alienating culture. The use of student-generated materials provides the avenue for student self-investment in the learning process and for self-affirmation. Using what the student is already able to express as the basis for language work not only provides a continuum from the known to the unknown, but also helps the students to recognize and value their intelligence, especially important for the adult ESL student who may feel that s/he knows nothing about the new language or the reading process.

I believe that adult learners need to become independent learners. They make a new language or the reading skill more their own if they have to actively reason through materials, discovering clues to meaning through context, instead of the teacher initially providing explicit rules. As the teacher, I must provide structure that will enable students to make their own discoveries and use other students as resources. Again, learning inductively requires risk-taking, educated guessing and tolerance of a certain level of ambiguity before meaning becomes clear, skills all necessary to becoming a fluent reader as well as an independent learner. Such a learning style can best happen in a basically secure learning environment where students'

knowledge, as well as the teacher's, is shared and respected, and mistakes are valued as essential to learning.

Finally, in looking at language learning in general and learning to read specifically, there must be some balance between focus on the synthetic, or the components of language, and the analytic, or global "wholes" of language. Adult students come to school with well-developed systems of meaning. They need to understand the "wholes" - sentences and larger units of language - to be able to express their personal meanings, but they also need an understanding of the parts-sounds, letters, syllables - in order to arrive at the whole. It is important, however, that any emphasis on decoding has originated from meaningful communication so that students aren't working on nonsensical, isolated units of language. My task as a teacher is to provide some kind of alternation from the global to the synthetic and back again so that students don't feel frustrated by the lack of decoding skills or by the lack of meaningful expression.

IV. Language Experience Approach and Words in Color

A. Introduction

In this section I will describe the Language Experience Approach and Caleb Gattegno's Words in Color approach in more detail, and discuss ways in which the two can be integrated. In choosing to focus primarily on these two approaches, I am not advocating their use to the exclusion of others. I think that any method can be used with different student populations if the teacher considers the particular learning needs of a given group and understanding the need to be eclectic in methodology to meet those varying needs, while being consistent with the teacher's assumptions. I believe, however, that the Language Experience Approach and Words in Color are particularly well-suited to working with functionally illiterate ESL adults. Also, relatively little has been written on either method in ESL, particularly on Words in Color. Language Experience provides the relevancy and focus on meaning important for adult learning, while Words in Color provides the student with some logical tools for discovering how to decode English.

B. Language Experience Approach

The major focus in this chapter will be on Language Experience; work on phonics using Words in Color should be

seen as an integral part of that approach. First, I will discuss some of the assumptions underlying the Language Experience Approach, then describe the various ways it can be used, and finally discuss its advantages and disadvantages in the ESL classroom.

Similar to Community Language Learning (CLL) in teaching a foreign language, the Language Experience Approach assumes that students will learn better if they are personally invested in their learning process. In teaching reading, this means that the material to be used is generated by the students themselves. Another assumption, that security in the classroom allows for better learning, is also supported by student-generated materials. Such materials are familiar and non-threatening. To see one's words and ideas in print is self-affirming, as well as interesting, to the student.

Language Experience was originally developed to teach reading to native English-speaking children, based on the assumptions that a student can talk about what s/he thinks about, that what a student says can be dictated to someone or written down, and that, finally, those spoken words written down can be read by the student. Wigfield and Altman, who have used Language Experience with ESL adults, suggested the following adaptations to those assumptions, when thinking about ESL adults:

- a. Adults with even minimal fluency can talk about something. (If they can't, they should not be involved in literacy.)
- b. Adults can either make an attempt at writing that "something" themselves or dictate it to

someone else.

c. What has thus been written interests the reader, contains only familiar vocabulary, and is in the interlanguage of the reader; thus it is the linguistic material which facilitates the development of reading skills.

(TESOL Newsletter, 1979, p. 29)

It is assumed then that the material used for teaching reading should be limited to the student's spoken vocabulary and should be highly relevant to the student's life in order to be easier to learn to read. The main emphasis in learning to read is on self-expression and meaningful communication, rather than phonics. Phonics work is a means to achieve such abilities, but it is not a goal in itself.

There are many different ways to apply Language Experience in the classroom. It can be used in a tutorial situation, in a group or between two students. The underlying focus, however, of materials based on students' experiences and language abilities, remains the same. Here I will describe a sequence for using Language Experience with one student, and from there I will discuss expanded uses of the same technique in the whole classroom.

The starting point is the student's experience; the student dictates a short account of some personal experience to the teacher. The content of such a passage will vary greatly, depending on the rapport between student and teacher, and the amount of experience the student has had using the method. The teacher should show interest and enthusiasm while the student is telling his or her story, but should not try to interject words or phrases. The story should be in the student's own words as much as possible.

The teacher can aid the student in the telling by asking "And then what happened?", "Really?", "And after that?", etc. if the student seems to be faltering or provide a word that the student asks for. Some passages may be complete stories, dreams, plans, desires, with beginning and end, while others may be narratives of the day's events or an opinion on some topic of interest. The student may only want to dictate short phrases or words in response to the teacher's leading questions or some other stimulus. If at first the student finds it difficult to talk about a personal experience, the teacher could use an interesting photograph, picture or recording to draw out the student's response. The teacher's response should communicate to the student that whatever is dictated is acceptable, valued and interesting.

While the student is speaking, the teacher prints the student's words on a large sheet of paper without making changes in syntax, vocabulary or phrasing. Then, while pointing to each word separately, the teacher reads the story back to the student as the student reads along silently. It is important that the students clearly see which word is being pointed to while it is being spoken, although the teacher should try to maintain fairly normal speed and phrasing while reading aloud. The teacher may want to sound out some words to help the student focus on that process. For a beginning student, the teacher might read back each sentence as it is written down, instead of waiting until the end of the passage. The reading back

process gives the student time to reflect on the connection between written and spoken language and also provides the opportunity for the student to edit the dictation as he or she chooses to do so.

It is then time for the student to read the passage. For a beginner, the teacher could read each sentence and have the student read it back. A student who can already read some can try to read back the entire dictation. The student should point to the words while reading so that s/he is making the connection between spoken words and written symbols, instead of using memory only. This is not to say that the student should not rely on memory at all; after all, the passage is made up of the student's own thoughts and words, and the student will remember much of the sequence of his or her words and phrases. The teacher is trying to help the student match up these words to the written symbols. The teacher can help with more difficult words, but should encourage the student to guess what the word might be, using context clues and knowledge of phonics.

During the student's reading, the teacher can get an idea of the strategies that a student does or does not use. Is the student able to use context clues? Does s/he have some knowledge of the sound values of letters? Does the student appear to be easily flustered by a difficult word? The teacher can then note the words that were difficult and have the student underline those words while reading. After that, those words, or particularly meaningful words, can be isolated and written on cards to be learned as sight words

or learned phonetically. This can occur immediately or during the next session. Later I will discuss the kinds of word attack activities that can be applied to the dictation.

The student can then re-read the dictation silently, underlining words not recognized, or, to focus on the positive, underlining everything s/he is able to read. Once the student can read his or her own dictation without too much difficulty, students can share dictations in dyads, one student reading aloud his or her story, while the other one follows along, much like the teacher did during the original reading. Thus, a kind of peer teaching situation can be developed, as well as the sharing of experiences among students.

A second method of obtaining the written experience is by using a tape recorder. Instead of immediately writing the student's words, the teacher tape records them. The tape can be played back and transcribed immediately, outside of class, or during another class session, depending on the goals of a particular class. For beginning students, immediate playback is probably most effective in establishing the relationship between speech and writing.

One advantage of using the tape recorder, as opposed to direct dictation, is that the student doesn't have to slow down his or her normal speaking rate to wait for the teacher to write. This may allow for more spontaneous material, since the student doesn't have as much time to get nervous or plan what is going to be said. Another benefit of taping the passage first is that the student can concentrate solely

on speaking during the telling of the experience, which is particularly helpful for ESL students. It may be too much distraction for some students to produce their stories orally and simultaneously to be able to attend to the teacher's transcription of the story. If the playback and transcription take place with the student present, the speech/writing connection is still made. A tape recorder makes it possible for a student or group of students to record a story when the teacher is not available. On the other hand, some students may be intimidated by the tape recorder, though this is usually overcome with familiarity, or students may prefer the slower pace and immediacy of direct dictation with the teacher.

So far, I have focused primarily on individual Language Experience work; teacher to student and student to student interaction. The teacher in an ESL literacy classroom can't always work on an individual basis, nor is this necessarily preferable; Language Experience lends itself to group work as well as individual. Here, a tape recorder becomes especially useful since group speech is often more difficult to stop and transcribe directly. In group work, as in individual, the story or experience being dictated or tape-recorded should be based on the students' own experiences. Group discussions, collective narratives of some common experience such as a field trip, stories created by the group, reactions to a picture, and descriptions of an object are just some examples of group experiences that can be recorded. The ESL literacy classroom should aim for

integrated movement between individual and group work. Not only is such group work challenging and conducive to a sense of community in the classroom, but it is also necessary, given the restrictions of the teacher/student ratio. As I will discuss in the next chapter, the teacher needs to strike a balance between group and individual activities, creating situations where students can work independently and with other students. One of the greatest advantages of group work is the creative stimulus it can foster within each individual. With ten minds stimulating one another, a discussion may go deeper or more details of an experience may be remembered than if a student is speaking only with the teacher. In group story-telling, there is room for all students to excel. One student may be able to put together a good plot, while another may excel in technical details, grammar or pronunciation. On the other hand, some students may feel more inhibited by a group. Part of the rationale behind Language Experience is that the student can read what s/he says, that s/he can better recognize words that s/he has made a personal commitment to. In a collective language experience story, the student will have to confront many new words that are not his or her own, thus losing some of the immediate personal connection between his or her own speech and written words. As compensation, however, the sharing of ideas and having one's own words recognized and read by other students, and the resulting solidarity and security that can develop in the classroom all contribute to the learning atmosphere. Coming into contact with words other

than one's own in a group story also provides a lead-in to reading other students' individual stories and reading outside materials.

A group recording can be made in a similar manner as a taping done in a Community Language Learning session. Students sit in a circle with the tape recorder in the middle, and take the microphone when they have something to say. The teacher does not provide correct versions of the students' English, as may happen in CLL, since the goal here is to have students read their own interlanguage. When students have finished their taping, which should be limited so that it doesn't become too long to transcribe practically, the tape is played back and transcribed sentence by sentence. As the teacher is writing each sentence, s/he may ask the student "What was that again?"; at this point the student may or may not choose to self-correct.

The teacher may want to capture a more spontaneous group discussion on tape by just turning on the tape recorder in class, though again it should be for a fairly short period of time so that the transcribed passage won't be too long. There are many different kinds of foci the teacher can provide, some of which were mentioned before. Other alternatives include recording a list of students' opinions on a controversial topic, or students providing different pieces of information about some aspect of the news that is especially relevant to them. As students gain more experience in the process of creating their own reading

materials, they should be encouraged to take initiative in deciding the topics and format of their taped passages. In the next chapter, I will suggest ideas for combining field trips that lead into group language experience stories that would be related to life coping skills.

To provide a flow between individual and group language experience, students can be asked to dictate individual stories based on group discussions. The teacher could also begin a story, and ask individual students or small groups to create their own endings. Smaller groups of three to four students could make their own stories. Occasionally a student might want to share an experience or story with the entire class and be willing to dictate it to the teacher in front of the class, and have the class work on reading it. Students can contribute individual stories to a folder where other students can read them. These stories can eventually be bound into a class reader. Students can read stories to one another in dyads. Tapes can be made of a teacher or aide reading a story aloud; students can listen to the tape while reading the written version.

It is important to emphasize the place of correction in the Language Experience Approach. The focus is teaching students reading skills, not grammar, pronunciation or vocabulary development. The student is distracted from the main purpose of decoding written symbols and extracting meaning from them if syntax and pronunciation errors are always pointed out. If a student requests certain information of that sort, the teacher should certainly

provide it, but not dwell on it. Haskell argues that an ESL student who is learning to read:

... will not learn incorrect language because he sees it in his reading materials; he doesn't see it. He is much too concerned with the experience and the process. Rigg points out that the greatest incidence of teacher failure occurs at this point, when teachers, to be helpful (i.e. to "teach"), edit and repair the student's story as it is being put onto paper, rather than copying it down exactly as the student tells it. (Haskell, 1978, p. 9)

Students will often correct their own stories when the teacher first reads them back, or during subsequent re-readings. The only time that it may be appropriate to provide correction during the initial telling of the experience is when the meaning is unintelligible and will therefore make re-reading by the student or other students very difficult.

When taking the dictation for the first time, the teacher can mentally note the student's pronunciation errors. While writing, or later typing the passage, the teacher can note patterns of grammatical errors. These errors can then serve as the source of future grammar and pronunciation instruction. This kind of work could be introduced in later readings of the passage, after the student has mastered the basic decoding of the story. Such correction should only take place at a pace that the learner can absorb.

There are an endless variety of ways in which Language Experience can be used, with individuals and the entire class, but its advantages remain the same. The language being used for reading is controlled by the spoken language

they read if the introduction to print is based on their own language and their own experiences. There is also a continual interaction between oral and written forms of language; students are encouraged to expand their abilities of oral self-expression and are able to see the immediate relationship between their thoughts, speech and print. A more thorough discussion of how I would use Language Experience with ESL adult literacy students will follow in Chapters IV and V.

B. Considerations in the choice of methods

1. The students and the school

The above descriptions provide an idea about the differences between the major approaches to teaching literacy. Ultimately, most methods are eclectic and advocate emphasis on either meaning or decoding as the initial focus in learning to read. Proponents of phonics methods do not suggest the mastery of the phonetic code at the expense of any work on meaning. All methods recognize that the ultimate goal of reading is to extract meaning from print, not to merely be able to identify isolated sounds and words. In order to decide on the methods that I believe will be most effective with functionally illiterate ESL adults, several factors must be considered. The most important consideration should be the needs and specific abilities of the students. The teacher must also look at

the learning environment. How do factors of class size, the mix of levels within a class, the learning center's resources and teacher preparation time affect decisions about methodology? In addition to considering the students and environmental factors, the teacher must have some knowledge about the nature of the reading process and about research on teaching reading. Finally, the teacher needs to consider his or her own assumptions about learning and teaching in general, as well as his or her abilities; those assumptions will influence the teacher's response to all the above-mentioned considerations.

I have already discussed the kinds of survival skills that ESL students need to develop in order to cope adequately in the new culture, and some of the literacy skills that will enable them to function competently. The content of literacy must be based as much as possible on students' practical, immediate needs; materials should include things that students encounter in daily life, such as street signs, food labels, advertisements, applications, etc. Students should be encouraged to bring in things they want to read or write, and classrooms must be individualized enough so that there is space for the teacher to address individual needs. The ESL adult learner needs to begin to understand the new culture, through a process of reflecting upon and trying to relate past and present experiences. Some of this can occur in the language classroom, and can be specifically worked into the literacy classroom using the Language Experience Approach. The adult learner may

approach the classroom with fear, hostility or a lack of self-confidence, depending on past learning experiences; the teacher needs to create a secure learning environment that accepts the student as s/he is, that allows mistakes to be made, and that respects the adult for the skills and knowledge that s/he already has.

The skills and experiences that adults bring with them to the classroom are what differentiate literacy for adults and for children. Probably the most important asset that adults usually bring with them is a strong motivation to learn to read. They already have a good idea of the practical application of literacy skills and how it may contribute to their lives. Such motivation may include finding or improving one's job, being able to help one's children in school and serve as a better model, being able to defend one's rights, and learning to read for pleasure. The teacher must pay attention to such motivations, and make sure that students can see the relevance of reading work to their home, work and social lives. Developing motivation is one of the prerequisites to reading that teachers are told to encourage in pre-literate children; it is usually only necessary to expand an adult's view of the uses for literacy, not to inculcate him or her with a desire to learn to read. With such motivation, adults can usually concentrate better and longer than children; they are able to persevere when they know their goals and see progress toward them.

Adults often possess many other "pre-literacy" skills

that children who are beginning to read need time to develop. Adults have a great deal of first-hand experience in the world, even if it is in another culture, that can be related to the learning situation. This larger knowledge of the world means that the adult learner will have a broader vocabulary and a much more sophisticated network of concepts than a child to bring to bear on the learning situation. Through life experience, adults have had to develop problem-solving skills and an ability to understand relationships in the world. The interests of adults are deeper and often more varied than those of children. The adult's visual perception will be more highly developed than a child's, enabling better differentiation among words (Bowren and Zintz, 1977, p. 28). Many adults may have compensated for their lack of literacy skills by strengthening their speaking skills, such as verbal wit and story-telling skills. Such oral abilities may be particularly valued in cultures where literacy is less important than in the U.S. Adults may also compensate for the inability to read by relying on, and thereby strengthening, their memory.

For the adult ESL student, most of the above-mentioned skills will have been developed in the native language and culture, but can and should be capitalized on in the language classroom and specifically in literacy work. Though an ESL student may lack an English word, s/he may have a well-developed meaning for that word in the native language. The ESL learner may possess many English sounds

attempts to compare methods. Levin criticizes the validity of such comparative research:

Were the groups equated on relevant variables?
Did the treatments follow the prescriptions?
Were the teachers equally competent and enthusiastic?
(Levin, 1970, p. 129)

Jeanne Chall adds that tests used to compare the effectiveness of a given method over another are usually incapable of measuring socio-economic and cultural factors affecting the learner. Another problem with research on beginning reading is that it is often carried out by different disciplines - psychologists, linguists, educators - and rarely integrated (Chall, 1967, pp. 80-82). She argues, however, on the basis of her own analysis of the probable course of development of reading skills in children and from other studies, that "early stress on code learning... not only produces better word recognition and spelling, but also makes it easier for the child eventually to read with understanding " (p.83). She then reminds us that such findings concern groups, not individuals, and that the effectiveness of any method depends a great deal on how the teacher uses it (pp. 83-84).

There are many reasons to believe that adults, with their cognitive and experiential maturity, use different strategies than children in learning to read. Very little research has been done, however, to determine what those differences are in adults learning to read in a second language. With the lack of relevant and reliable research methods, the teacher needs to look at what the reading

process is for beginning and mature readers. Levin argues that we should base methodological decisions more on what is known about the reading process and on informal modifications in the classroom (1970, pp. 129-130). Frank Smith cautions that "no theoretical analysis of the reading process can dictate an instructional method; pedagogy always has to be tested in the classroom" (1971, p. 320). An understanding, however, of what a skilled reader and a beginning reader are doing when they read, should influence how the teacher works.

Kenneth Goodman calls reading a "psycholinguistic guessing game" in which

... efficient reading does not result from precise perception and identification of all elements, but from skills in selecting the fewest, most productive clues necessary to produce guesses which are right the first time. (Goodman, "A Psycholinguistic Guessing Game," 1970, p. 108)

Pat Rigg elaborates on this prediction aspect of reading:

Reading is neither a process of sounding out each letter, letter by letter, nor is it an automatic recognition of each word, word by word. Reading requires sampling graphic, grammatical and semantic features: testing that prediction against a further sampling... (1976, p. 206)

Both she and Frank Smith feel that too much concentration on the small components such as individual letters and words makes it difficult to get meaning from the whole. Fluent readers do not read every word or stop at unknown words, but use contextual information to guess and predict.

What distinguishes the skilled reader from the novice... is not... the amount of visual information he can pack into a single fixation, but the amount of nonvisual information with which he can leaven the featural input and make it go the farthest. (Smith, 1973, p. 63)

of the students, so that a student is not at the disadvantage of having oral skills that are inadequate to cope with the reading materials. The writing down of students' words assures that, at least in beginning reading, the student does not have to deal with the differences between oral language and written language. Though the student will certainly come into contact with readings that have a more "literary" style, at first s/he can concentrate on decoding the language s/he already knows.

Language Experience addresses the students' needs for relevant, interesting materials by drawing on students' natural language and imagery. Sylvia Ashton-Warner says that beginning reading must be based on the students' "native imagery", on the words and experiences that have organic meaning to the students. "They must be words organically tied up, organically born from the dynamic life itself" (1968, p. 30). Instead of relying on texts that may be uninteresting, alienating or culturally biased, and instead of the teacher always determining the topics of reading, the students' interests and knowledge are used. It is certainly easier and more motivating to learn to read something about one's self or a fellow student, than to struggle with a text about something that may be unrepresentative of the learner's background. This method also addresses the student's need for security in the classroom, which is crucial for students faced with the multiple insecurities of a new language, a new culture and learning a new skill, reading, in adulthood. Each student's

experiences and language are valued, however imperfectly they may be expressed. "In reading one another's stories, reference is continually made to the writer for the identification of new words. This hardly hurts the writer" (Ashton-Warner, p.56). Students learn from each other, hearing and reading about each other's experiences.

There is room for different proficiency levels in a Language Experience classroom. Students can begin the Language Experience process when they are able to express themselves orally to a limited degree. Students' readiness will vary, depending on oral language ability and confidence in self-expression. Since the approach is so individualized, however, students can be working at several different levels simultaneously. They can be grouped in similar levels for small group work, or in mixed levels, so that more advanced students can help the less advanced ones.

Though many word attack skills from the "analytic" approach to teaching reading can and should be integrated into the Language Experience Approach, Language Experience relies most heavily on the total context to recognize words and get meaning. Kenneth Goodman postulates that:

All of the syntactic and semantic information which the reader has going for him makes him relatively independent of the grapho-phonetic information. (1970, p. 33)

Though an ESL student may have to rely more heavily on "graphophonic" information since s/he is not familiar with the sound system like a native speaker, I would encourage the heaviest reliance on contextual clues so that the

student can begin to develop the strategies for predicting and guessing which are part of the mature reading process. The students need to begin with a knowledge of some, but not all, letter-sound correspondences, in order to begin reading. Words that are difficult to recognize in isolation are often easier to understand in the total context of sentences or paragraphs, and students should be helped to read larger chunks as soon as they have a basic familiarity with sign-sound correspondence. Some work, however, should be done with words in isolation, as a check to make sure that students aren't merely memorizing their stories. Since many of their reading materials are limited to their oral language, the problem of confronting material with totally new grammatical structures or unfamiliar meanings is minimized.

The way that Language Experience combines speaking, reading, listening and writing makes it clear that these components of language are mutually reinforcing, and should not be artificially separated during the learning process. "All facets of language are used as experience related to the construction of printed materials" (Haskell, p. 10). The student speaks, the teacher writes, the student listens, and then reads. There is an organic connection between all the components, and they can interact in a variety of ways. In the early stages, only the teacher will do the writing, while the student watches; later, the student may copy the teacher's writing of the story, or transcribe his or her own story.

Some of the very advantages of Language Experience are the sources of its disadvantages. The fact that it is so individualized can make it difficult for a single teacher to work with a classroom of ten to fifteen students or more. The teacher needs to be able to provide clear directions for students to work independently or in small groups, while s/he works with one student or a small group. The teacher also needs to learn how to move around the classroom a lot, which demands a great deal of energy and awareness on the teacher's part. Ideally, an aide, or any person who can read and write, would be available at certain times to take dictations and read them through with students. The challenge for the teacher is to organize these independent activities, to be able to focus on one individual, and to move around to several different students, not shortchanging more advanced students for those that are less advanced, or vice versa. There will also be work done in the whole group; the teacher needs to find a balanced movement from whole group to small group to individual work.

Some ESL students, who have been accustomed to a more teacher-centered learning environment, may for a while be resistant to working independently or in small groups without the teacher present. The more clearly that students understand what it is they are supposed to be doing, the easier it may be for them to work independently. There are a number of autonomous activities in which students can be involved while the teacher is taking a dictation with one student or with a small group. Students can work

independently reading their own or other students' writings, or can work on structured writing, filling in blanks, or practicing letters.

Another drawback of Language Experience is the relatively large amount of preparation time that is required outside of the classroom. This can certainly be somewhat minimized with planning and experience. If transcriptions are handwritten on large sheets of brown paper, they must be typed for the students' later use. Ideally, the classroom would have a typewriter that the teacher, and eventually students, could use to type the dictation during the class period. Though the dictations are usually short, especially at the beginning, it would take the teacher quite a while to type up several dictations.

Since the word attack skills to be taught will come from the students' own writings, the teacher will not be using a prescribed phonics program. This means that the teacher must create the structure and sequencing of phonics work, basing the content on words from the students' dictations. The teacher may be able to use some commercially prepared materials, but will probably more often be using teacher-prepared materials. Besides the extra time that a teacher needs to prepare such materials, s/he needs to be very familiar with phonics in order to be able to respond spontaneously during work with a student. Therefore, the individualized nature of Language Experience which makes it so relevant to students also makes it more demanding and challenging for the teacher, especially for a

teacher with relatively little experience in the teaching of reading.

Before moving on to discussing Gattegno's Words in Color in the context of Language Experience, here is an example of a Language Experience dictation. This story was told by an ESL student with fairly advanced oral skills who was just beginning to learn to read.

We have lay off about fifty people. They are all napkin machine tenders and napkin wrappers. They got lay off last Friday. Our department has lot of wrapping to do. My department has six people. One do the packing. One do the strapping. We have to work quite a bit more. Today they were running two sheeters, so we really work hard today. A couple more are going to be lay off, but we don't know when. I like to be lay off for couple days, for little vacation. It might be for two or three weeks, because they don't like to pay unemployment. One machine tender want to go to Florida to visit her sister, but the boss wouldn't let her go. They were the only ones who know to run the machine.

The student self-corrected some of her errors after a few readings. During the first few readings, however, she was concentrating on decoding her story, not on its grammatical correctness. I will refer back to this story to show how decoding skill development can be drawn from a story.

C. Words in Color

There are several tools which students need when approaching unfamiliar words. The most valuable tool is to be able to decode a word by using contextual clues. In order to do this, however, the student needs to know

something about sign-sound correspondence, which is very inconsistent in English. So, while the student is learning sight words from dictated stories and using context clues, s/he will also need to use other techniques to recognize words. The teacher can draw from several different phonics approaches, using syllable units, rhyming words, teaching long and short vowels, etc. There are many prepared materials that will help teachers in the use of such phonics methods. One particularly useful method about which relatively little has been written, except by the originator himself, is Gattegno's Reading with Words in Color, which attempts to give English some kind of phonetic consistency in order to aid the learning to read process. Gattegno has used similar elements with the teaching of foreign languages, including English, in the Silent Way. In a series of wall charts, Gattegno organizes the different spellings of each of the forty-seven identifiable English sounds into color-coded categories. With these charts as an aid to understanding sign/sound correspondence, the student learns to combine sounds and then corresponding symbols into words and, through manipulation, learns to make transformations of words.

Before describing in detail how to use Words in Color, I will discuss some of Gattegno's assumptions about learning to read, which he discusses throughout Words in Color: Background and Principles (1962). First, he believes that phonetic languages are the easiest to learn to read and write. English's phonetic inconsistency is the major

a sea green	u pale green	e red	o ochre	ou purple/aqua	a turquoise	oo leaf green
a - late ay - day ey - they eigh - freight aigh - straight ei - veil ea - break ai - mail et - ballet au - gauge	u - use you - youth eau - beauty ue - hue ew - few eu - feudal eue - queue ieu - adieu ewe - ewe yew - yew *iew - view *hu - exhume	e - he ee - see ea - tea ei - conceit ie - field i - clique eo - people oe - amoeba ay - quay ey - key *y - fifty ae - caesar *is - debris	o - go oe - goes ow - know oa - owe oh - joan oh - oh ew - sew ou - soul eau - plateau ough - though oo - brooch au - mauve eo - yeoman ot - depot	ou - our hou - hour ow - sow ough - bough	a - rare ai - air hei - heir ea - pear e - there ei - their ae - aerial aye - prayers	o - do oo - too oe - shoes ough - through ou - soup u - flu ue - true ui - fruit ew - dew wo - two eu - pneum ieu - lieuten

y pale pink	l royal blue	w pale aqua	k gold	r dark orange	b dark green	h pale blue
y - yes i - onion j - hallelujah	l - let ll - sell le - pale lle - belle *yl - he'll	w - wet wh - when o - choir u - suite **h - where	k - kit kk - trekked ke - like ck - sick ch - chorus c - cat cc - occasion lk - talk qu - quay que - clique ech - saccharine che - ache egu - lacquer kh - khaki *co - chocolate	r - ran rr - horror re - more rre - bizarre wr - write rh - rhythm rh - catarth rt - mortgage lo - colonel rp - corpsman rps - corps *re - you're	b - but bb - ribbon be - cube bu - buy	h - he wh - who **w - where j - José
	el yellow/royal blue			er yellow/dark orange		
	l - wild lo - pile *ll - F'l					

o - pot oh - john ho - honor ow - knowledge a - swamp	a - fatal o - potato i - pencil y - ethyl ei - foreign *oi - tortoise ai - mountain *eo - pigeon *he - vehement *iu - nasturtium *au - restaurant ah - hallelujah	u - upon e - the ea - pageant ou - numerous ie - conscience io - question *ia - martial eou - righteous *oa - cupboard iou - conscious *eau - bureaucrat ough - thoroughly	*u - fur *e - her *o - work *i - girl *ou - courteous *ea - pearl *y - myrth	I - I y - my i - like igh - high ie - lie eye - eyes ye - rye eigh - height is - isle ais - aisle **ei - either	a - far aa - bazaar ea - heart e - sergeant ah - ah **au - laugh	o - for a - all au - paul aw - paw augh - daught ough - thought ou - pour oo - door hau - exhaust oa - board awe - awe ao - extraon ho - exhort **oi - reservo
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m tangerine	n lavender	f mauve	v khaki	d green	th pale purple	th pale lime
n - mat n - comma e - same b - lamb n - diaphragm n - hymn n - calm n - I'm	n - on nn - channel ne - fine kn - know dne - wednesday pn - pneumatic gn - sign en - often in - extraordinary on - iron nd - grandfather mn - mnemonic *ln - lincoln	f - if ff - off fe - life ph - photograph lf - half gh - cough ffe - giraffe pph - sapphire ft - often	f - of v - seven ve - give lve - halves *ph - stephen	d - did dd - sudden de - made ed - rolled ld - would *d - he'd	th - this the - bathe	th - thin the - absinth h - eighth *t - southa *phth - phthalic

beige	brown/pink	pale aqua/purple	pale aqua/pale yellow
oo -- foot ou -- would u -- put o -- woman	oi -- oil oy -- boy	oi -- reservoir	o one

g gray	sh sky blue	ch dark magenta	η olive	j light green	kw gold/pale aqua
g -- go gg -- egg gu -- guard gh -- ghost gue -- catalogue kgu -- blackguard	sh -- shop ch -- michigan t -- education s -- sugar ce -- ocean che -- cache ss -- tissue sch -- schist sc -- conscience ci -- special c -- appreciate	ch -- chicken tch -- watch t -- question c -- cello *che -- niche	ng -- sing n -- anxiety nd -- handkerchief ngue -- tongue	j -- jack g -- gem d -- soldier dge -- judge ge -- cage gg -- exaggerate dg -- judgment dj -- adjective	qu -- question equ -- acquire

ks gold/lime	x -- box xe -- axe xc -- excel cc -- accide
gz gray/lilac	
x -- examina	
ksh gold/sky bl	
x -- obnoxio	

<p>a white</p> <p>a -- pat au -- laugh ai -- plaid</p>	<p>u pale yellow</p> <p>u -- up o -- done oe -- does ou -- young oo -- blood a -- was up -- cupboard</p>	<p>i pink</p> <p>i -- it o -- women a -- village u -- busy e -- english ai -- portrait ei -- forfeit ae -- caesarian *is -- chassis *ois -- chammois</p>	<p>e blue</p> <p>y -- beauty ey -- honey ay -- saturday ui -- build ee -- been ia -- marriage ie -- sieve *ea -- guinea hea -- forehead hi -- exhibition</p>	<p>e -- pet ie -- friend ea -- lead ai -- said u -- bury a -- any ay -- says eo -- leopard ei -- heifer ae -- aesthetic</p>
--	--	--	--	---

<p>p dark brown</p> <p>p -- pot pp -- stopped pe -- pipe ph -- shepherd *bp -- subpoena</p>	<p>t magenta</p> <p>t -- top tt -- little te -- late ed -- finished cht -- yacht ct -- indict bt -- debt pt -- receipt tte -- cigarette th -- thyme *d -- placed *t -- don't *phth -- phthisic</p>	<p>z lilac</p> <p>s -- is ss -- possess se -- hose 's -- sam's z -- zero zz -- buzz ze -- size si -- business thes -- clothes x -- anxiety sth -- asthma</p>	<p>s lime</p> <p>s -- us ss -- pass se -- promise 's -- pat's c -- conceit ce -- service sw -- sword st -- listen sc -- scythe sch -- schism ps -- psalm sse -- fnesse sce -- acquiesce sth -- isthmus *tz -- waltz</p>	<p>zh cobalt blue</p> <p>s -- measure z -- azure ge -- garage</p>
---	--	--	---	---

problem in becoming literate. The color-coded charts are an attempt to make English closer to a phonetic language. He discourages teaching the alphabet initially since the names of the signs are often misleading, and emphasizes the importance of teaching consonant sounds together with vowels, since consonants cannot exist alone. Color is used as a phonetic clue to show similarities and differences in signs, to be used only for the purpose of introducing words. He recognizes that color, in and of itself, may be helpful to some and not others (Gattegno, 1962, p. 22).

Another assumption is that the close connection between spoken and written language must be maintained in the learning to read process, particularly for second language learners.

Underlying all written material there must be somewhere the spoken word, actually or potentially... To read is to restore the voice to the printed page... [The teacher's task is] helping the learner to understand the connection between the temporal aspect of spoken speech and the spatial arrangement of print. (Gattegno, 1968, p. 3)

"Reading-as-talking", or understanding phrasing, rhythm and intonation, becomes an integral part of the learning to read process (1968, p.4). Language Experience also emphasizes the speech/writing connection, but Gattegno differs with that approach in how he would implement making the connection. He advocates the early introduction of student writing in learning to read, arguing that it helps the student establish the connection from his or her own speech, to writing the symbols that represent that speech, and

finally to reading those symbols. With such early focus on writing, the language to be used must necessarily be quite restricted.

Probably one of the Gattegno's most basic assumptions about learning to read, or learning a second language, is that a discovery process must be facilitated as much as possible in the learning process, as opposed to reliance on memorization. Relationships among sounds and symbols must be taught in a way that makes the learner use "the dynamic properties of the mind", instead of "memory tracks", by far the weaker of the processes (1962 p. 36). Instead of memorizing a whole word, as in the sight word method, students understand whole words as the result of combining elements and can actively manipulate those elements to form new words, once the elements are understood.

Gattegno also advocates the development of independence in reading and writing as early as possible. The teacher is there to introduce the signs and corresponding sounds, and facilitates the process whereby the learner will eventually be able to combine those elements into words, sentences and passages, independently. The learner will be better able to develop such autonomy if s/he is relying upon logic and inductive abilities, as opposed to memorized structures.

I will now give a brief outline of Gattegno's approach. One must keep in mind that there are infinite variations on how the color chart can be presented and manipulated. Gattegno suggests beginning with the five different "short" vowel sounds (a, e, i, o, u). The teacher will tap with a

pointer to those vowel symbols, in their corresponding color, until the student is clear that each sign has a corresponding sound and vice versa. Then the first consonants are introduced, one at a time. So, with:

a e i o u

and

p and then, t

a great deal of combinations that form sounds and real words can be made. The teacher could begin with one vowel on the board, "a", and "t" and "p". Students could then form "tap", and "pat", and then substitute other vowels. The learner begins to see the principle of combining symbols and sounds to form words. This combining takes place through what Gattegno calls a "visual dictation," in which the teacher taps out the elements while the students say the words. Initially, the visual dictation will be at the level of individual words (top, tip, pot, pit) and then move on to short sentences, in such a way that the student will see that one can manipulate the elements of a word to create another word, as well as change the elements of a sentence to form another sentence (Is it Pat?, It is Pat). A further exercise to help the learner understand the characteristics of sounds and their symbols is called the "game of transformations", which includes substituting one letter in a word to make another (pit, pat), reversing beginning and final letters (tip, pit), and on a more advanced level, adding new letters at the beginning or end of a word (pit, spit, spits), or inserting a new letter inside a word (sit,

slit).

Gattegno emphasizes the game-like quality of such exercises, as the student sees how many sounds and words s/he can generate from a limited amount of signs, or how many new meanings can be generated through the manipulation of words in sentences. While the teacher will introduce new sounds, the students can soon become the "tappers" and do visual dictations for one another.

Gattegno suggests the introduction of writing much earlier than Language Experience. At the early stages, the focus should not be on legibility, but only on transcribing speech. Coding, or writing, and decoding, or reading, must be kept separate at this point; the student's only demand should be the transcription of speech. Eventually writing and the reading of one's own writing will become spontaneous. In keeping with the use of discovery and the mind's "dynamic properties", he suggests teaching the letter shapes logically. The progression, then, would go like this:

a → α → u → ũ → i → ĩ → e → ē / a → o → 0

The students will therefore be able to record words, visual dictations and transformations. Attention to handwriting legibility and students writing their own stories would be delayed.

A beginning ESL reader would probably find the charts with all the spellings of English sounds quite overwhelming.

Instead of presenting the "fidels", as the color-coded sound/symbol charts are called, at once, the teacher and students can gradually create their own fidels. As new words and spellings are learned, the students can decide in what sound column that spelling belongs. For instance, they may know the word "red," and then learn "said" and "dead."

On the chart they would add: red

dead

said

The teacher could organize this process in a way that would keep the sounds color-coded to some degree. The advantage of doing it this way is that the student is involved in seeing the consistency and inconsistency of English sign/sound correspondence; also, this understanding grows out of a functional need to be able to write, read or say an unfamiliar word as it arises. The fidel charts become a well understood reference point for students, and provide them with some regularity and a vehicle for independence in learning how to spell and pronounce English correctly. It will also help them to see that the variations in English sign/sound correspondence are not, in fact, infinite.

One of the shortcomings of Words in Color is that it is not intrinsic in the approach for the phonics work to be linked to meaning. Gattegno states:

If one becomes aware of words as aspects of reality and starts being interested in them as such, there is no end to the observations that can be made about their structure, and relationship of sounds, forms and meanings. (1968, p. 6)

Yet most of the beginning words are based on a limited

number of elements, and the meaning level of the content is restricted to sentences that include these elements. Gattegno feels that the postponement of spontaneity and of student's natural language integrated into their reading is counterbalanced by the gains made using his approach. "Just as the environment for the learner-driver cannot encompass all possible situations, so the language...for the learner-reader will also be restricted..." (1968, p. 2).

He believes that it won't be such a problem with adults since their motivation is often quite high and they can keep their ultimate goal in mind, as opposed to children, who need more stimulation from the teacher. I think, however, that adults do need to see the immediate connection between their literacy work and its function in their lives, and that it isn't advantageous to limit beginning readers to such pure phonics work. ESL beginning readers' language is limited anyways, so that there will be some kind of natural restriction of language if reading is based on their speech.

While the Language Experience Approach never specifically addresses how to teach decoding skills, Words in Color never examines exactly how to assure that the language being read is in a highly meaningful context. It appears that Gattegno thinks that the value of meaning can be sacrificed at the initial stages, so that phonics skills can be the focus. I believe that both foci are indispensable in the beginning stages of learning to read for adults, and the foci of each approach can be integrated in a complementary fashion. The student can move back and

forth between the controlled language of Words in Color and the more unrestricted language generated in Language Experience stories.

Let us return to the language experience story earlier in the chapter, a story that has strong personal meaning for the student, to see some of the techniques from Words in Color that could be used with the story. As the student reads his or her own story for the first time with the teacher, s/he will be able to read many words, and then will confront unrecognized words. If the student is familiar with most of the sounds on the fidels, the teacher can guide the student to the column with the same sound. For example, if the student can't read "might", the teacher could direct the student to the column with "I" and point out that these have the same vowel sounds. The student could keep a notebook with a modified record of the fidel, and mark down the new spelling, as well as record it on the classroom fidel, which might be on brown paper or newsprint around the room. At this point the teacher could work with the new spelling and do beginning letter substitution (fight, light, sight), insertion and addition (slight, flight).

The teacher could ask the student to go through the story and notice all the words with the vowel sound in "run". The student might find "couple", "because", "but", "ones" and "unemployment." This may be difficult for ESL students since they may not know the way those words are pronounced. Such an exercise could concentrate on pronunciation first, and then on seeing

different spellings for the same sound. Another exercise could do the opposite: find the same vowel spellings that have different sounds. If the student looks at the letter "a", s/he might note these words: have, all about, vacation - four different sounds for the same letter.

The teacher could ask students to tap out on the wall charts new words learned from their stories for the rest of the class, or to form new sentences from words in their stories. Students could work together doing transformations on one student's presentation of words. If a student tapped out "might", they could brainstorm all the words they know with the "igh" letter combination. A "scrambled word reading" can be created, where around ten words are put on the board in random order, and students are asked to generate as many sentences as possible from the words. This could also be done on a more elementary level with scrambled letters. This provides the students practice in recognizing words, manipulating those words within the structure of English, and gives practice in writing, with some control since the words can be copied from the board. Equally important, the material being used for this work should be from the students' own stories.

These are only some examples of ways in which the tools provided by Words in Color can be applied to language experience stories. The students' own stories assure that the materials are always interesting and relevant to their lives. The sound/spelling charts and the techniques used to understand the elements of words and sentences assure that

the student will be learning skills that will help him or her decode unfamiliar words.

V. In the classroom: Integrating literacy and life-coping skills

A. Pre-literacy requirements

In the previous chapter, I described the Language Experience Approach and Words in Color and gave suggestions for their application in the ESL classroom. The teacher may be working in a situation where ESL classes are divided by skills such as conversation (i.e. listening and speaking), reading and writing, or in a situation where all language skills are to be focused on in one class. Regardless of the format, it is important that during the time spent on literacy work that there be movement from individual to group work, that students feel secure and able to work at their own pace, and that literacy development be firmly rooted within the other ESL skills - listening, speaking and writing.

In this chapter, I will discuss some of the related skills that will help adult learners in preparation for learning to read. Then I will look at how to integrate ESL literacy training into a larger life-coping skills program, addressing the need for relevancy in adult literacy. Such a program would draw from class field trips and projects which focus on learning survival skills in the students' community; these experiences would then become the basis for group and individual language experience stories.

First, as I mentioned earlier, students need a minimal

level of oral proficiency before embarking upon literacy work. To be able to use language experience, they need to be able to relate a simple event. They may also need to develop visual perception, to prepare them for eventual recognition of letters and words, particularly if they come from a culture with no tradition of literacy. This work could begin with colors, forms and shapes, while students are learning the related oral vocabulary. Then they could move on to learning to recognize the similarities and differences between letters, then words, and eventually word patterns. In pronunciation work, the teacher would help students develop the ability to hear similar and different initial consonant sounds, and to recognize words that rhyme. The teacher may want to introduce some initial sight words, including such essential words as "exit", "men", "stop", their own names, and the kinds of words that appear on forms, such as "name", "address" and "age". Gradually students should be gaining an understanding of print as a symbol for sound. They should also be introduced to the concept of reading from left to right and from top to bottom.

Besides developing visual and aural perception skills, ESL adult learners may need to refresh or develop for the first time some basic learning skills and strategies before focusing on the task of learning to read. Most ESL illiterate adults will have had little school experience so that the classroom experience may be entirely novel. Many of them will have to start developing new ways of

concentrating on and organizing information. The teacher will want to develop the classroom dynamics so that students begin to feel comfortable enough to indicate a lack of understanding and so that they learn to work in groups as well as independently. Though discussion will be limited by the oral abilities of the group, another important aspect of pre-literacy preparation is to address the need for literacy. Most adults will already come with a high level of motivation, but such a discussion could expand their vision of what use reading will have in their lives. Also, it could provide a forum for sharing some of their feelings about not being able to read when they realize the commonality of their experiences. Students may not be able to express or understand a great deal verbally, so the teacher could make use of pictures, a film strip, or role plays, generated by both teacher and students, to illustrate the uses of reading. Such activities might provide a stimulus for the first language experience dictations.

B. Life-coping skills

While adult literacy students are probably quite motivated, they need to see how the skills learned in the classroom are applicable to the outside world. If the teacher broadens the scope of literacy to include knowing and using the community, the student's learning process is strongly reinforced by practical application of skills. The focus of the class goes beyond the narrow definition of

functional literacy as learning to read at a minimal level to the broader concept of "functional competency", as suggested by the APL project. On the following page is a model that illustrates APL's delineation of the set of skills to be applied to the five general knowledge areas. Though literacy work will focus primarily on the application of the skills of reading and writing to the knowledge areas, literacy should never be treated as an isolated skill. Speaking, listening, problem-solving and even math skills should be integrated into a ESL literacy classroom that has functional competency as an eventual objective.

The APL breakdown of skills and knowledge areas provides a useful , though by no means exhaustive, framework for understanding the components of competency in today's society. The demands of any society are continually changing, so it can't be clear at any given time what essential knowledge and skills actually are. Individual needs will also vary a great deal. It is important therefore that the teacher not mechanically apply the APL model, but explore together with the students what they need to know in their particular community.

To give an idea of the possible range for each of the knowledge areas, I will give examples of specific objectives formulated by APL for each area. Some of the objectives for consumer economics are:

To build an oral and written consumer economics vocabulary.

To be aware of advertising practices, and to recognize appropriate and inappropriate forms of selling and advertising.

Consumer Occupational Health Community Government
 economics knowledge resources and law

Skills:

Reading	Reading a newspaper grocery ad	Reading a help-wanted ad	Reading a doctor's prescription	Reading a movie schedule	Reading a pamphlet on one's rights if arrested
Writing	Filling out a mail order form	Filling out a W-2 form	Answering a medical questionnaire	Filling out a welfare application	Writing a letter to a legislator
Speaking, listening	Listening to a radio advertisement	Talking with a union representative about union membership	Explaining a problem to a doctor	Calling an agency to inquire about its services	Calling City Hall to make a complaint
Computation	Computing the unit price of a grocery item	Computing overtime earnings	Computing the daily dosage of a prescription	Computing a bus fare	Computing income taxes
Problem solving	Determining the best stores in which to shop	Deciding what to say to a bothersome co-worker	Meal-planning decisions, based on nutrition	Deciding where to go for help with a problem	Determining whether a situation or action is legal

- To know how to order food and to tip in a restaurant.
- To determine housing needs and know how to obtain housing and utilities based on those needs.
- To be familiar with banking services in the community.

Some of these objectives may be more important than others for any given student. Reading activities would certainly be a part of attaining the above mentioned objectives.

Among the objectives for occupational knowledge are:

- To identify sources of information which may lead to employment.
- To prepare for job applications and interviews.
- To know the financial and legal aspects of employment.

Some of the objectives for community resources, a broad category, include:

- To understand how and when to apply for community services, such as Social Security or Medicare.
- To know various recreational services available in the community.
- To develop a familiarity with transportation schedules, and to calculate fares.
- To learn the use of maps relating to travel needs.

Some health objectives are:

- To develop a working vocabulary related to health, especially as it relates to basic medical and physiological terminology, for accurate reporting of symptoms and following a doctor's directions in applying treatments.
- To know medical and health services available in the community.
- To understand what contributes to good mental and physical health and to apply this understanding toward preventative care and health maintenance.

One objective for the area of government and law is "to obtain a working knowledge of the various legal documents which the individual will need as a member of society."

This could include understanding the fundamentals of an apartment lease or getting basic citizenship information (APL, Table of Contents).

I would propose using the APL model as a framework for community exploration. Throughout a ten-week class, the teacher could focus a couple of weeks on each of the five knowledge areas as the content focus for literacy work. Much of the work could revolve around a class field trip, which the class extensively prepares for and follows up afterwards.

Examples of community trips that could raise students' awareness of consumer economics are:

- A bank
- A factory
- A large discount store
- A supermarket
- A central warehouse where food comes into a city

For the area of occupational knowledge, visits could be made to:

- The local CETA office (this naturally relates to community resources also.)
- A local factory
- A large insurance company
- A vocational school
- A community college

Field trips related to health care could include:

- The local hospital
- Community clinics

Community resources that students might want to visit are:

- The library
- The public housing authority
- Public recreational facilities (park, zoo, etc.)

For trips focusing on government and law, students could attend a local board of aldermen meeting or see the State

congress in session, or visit:

Motor vehicle registry (how to get a license)
Police station (how to make a complaint)
Federal Building
City Hall

The categories suggested by APL should not be seen as limiting. A field trip may not fit neatly into one category. For example, students may want to learn more about the community's history; such an exploration could include looking at changes in the community's health care and social services, as well as its employment sources. Another project could be to look at the relationship of different elements in the community. For instance, they could examine the impact of immigrants on the city or they could investigate facilities for young people and problems with youth in the community. The later project could include visits to the police, a recreational facility, CETA and a youth agency, thus encompassing several of the APL categories.

First I will discuss the general planning of a field trip, and then look at the kinds of ESL classroom activities that could accompany a trip, particularly activities related to literacy work. Field trips are good for several different purposes. On the most basic level, students can gain essential and interesting information about their new community and the new culture. If the trip is prepared for well, it can become an exercise in increasing observation and listening skills. Students' fears about new, strange places - such as government bureaucracies or supermarkets -

may be lessened by visiting these places within the security of a group. Such places may be less mystifying for them the next time they go alone. A trip links the school and its community; it brings the "real world" into the classroom.

The process of planning a trip can in itself be a valuable learning experience for students, if it is thought of as a cooperative venture. If the focus were consumer economics, the process might begin with students talking about the kinds of problems they've had in stores or as consumers in general. The teacher could suggest several possible trips. The class could then list different problem areas or questions they have about consumer economics, decide which were most important, interesting or relevant to them, and, based on that, decide where they wanted to go. Then the class could brainstorm more specific questions they would want to ask and share the information they already have. Small groups or committees could form to work on different aspects of the trip. One group's focus could be transportation for the trip; they could work on reading bus schedules and public transportation and local street maps, or they could organize car pools. Another group could be responsible for learning and presenting new vocabulary that might arise during the trip. Another group could develop a roleplay about a scene that they envision in the place to be visited, for example, a new client and a social worker at the welfare office. Such group participation in planning will maintain everyone's interest in the trip. In addition, the more specific questions and knowledge students

have beforehand, the more they will be able to benefit from the actual trip and the follow-up work.

All the language skills - speaking, listening, reading and writing - will certainly be drawn upon during a field trip, but here the focus is literacy development. Discussion of the trip, the topic, students' experiences, and related oral vocabulary would come first. Then the teacher could begin to present some of the more important words as sight vocabulary. There could then be phonics work on some of the vocabulary with regular spellings, starting with simpler "short vowel" words, then long vowel words, and later, more difficult vowel and consonant combinations. During individual work time, students could work on forming letters, copying some of the new words, while more advanced students might be able to do some short language experience stories related to the earlier discussions.

After the actual trip, group and individual language experience work could begin. This could result naturally from the discussion that would follow the trip. The first group story might be a simple recount of some of the trip's highlights; what happened to students, what they saw, what they liked or didn't like, etc. The teacher could use any of the group language experience techniques suggested in the previous chapter, depending on which ones the class seems to find most useful and easy to work with. The end result should be a fairly short transcript, on a large sheet of paper on the wall that the entire class can read. First, the class as a whole would work with the transcript. The

teacher might read it through once or twice, and then have students volunteer to read parts of it. Group word study could take place at this time, where words with regular spelling patterns were noted and compared with other similar words, and irregular words could be taught as sight words. During the time when the whole class is studying the transcript, questions about meaning and pronunciation of words, as well as grammatical structure, could be briefly addressed, though the primary focus is still on reading and writing activities.

Then students could begin to work individually or in pairs. The teacher might want to vary the way students work, depending on their needs - sometimes forming homogeneous pairs of lesser or more advanced students, or pairing a more advanced student with a lesser advanced one, or having students work on their own. A student who is learning how to print or write cursively could spend time copying the transcript or simply forming particular letters. In fact, all students should keep a notebook with their own copies of the group and individual stories. The teacher can also provide the students with a typed copy of group stories with which they can compare their own copies.

Students would be working at many different levels during this time. While some would be working on their handwriting, others could be reading the story silently or along with a partner. Still other students could begin to work on their individual stories, possibly a continuation of the group story; some might request the teacher to

transcribe that individual story and read it through with them, while more advanced students could try directly writing their story. The teacher will be moving around the room working with individuals and small groups, checking progress and making suggestions for the next steps for individual students.

Then the group could reconvene for more work on word patterns. Printed material may have been collected from the trip - forms to fill out, pamphlets, fliers, brochures, handouts, a supermarket coupon section from the newspaper, etc. While the reading level will most likely be too high in such printed material, key words could be pulled out and examined - words that are functional and that students are likely to see again. For example, from a brochure that tells the schedule of a particular agency could come a lesson on beginning to recognize the words "closed", "open", numbers and the days of the week, and also a discussion on general schedules of stores, banks and agencies in this country. An advertising flier from a department store would provide important and interesting consumer goods vocabulary, often with corresponding pictures, as well as words like "sale" and "50% off"; it could also provide the basis for a discussion of how stores advertise and how students can be more careful as consumers. Copies could be made of a form, such as a social security application, and work could be done reading and then filling out the form.

In the next class session, a typed version of the group

story could be given to all the students. It can be used in several different ways. The teacher could decide to make it a modified cloze passage, deleting some key words that had been learned the previous day, or deleting some verbs, articles, depending on what kind of focus the teacher wants. For a simpler exercise, words from the story could have letters deleted, but kept in the context of the sentence. For example, "We t_k the subway to Boston." Punctuation could be deleted if the teacher wanted to work on the concept of a sentence. The teacher could scramble the sentences in the group story and ask students to reconstruct the story, if it were a story with a logical sequence. Letters in single words could also be scrambled. More word study could also take place at this time; the class could review some of the word patterns. The teacher could also make flash cards to review sight words.

Before breaking down again for independent work, there could be further discussion of the trip and related topics. The focus of the discussion could be the survival skills aspect of the trip, with students sharing information they know and the teacher then offering additional information. Students could also discuss their experiences and feelings related to the trip. After a trip to the local welfare office, for example, students could first talk about the details of getting welfare, who is eligible, etc. Many students will have probably had personal experiences with welfare, have opinions about the pro's and con's of welfare, or can compare our welfare system with government assistance

programs, or the lack of such programs, in their own countries. This kind of discussion can serve as a catalyst for them to write or dictate their own individual or small group stories.

Again, the class would break down for individual work. The teacher would begin working with the less advanced students by writing down their dictations. Some students who weren't able to write down their own stories could work individually or in a small group tape recording their stories for the teacher or a more advanced student to write later. More advanced students could begin writing their own stories. Some of them could also be paired with students who needed someone to write down their dictation. Such groupings of students should vary from class to class so that students aren't always doing the same thing or working with the same students. Sometimes a student will mostly work on dictating his or her story, and then read it alone or with another student. During another period, the student could work on copying the teacher's written version of his or her story. Another student may spend one independent work period on writing his or her story, and the next period on writing a dictation for another student and helping her or him read it. With time, the teacher will see the different ways in which students work best and should encourage students to make decisions about the best way to spend their individual work time.

At the end of this time, as a final class activity, students could share their individual or small group

stories. This would not necessarily have to be a "teaching" time, where, for example, new words are being taught, but a time to simply appreciate and respond to other students' stories and ideas. Such sharing should be voluntary. On the other hand, the teacher might want to use one student's story, with the student's consent, as some kind of exercise - a dictation for students to write, a punctuation-cloze exercise, word study, etc.

Since the Language Experience Approach relies primarily on student and teacher-prepared materials, and less so on commercially prepared materials, it is essential that students keep well-organized, looseleaf notebooks, where they keep a record of group and individual stories, of new vocabulary that they have learned, and of phonics exercises. Student notebooks will enable the student as well as the teacher to pinpoint problem areas and see progress. Students could also make a class book: typed versions of students' own favorite stories collected in a binder, or several binders, that would be available for reading during independent work time. Periodically a collection of stories could be reproduced for other students in the school.

The following is a sample outline of several days' lessons that would revolve around the area of consumer awareness, to give more concrete examples for the preceding suggestions about combining survival skills and literacy work. The assumption is that each class would be approximately one hour. Any of the activities could be shortened or expanded into a full lesson themselves,

depending on the goals of the class and time constraints. The progression of work within each class period would usually be to begin with the whole class, then do independent work and end with the entire group again. It should be remembered that the work taking place in a literacy class can easily be complemented by work in an oral conversation class or a math class.

D. Lesson plans

DAY I*

I. Objectives

- A. To develop an oral vocabulary of consumer economics
- B. To familiarize students with the knowledge area of consumer economics, especially how advertising works on us.
- C. To have students describe some of their experiences or problems as consumers.
- D. To begin to plan a field trip.

*(This first introduction day may happen long before a field trip, depending on how far ahead a group needs to reserve for a tour of the place to be visited; in such a case, the teacher may need to plan the trip ahead of time.)

II. Materials

- A. Teacher and students should bring in newspaper and magazine advertisements, preferably with pictures that clearly tell the advertisement's story.

III. Procedure (corresponding to the objectives)

A. Vocabulary work: (oral)

1. Depending on oral level in class, the teacher should go over verbs (buy, sell, etc.), types of stores, names of local stores, names of things, commonly bought, selling practices (sale, discount), using visuals.
- B. To develop an awareness of advertising practices, have everyone choose an ad. Ask students to look at their ad and answer these questions:
 1. What is the ad selling?
 2. What is happening in the picture?
 3. What kind of people are in the picture?
 4. If you buy this product, how will you feel? (according to the ad).

The teacher could start with a few ads as examples. Then students can present their ads to the class.

- C. Discussion of student experiences - possible questions:
 1. Where do you shop?
 2. Why? Friends, television, radio, newspaper ads, location, prices?
 3. What is difficult about shopping? Finding things in supermarkets, reading labels, reading prices, deciding among similar products, pushy salespeople, etc.?
- D. Brainstorm places that the class could visit together, preferably places where people regularly shop.

1. Discuss and try to come to agreement.
Let's suppose that students decide on a large
supermarket. (Many supermarkets provide tours of
their facilities).

DAY II (The next class is devoted to preparing for the trip, not necessarily right after the last lesson, depending on the scheduling of the trip.)

I. Objectives

- A. To begin to develop sight and oral vocabulary specifically for the trip.
- B. To have students develop their own objectives for trip.
- C. To develop a roleplay for the trip.
- D. To plan more of the trip's details.

II. Materials

- A. Ask students to bring supermarket coupon fliers.

III. Procedure

A. Vocabulary

1. Ask students to study fliers, and from what they already know, have them come up to board and write food words they know. Study words.
2. Use food flashcards (pictures mounted on flashcards) first for oral drill, covering written words, then with the word showing.
 - a. Have written words and pictures on separate cards, spread them out on a table, and have students match.
 - b. Play "Concentration" game of matching words and pictures.
 - c. Create worksheets with pictures and blanks to write in words:

__pple
m__lk
__ __ nana

3. Have students return to fliers of coupons, and, working in pairs, try to find words that they can read, and copy these words in their own personal vocabulary list.
4. Discuss words used for sections of the supermarket. (frozen foods, meat, cereals, dairy, etc.)
5. Read numbers.

B.+ C. These objectives could be accomplished by having small groups work on each one, and then present the results of their work to the class. If done in this manner, the teacher needs to provide clear instructions for each group. Though these two activities don't necessarily focus on literacy per se, they do prepare students for the trip and for being able to request information they need in a real life situation. The activities also give students the experience of working together in a group.

- B. One group brainstorms a list of things they want to know. The teacher, an aide or a student who could write fairly well could act as recorder, roughly writing down the topics students wanted information about. Then the group could go back over the list, making questions for each topic. For example:
- How big is the store?
 - Where do you get the food?
 - Where does the fish come from?
 - Do you sell Oriental food here?
- C. The second group creates a roleplay in the supermarket, for example, checking out in line or asking for something at the meat counter.

Finally, each group could share their results, discussing the structure of questions and how to ask them politely. (Here it must be remembered that the class may have a very broad range of oral abilities.)

- D. Finally, the class should discuss:
1. Where is the supermarket?
 2. How do we get there?
 3. Other arrangements for the trip?

DAY IV (after trip) The lesson plans that follow the trip could be organized in many different ways. These suggestions are also discussed in more detail earlier in this chapter.

I. Objectives

- A. To have students reflect on trip.
- B. To develop a group language experience story based on the trip.
- C. To have students read as much as possible of the story.

II. Materials

- A. Large sheets of paper and magic marker to write down students' story.

III. Procedure

- A. Discussion of trip - the type of discussion would depend on the oral level of the group; it could be a simple description of the supermarket ("The supermarket is big. It has many parts.") or a more complex narration of what happened on the trip. This might be preceded by a discussion of vocabulary that came up in the trip.
- B. Group language experience story: There are several ways the teacher might want to get the story, as discussed earlier. The teacher can tape a short part of the discussion, and after the discussion, play it back and transcribe it. S/he could also directly transcribe part of the discussion, or, afterwards, suggest a focus for the story out of the discussion, or get students to decide on a focus. The latter will probably be easier to do as students gain more experience using language experience. After transcribing the students' story:
 1. Teacher reads story aloud, giving students a chance to self-correct and ask questions about story.
 2. Students volunteer to read different parts of the story aloud. The story could be read this way a few times.
 3. Study individual words that students are having problems with.
- C. Individual or paired work
 1. Individual students or pairs read story together. They underline unknown words.
 2. Handwriting practice; students can copy letters, words, or entire story, depending on level.

D. Group work: Possibilities:

1. Phonics work from words in story, from supermarket fliers, starting with familiar patterns.
2. Reading numbers, prices, discussing concept of unit prices.

DAY V

I. Objectives

- A. To review group story.
- B. To be able to read more of the story.
- C. To focus on particular aspects of the story - word patterns, punctuation, etc.
- D. To discuss aspects of saving money when shopping.

II. Procedure

- A. Whole class reads story (on wall transcript) again. Then they write it down.
- B. Cloze versions of story: individual work.
Possibilities:
 1. Easiest level: letter deleted from words in story (We went to the St_ _ and Sh_ _ yesterday.)
 2. More difficult level: whole words deleted - verbs or pronouns, for example.
 3. Punctuation cloze: capital letters and periods deleted.
 4. This work should then be gone over in the group.
- C. If time, as a lead-in to the next lesson, a short discussion of the trip, and ways to save money when food shopping. The teacher could ask students to bring the following questions home, think about them themselves and ask others.
 1. Where is food the cheapest - big stores, small ones, which ones?
 2. Where do you find the best fruits and vegetables? The best meat?
 3. What's cheaper - the store brand or a commercial brand?
 4. What's different about shopping in your native country?

DAY VI

I. Objectives

- A. To raise students' consumer awareness.
- B. To discuss cultural differences concerning shopping.
- C. To write or dictate an individual language experience story.
- D. To begin to read one's individual story.

II. Procedure

- A. Discuss questions from day before about saving money when food shopping.
 1. Do exercise on price comparison.
- B. Individual and small group work: creating own language experience stories. (see discussion earlier in chapter).

Possible foci for stories could include:

 1. Food shopping in native country.
 2. How and where students shop here.
 3. Pro's and con's of a big supermarket.
 4. A student's first trip to a big supermarket.

Most of the class period would be spent working individually or in small groups, with the teacher moving around taking dictations, students using the tape recorder, students directly writing their stories, etc. As the end to this session, the teacher might want a few students to tell or read their stories to the class. Eventually, these individual stories could be reproduced for the class and used in much the same way the group story was used.

VI. Conclusion

In an attempt to summarize and conclude this discussion of ESL literacy, I would first like to return to the basic question of why teach literacy in the first place? Why do students want to become literate and why do we as teachers think that it is important to teach literacy? Most obviously, if one is literate, it is much easier to adapt and survive in a society such as ours which places a relatively high value on basic literacy. Getting and holding a job, finding one's way in the city, and shopping, to name a few, are greatly facilitated by having functional literacy skills. It also seems likely that the development of literacy skills will have some effect on the student's other verbal skills; learning to speak and comprehend English as a second language may be accelerated by familiarity with the language's written form. Furthermore, the general sense of accomplishment a student begins to feel as s/he begins to read for the first time may have positive repercussions not only in the language learning process but in the student's world outside of the classroom.

In the preceding chapter, I provided concrete suggestions on how to integrate Language Experience, phonics work and survival skills development. The lesson plans should be viewed as suggestions for part of an ESL literacy program, not part of any particular curriculum. Certainly not all of literacy work nor Language Experience work needs to be combined with field trips or even with life-coping

skills, as defined by APL. The classroom should be a place where many different levels of "coping" are expressed and recorded and read about, from the aspect of minimal survival skills to that of cultural adjustment, and all the emotions that accompany that. The last chapter should not be seen as prescriptive, but as suggestions for teachers to adapt to their own classroom needs. There are many aspects of literacy teaching which I have not covered - such as how to teach the writing of letters, the particular sequencing a teacher should follow from the very beginning, to name a few; there are some materials that address such issues (Bowren and Zintz, 1977; Colvin and Root, 1976; Strauch, 1978; and Wigfield, 1979), and there will hopefully be a great deal more as the need for literacy instruction increases.

One central theme of this thesis has been the need for literacy to center around students' actual needs, not the teacher's often inaccurate perception of what their needs for reading and writing are. A teacher must constantly ask him or herself whether s/he is teaching to those needs; s/he must also continuously ask the students the same question. After all, it is their learning process. How much students will need to read and write connected discourse should influence the emphasis on that in the class. What kinds of things do students need to be able to read on a form and what words would they have to be able to write on a form? What other things do they read besides the written word - such as maps, schedules, charts, or bills? What kind of

reading and writing are students required to do on their jobs? These are a few of the questions that a teacher should ask in order to maintain relevancy. Just as phonics and word attack skills shouldn't be isolated from a meaningful context, the composite of literacy skills should not be separated from the functional uses of those skills.

I have advocated an eclectic approach to teaching literacy, given that it is in keeping with the teacher's assumptions about learning and teaching and given that it is relevant. My own assumptions and experience have led me to suggest the Language Experience Approach as a useful approach for the multi-lingual ESL literacy class, with Words in Color as part of that approach. This focus is not exclusive; a teacher should try different approaches - sight words, phonics and structural analysis, Words in Color - and see what is most successful. In all likelihood, different things will work with different students. Again, all methods of teaching reading combine elements of word attack skills (decoding) and focus on meaning; the difference lies in the emphasis. I suggest that even the beginning reading process begin to emulate the mature reading process, in which the reader is not reading every single sound and word, but is trying to extract meaning. A focus on meaning, however, certainly does not exclude word attack skills. A non-reader naturally must begin with some knowledge of the components of words. The important thing is that these word attack techniques are based on words that come from students or that come from a context that is clearly relevant to

their lives. As much as possible, words should be kept in their natural contexts. Not only does that help to approximate the mature reading process and address the need for relevancy, but it is also in keeping with the belief of many reading specialists that the most effective clues for deciphering new words are contextual clues.

The kind of approach I am advocating also recognizes the importance of students being personally invested in some way in the content of literacy learning and in the actual process itself. This investment will only take place if the teacher attempts to learn about the students' worlds, encourages them to express what they need, and then attempts to respond to those needs. I do not mean to say that students make all the decisions about the content and direction of literacy work; the teacher has his or her own experience and knowledge to bring to bear on the situation. Many times, however, the teacher can consult students and explain why s/he is doing something in a particular way. If, for example, a teacher is working individually with a student whose language s/he knows, both student and teacher could discuss the pro's and con's of conducting literacy work in the student's native language, in English, or in a combination of the two. This level of student participation in the process, as well as the possibilities for individualized work, encourage students to become independent learners - a priority for any learner, but particularly for adults.

The use of students' personal experiences will be

conducive to emotional investment in their learning process, as well as a sense of community and group cohesiveness, two elements that can only enhance learning. Literacy is a new mode of experiencing the world and possibly of expressing themselves in a new way. This doesn't mean that students will emerge from a literacy program writing stories and journals; most will probably use the skills in a very functional way. The process itself, however, of learning to read can be part of connecting with the new culture, or at least of lessening the alienation and mystification of a strange world. It can increase students' sense of control. Being able to recognize words opens up a new realm of experience. But hopefully, the literacy classroom will encompass more than just recognizing and understanding written words; along with learning to read and write in a second language, students will have taken important steps toward a new understanding of and participation in their community.

NOTES

- 1 Vivian Horner, "Bilingual Literacy", Toward a Literate Society (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1975), pp. 190-199; Muriel Saville-Troike, ed., Classroom Practices in ESL and Bilingual Education (Washington, D.C.: TESOL, 1974) pp. 2-4; Eleanor Thonis, Teaching Reading to Non-English Speakers (New York: Collier-MacMillan, 1970), pp. 128-129.
- 2 Pat Engles, The Use of Vernacular Languages in Education (Arlington, Va.: Center for Applied Linguistics, 1975). pp. 19-27; W.E. Lambert and G.R. Tucker, Bilingual Education of Children: the St. Lambert Experiment (Rowley, Ma: Newbury House, 1972), pp. 203-211.
- 3 Faye L. Bumpass, "Basic Considerations and Sequenced Steps in Teaching Young Children to Read English as a Second Language", On Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (Champaign, Ill.: National Council of Teachers of English, 1965), p. 98; Thonis, pp. 12-14, 27-29.
- 4 Most of the information on Language Experience is drawn from Ruth J. Colvin and Jane H. Root, Tutor: Techniques Used in the Teaching of Reading (Syracuse: Literacy Volunteers of America, 1976); Katherine Kennedy and Stephanie Roeder, A Guide to Using Language Experience with Adults (Syracuse: New Readers Press, 1975); Russell G. Stauffer, The Language-Experience Approach to the Teaching of Reading (New York: Harper and Row, 1970); and from personal experience.

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95

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Literacy in 30 Hours: Paulo Freire's Process in Northeast Brazil

by Cynthia Brown

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Learning to read is a political act. In a literate society being able to read is a necessary step toward making decisions and sharing power. A nonliterate person may be very powerful within a nonliterate subculture, but within the dominant culture a nonreader is marginal. She/he cannot fill out tests and applications, cannot determine what is in contracts without a trusted adviser who can read, has no access to information controlled by professionals, and often is denied the right to vote. Learning to read gives access to information, protection against fraud, and participation as a citizen.

Learning to read is a step toward political participation. But how people exercise their ability to read reflects in part the political attitudes of their teachers. If nonreaders learn to read by writing and reading their own words and opinions, then they learn that their perceptions of reality are valid to others and can influence even those in authority. If, on the other hand, their teachers require them to learn the words and ideas in a primer which is donated by those in power, then the learners must accept that experience as more valid than their own. They must accept the concepts of social and economic structure trans-

mitted by the teacher—or decide not to learn to read.

By understanding the political dimensions of reading, Paulo Freire developed materials that enabled adults to learn to read in 30 to 40 hours. Freire was born and lived until 1964 in Recife, on the northeast coast of Brazil. In 1960, Recife had 80,000 children from 7 to 14 years old who did not attend school. Adult illiteracy was estimated at 60 to 70 percent. Crusades against illiteracy had been waged repeatedly without much effect. But Freire believed that adults could learn to read rapidly if reading were not part of a cultural imposition on them. After all, adults speak an extraordinarily rich and complex language which they could set down graphically if only they were given the tools to do so.

For more than 15 years Freire had accumulated experience in adult education. In 1959, he received a Ph.D. degree from the University of Recife and stayed at the university as a teacher of philosophy and education. He envisioned the university as a base for the education of all people, not merely for the rich and the educated. While teaching there he coordinated the Adult Education Program of the Popular Culture Movement, which set up circles of culture in slum areas and encouraged popular festivals and performances. In February 1962, Freire became director of the university's newly established Cultural Extension Service.

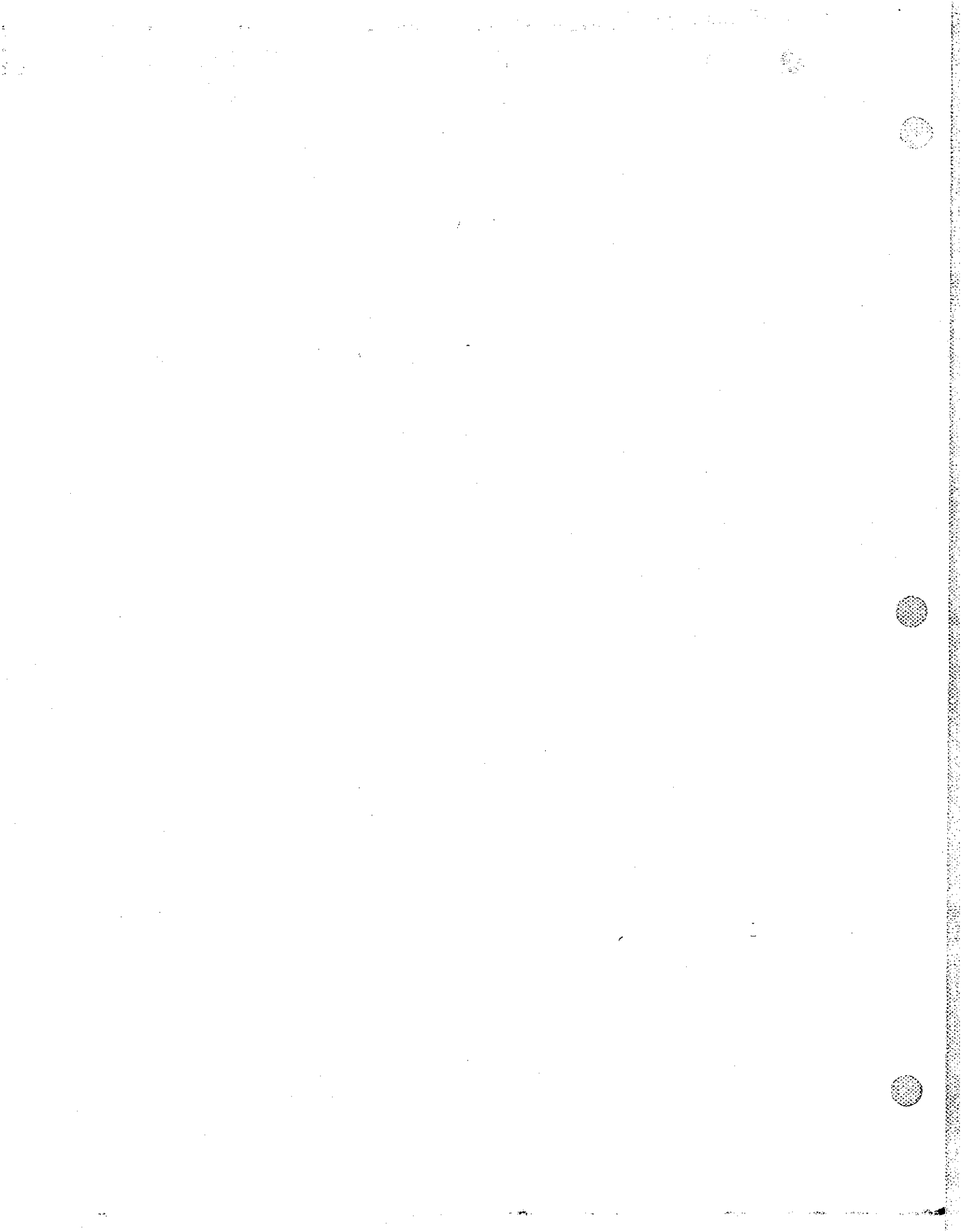
The political realities of early 1962 supported Freire's hope that the Cul-

tural Extension Service could be a resource for all the people. In October 1962, a coalition of the Socialist, Labor, and Communist parties elected the mayor of Recife, Miguel Arraes, to the state governorship. Arraes appointed the founder of the Popular Culture Movement, Germano Coelho, to be state secretary of education. As the Cultural Extension Service developed its literacy program, it received financial assistance from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID)—enough to run a pilot project and to train 70 people in the use of the materials. USAID terminated its assistance in January 1964.

By that time the upper class and the small middle class in Brazil had become frightened by signs of growing political awareness among the masses. On April 1, 1964, the military leaders of Brazil took control of the government at all levels. Freire was under house arrest until June, imprisoned for 70 days, and finally sought refuge in Chile. After a year in Santiago he spent a year in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and in February 1970, he went to Geneva, Switzerland, to work for the World Council of Churches.

In the circles of culture set up by the Popular Culture Movement, Freire and his colleagues arranged discussions of such topics as nationalism, development, illiteracy, democracy. They introduced these topics with pictures or slides, then led a dialogue in which they exchanged points of view with nonliterate. Amazed by the results, Freire became ever more con-

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vinced that for adults learning to read could be a process of analyzing reality, that adults can become critically conscious of their situation, and that when this occurs enormous energy is available for learning to read.

Yet Freire and his teams found many Brazilian nonliterate so submerged in their daily struggles that they had no awareness of whether or how they could change their lives in any way. They resisted being told they had problems. They believed that the conditions of their lives were due to God's will or to fate. In order to change this passive attitude Freire introduced the anthropological concept of culture, that is, the distinction between nature and culture. Freire believed that discussing this distinction would lead nonliterate to the discovery that they are makers of culture as much as literate people are, that aspects of their lives are man-made and therefore subject to change. The distinction between nature and culture included for Freire the difference between men and other animals and the importance of oral and written language in that difference.

Freire asked his friend, the well-known artist Francisco Brennand, to draw a series of pictures that could be used to stimulate discussions about nature and culture, men and animals, and culture in the lives of people. Brennand painted a series of 10 pictures. Eight appear below, made from slides in Freire's possession.¹ The originals were taken from him. To complete the series two pictures are included from a later version of the series drawn by Vicente de Abreu and published in Paulo Freire's *Education for Critical Consciousness*.

This sequence of 10 pictures is tightly analyzed and structured. The first picture (Figure 1) is carefully designed to elicit an initial distinction between culture and nature, while succeeding pictures are sequenced to draw out various subtleties of the distinction, namely: the difference between man and other animals being man's culture-making and communicating capacities (Figures 2-5); nature trans-

formed into culture by man's work (Figures 3,6,7); communication as culture (Figures 2,8); and patterns of behavior and traditions as culture (Figure 9). The final picture (Figure 10) challenges the group to analyze its own behavior—the most distinctive capacity of people.

Figure 1 provides a familiar image from which a nonliterate from north-eastern Brazil can use his knowledge to distinguish between nature and culture. The coordinator begins the discussion with the question: "What do you see in the picture?" This naming of the objects is important because people not accustomed to graphic representation may not easily identify what is meant to be shown. Notice

"Freire believed that adults could learn to read rapidly if reading were not part of a cultural imposition on them."

that Brennand painted the pictures in one dimension without the conventions used by schooled artists for showing perspective. The coordinator then leads the discussion into the distinction between nature and culture by asking questions like: "Who made the well?" "Why did he do it?" "What materials did he use?" The questions continue: "Who made the tree?" "How is the tree different from the well?" "Who made the pig, the birds, the man?" "Who made the house, the hoe, the book?" Gradually the discussion moves to the conclusion that people use natural materials to change their situation, to create culture. Nonliterate know this distinction, but the discussion gives them the words to name and clarify it. At the conclusion of this discussion participants are already conscious of being cultured.

The second discussion, provoked by Figure 2, concerns the relationships among people. People can make culture while animals cannot, and people,

unlike animals, can communicate extensively with each other, both orally and graphically. Nature mediates the relationships and communications of people. The natural world is real and can be known by investigation and dialogue; human disagreements can be checked against the natural reality. The proper relationship among people is discussed as being that of subjects communicating with each other, not as objects being used by anyone. This communication must take place as dialogue between equals, with the perception of each person having equal validity. If one person assumes a superior position to another, he issues *communiqués* instead of communicating, and the dialogue is broken.

The next three discussions (Figures 3,4,5) refine the concept of culture and raise the question of how culture is transmitted to younger generations. The group is asked to name what represents culture in Figure 3. Characteristically, the group mentions the bow and arrow and the feathers. When asked if the feathers do not belong to nature, they answer that feathers belong to nature when on the bird, but people change them into culture by making clothing of them. The Indian teaches his skills to his son by direct experience, without writing, and the group discovers that those unable to read and write belong to a nonliterate culture like that of the Indian, even if they are part of a literate culture such as that shown in Figure 4. Here the hunter is using a tool so complex in its construction that directions for making it must be recorded, and only those who can read can learn to make it. Moreover, in this culture only those who can read can earn enough money to buy guns, so access to their use is controlled by the literate members of this culture. Participants discuss the technological advance represented by the rifle compared with the bow and arrow, and they analyze the hunter's growing possibilities for transforming the world. This transformation makes sense only to the degree that it liberates and humanizes people. Finally, the group discusses the implication of education for technological development.

¹ These pictures are published here for the first time with Paulo Freire's permission.

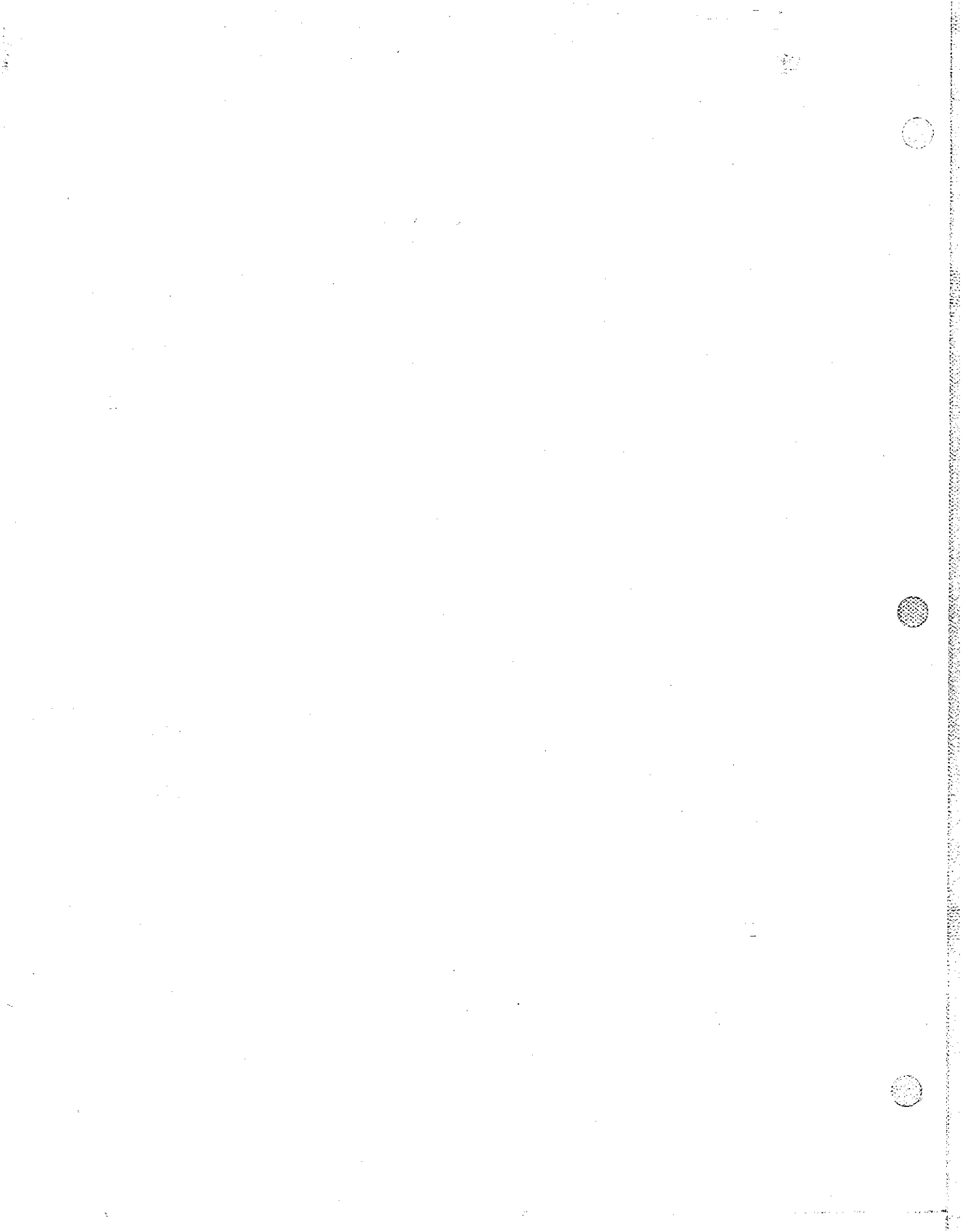




Figure 1

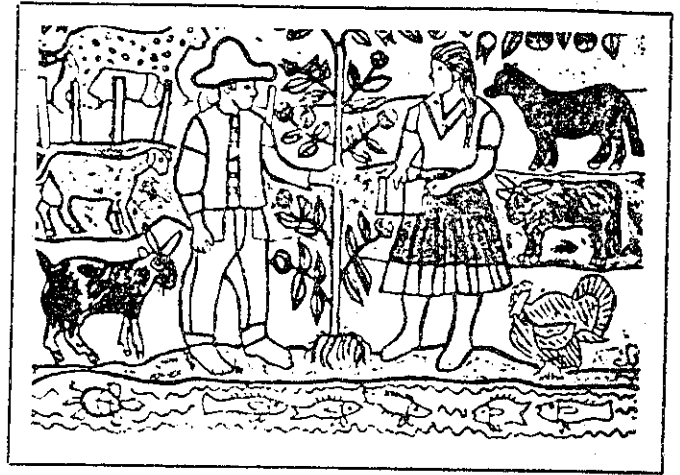


Figure 2



Figure 3

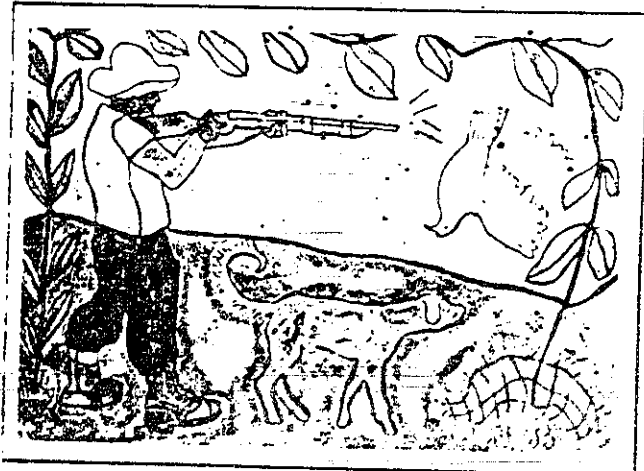


Figure 4



Figure 5

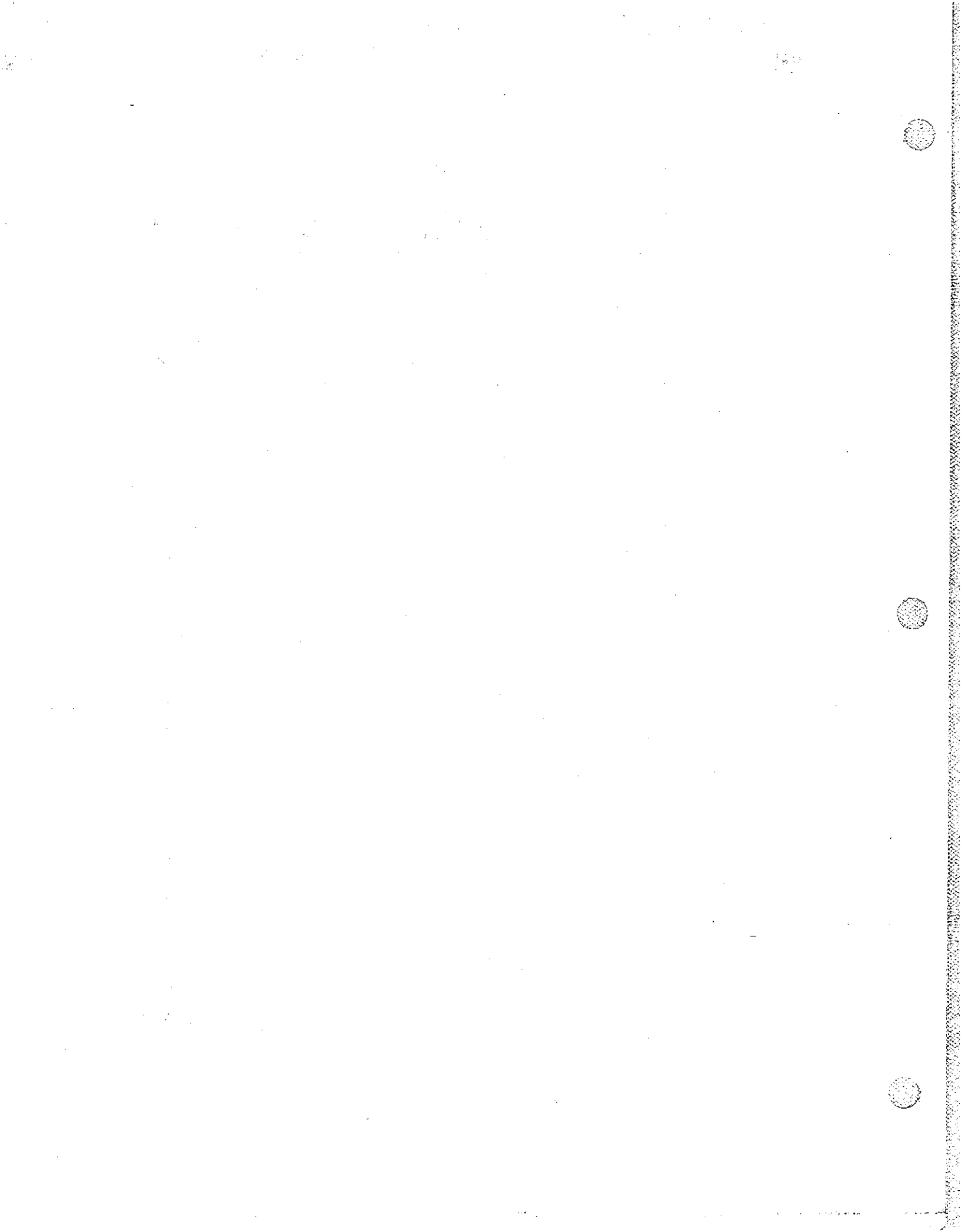




Figure 6

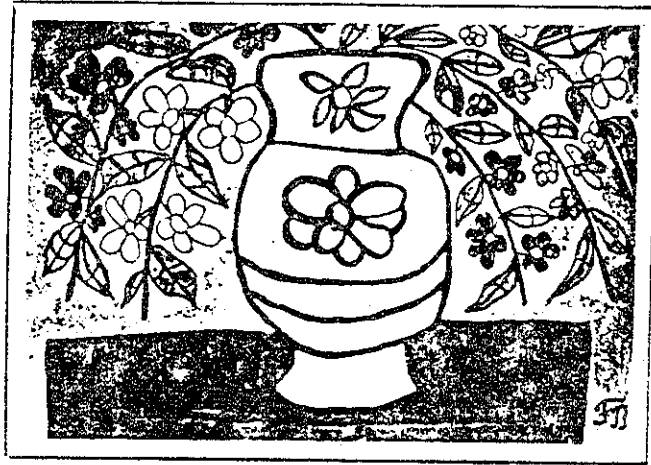


Figure 7

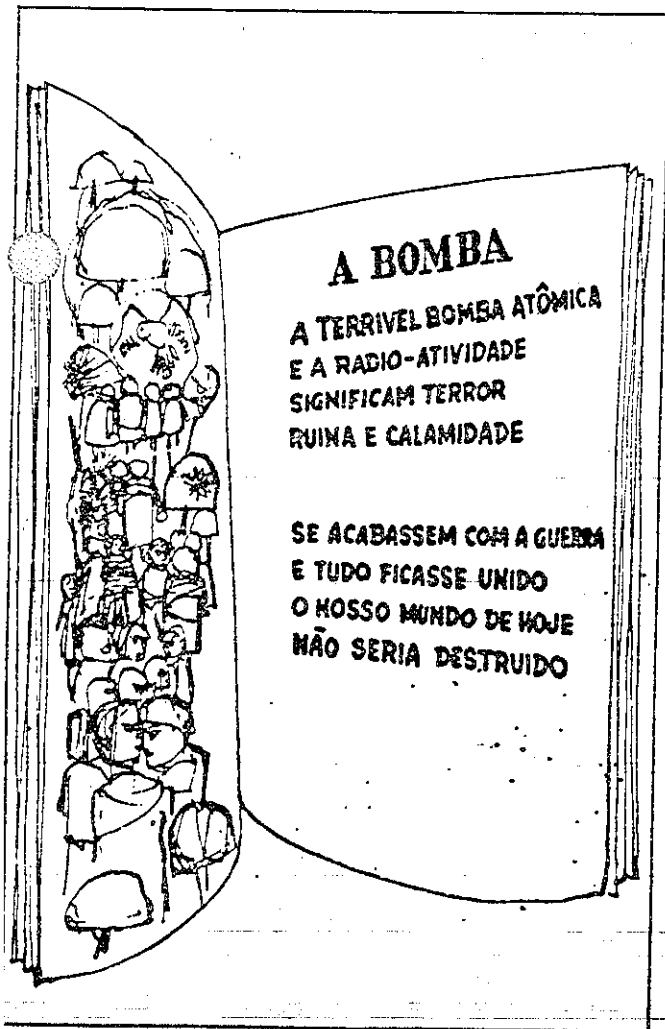


Figure 8



Figure 9

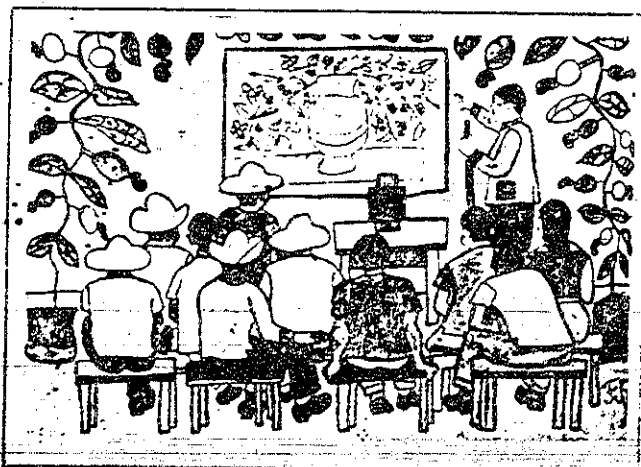


Figure 10

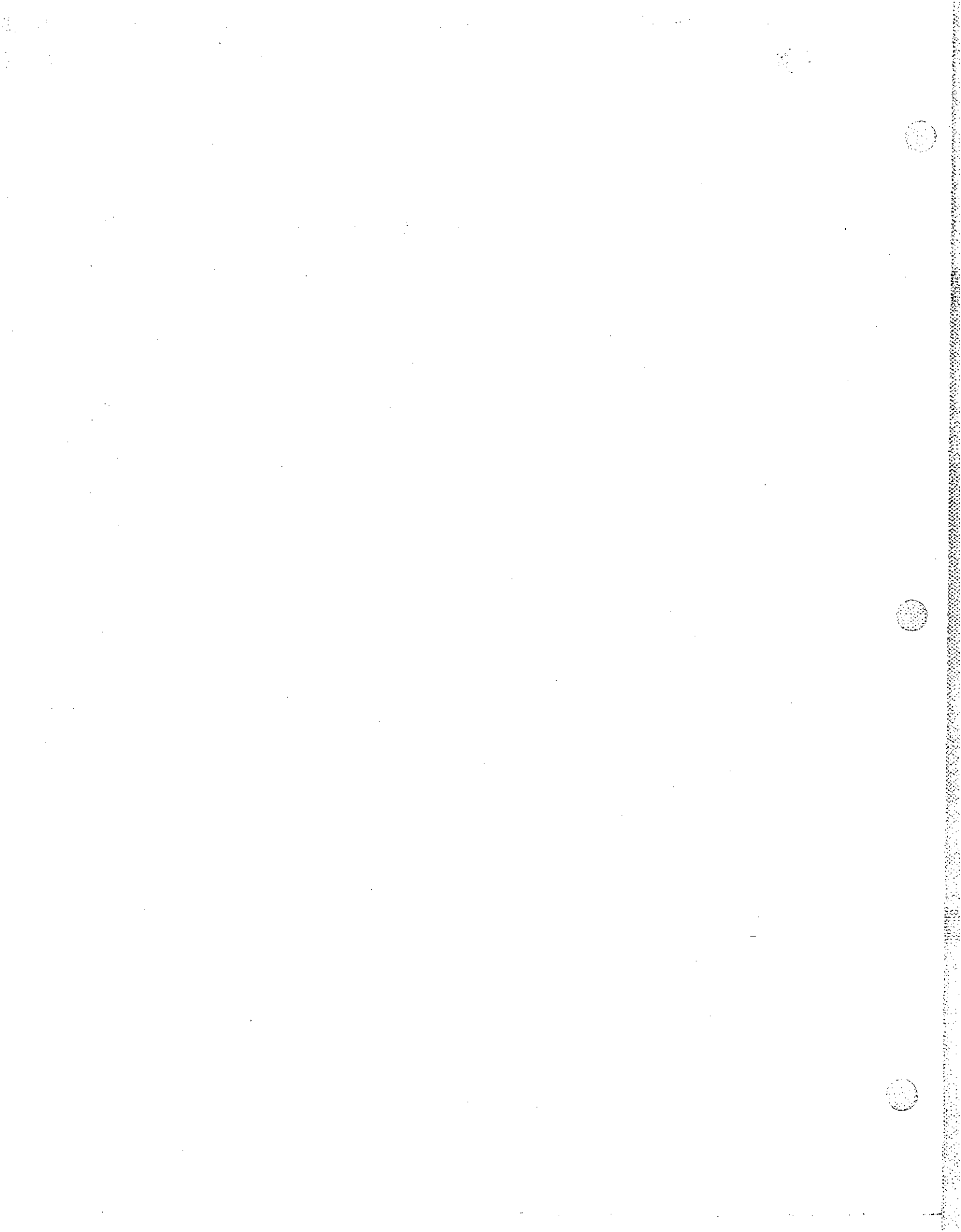


Figure 5 reinforces man's culture-making capacity by showing a cat who cannot make tools to extend his hunting capabilities. A nonliterate from Brasilia pointed out: "Of these three, only two are hunters—the two men. They are hunters because they made culture first and then hunted. The third, the cat, who did not make culture either before or after the hunt, is not a hunter (*caçador*). He is a pursuer (*persequidor*)." The series of the three hunters always provoked many observations by the participants about people and animals, and about such things as instinct, intelligence, liberty, and education.

After this somewhat general discussion of culture referring to other places (countryside) and times (Indian preliterate culture), Figure 6 ensures that participants in a circle of culture discover themselves as makers of culture. Here they see their brothers from the people making clay pots, and they realize that clay pots are as much culture as the work of a great sculptor. "I make shoes," said one participant, "and now I discover that I have as much value as a professor who makes books."

Figure 7 shows the use to which someone has put a clay pot. Here not only is clay transformed into culture, but flowers, which in the field are part of nature, have been changed into culture by the person who arranged them. "I make culture, I know how to do that," recognized a woman, very moved, in a circle of culture in Recife. A graphic signal is introduced for the first time in this picture. The flowers in the vase are represented by a drawing of them on the clay of the vase. Nature, transformed into culture, has been transformed once again into a written symbol.

Figure 8 is the next step in graphic representation. It shows that words known by and put together by nonliterate can be written down and are as much poetry as poems by educated people. This poem is a popular song, part of an elaborate tradition among nonliterate in northeast Brazil where, by the news is spread from town to town by singers. These singers play guitars and sing in pairs, each challenging the other to invent another

verse incorporating the latest news. This picture is highly exciting to nonliterate because it shows them that they can learn to read the words and songs they already know.

Figure 9 shows two cowboys, one from the south of Brazil who is dressed in wool and the other from the northeast who is dressed in leather. This scene is designed to expand the idea of culture by showing that clothes and ways of behaving are also part of culture. The discussion focuses on the clothes of the cowboys. The southern cowboy makes his clothes of wool because sheep are available and wool keeps him warm. The northeastern cowboy uses leather because cows are

"Yet Freire and his teams found many Brazilian nonliterate so submerged in their daily struggles that they had no awareness of whether or how they could change their lives in any way."

available and leather is tough enough to protect him against cacti and scrubs. By discussing the cowboys' clothing and why it is different, participants realize that patterns of behaving are created by people in response to necessity. Sometimes this picture leads to a discussion of people's resistance to change—that traditions, such as clothing, develop out of necessity, but the necessity may pass while the tradition stays.

Figure 10 enables the group to develop its critical consciousness—to look at itself and reflect on its own activity. This picture shows a circle of culture functioning; participants can easily identify it as representing themselves. The coordinator introduces the phrase "democratization of culture" to be discussed in the light of what has been happening in the circle of culture. As one participant concluded:

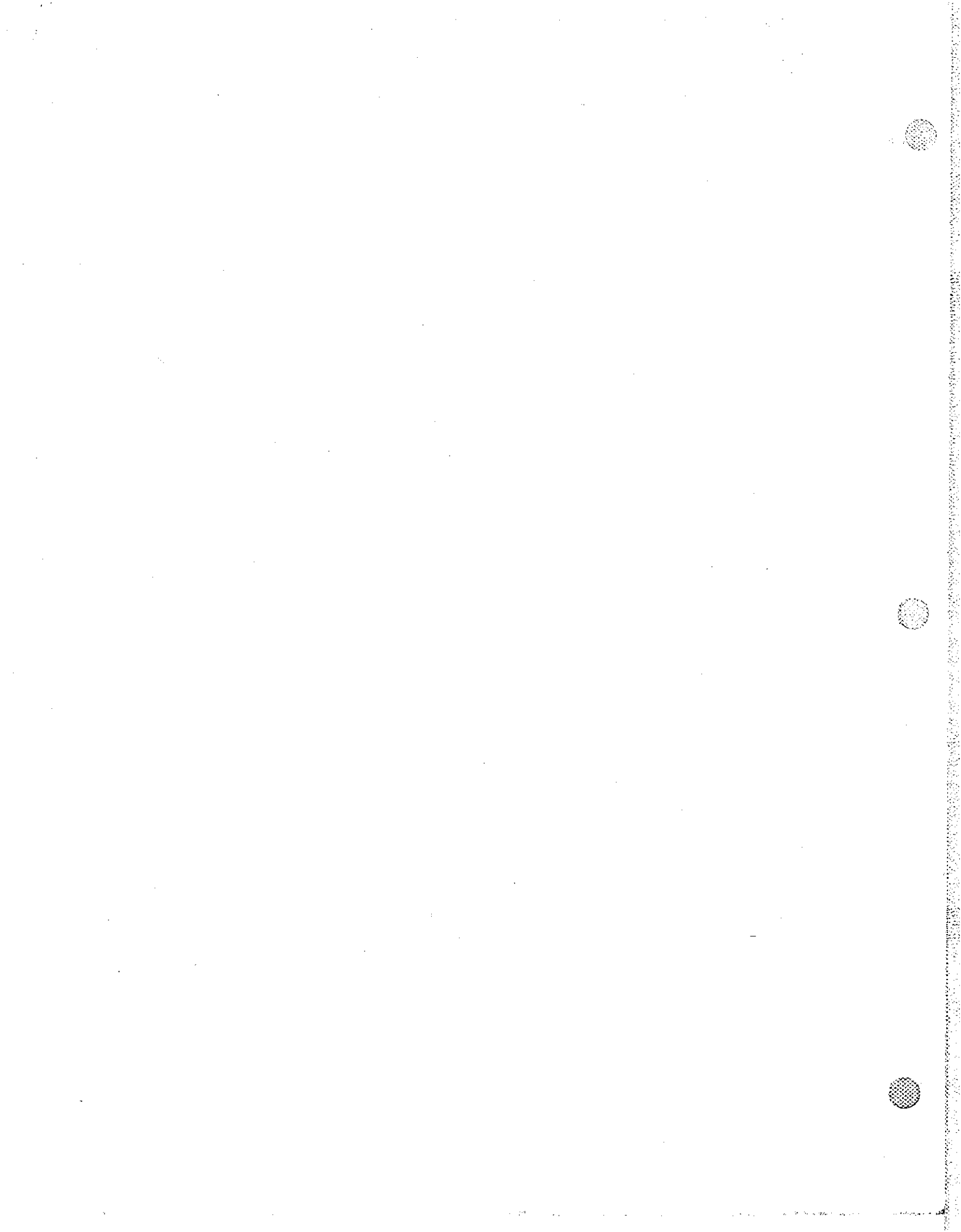
"The democratization of culture has to do with what we are and with what we make as people. Not with what they think and want for us." The function of the circle of culture is examined by everyone—what the experience has meant, what dialogue is, and what it means to raise one's consciousness. By the time the group had reached this tenth picture, participants had regained enormous confidence in themselves, pride in their culture, and desire to learn to read.

The coordinators conduct the discussion of the 10 situations orally without using any kind of text or written representation. The fact that participants could not read was not allowed to prevent their considering highly complex issues. Since they could not read, ideas were introduced in the graphic representation they could understand—pictures. Because the participants were given a chance to express their real knowledge and were not demeaned by their inability to read, they were able to recover their eagerness for learning to read.

Freire called the process just described *conscientização*, usually translated as "conscientization." For him conscientization is a process in which people are encouraged to analyze their reality, to become more aware of the constraints on their lives, and to take action to transform their situation. For Freire education is either liberating or domesticating, teaching people either to be critical and free of constraints or to accept things as they are. If literacy is not to be domesticating, Freire believed, then it must be part of a process of conscientization.²

Freire and his colleagues developed the linguistic materials for their literacy program from two premises: (1) Adults can learn to read with ease words that are highly familiar and meaningful to them. (2) It ought to be possible to select a brief list of words that would contain all the phonemes in

² No verbatim record from Freire's circles is available, but the process of conscientization is clearly illustrated in the account of Stokely Carmichael's speech class, held for field workers of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee in 1965, reprinted in Miriam Wasserman, ed., *Demystifying School* (New York: Praeger, 1974), pp. 327-330.



Portuguese, so that learning this minimal linguistic universe would enable a learner to sound out any other words or to record any words he knew orally. (This premise appeared possible because Portuguese is for the most part a phonetic, syllabic language.)

In order to prepare for teaching reading in any specific community, Freire's teams visited the community to investigate its culture. They explained why they had come and solicited help from volunteers from the community, whom they called co-investigators. Together they examined all the familiar activities of the community, cross-checking their perceptions and analyzing the significant words used by the community. From these lists of words they developed a short list of words chosen by a double criterion: (1) a word's emotional impact and capacity for provoking discussion, and (2) its phonemic value in presenting all the sounds of Portuguese. Freire and his colleagues observed that both in Brazil and in Chile, that no more than 17 words are necessary for teaching adults to read and write syllabic, phonetic languages such as Portuguese and Spanish. They called these words "generative," in the double sense that the words could generate among nonliterate impassioned discussions of the social and political realities of their lives (in Freire's words, they could engage the learners in "problematizing their existential situations"), and by breaking the 17 words into syllables and rearranging the syllables nonliterate could generate other words and transcribe their own words.

After choosing 16 or 17 generative words Freire and his colleagues found they must analyze carefully the sequence in which to present the words. Three principles guided their order of presentation. First, the initial word must be trisyllabic, such that each of the three syllables consists of one consonant and one vowel. Second, less common and more difficult phonetic material should appear toward the end of the list. For example, words with "z," "q," and "ão" tend to appear late on the list. Third, words of some concrete and familiar objects should appear early, while words

naming more abstract social and political realities should appear later on the list. These principles can be seen in the word lists (Lists 1-4) used by Freire or by teams using his process.

Freire believed the ideas represented by the words must be critically discussed before the words themselves were analyzed as graphic symbols. So his teams prepared a picture to illustrate each word. For example, for the word *tijolo* (brick) a picture of a construction scene was prepared. This picture was shown first without the word *tijolo*. Only after the group had discussed building with bricks, their own houses, housing as a community

"For Freire education is either liberating or domesticating, teaching people either to be critical and free of constraints or to accept things as they are."

problem, obstacles to better housing, and whatever other topics were generated, was the second picture introduced showing the construction scene together with the word *tijolo*. In the third picture or slide the word *tijolo* appeared alone. In the same manner pictures were prepared for each of the 16 words in order to ensure full discussion of the significance of the words before any linguistic or graphic analysis was made.

On every word list the first word has three syllables. The reason for this is that one of Freire's colleagues discovered that a chart could be made of the syllables of trisyllabic words in a way that helped nonliterate grasp the structure of Portuguese words. For example, after introducing *tijolo* the coordinator broke the word into syllables. After reading aloud the individual syllables with the group, the coordinator presented the first one, "ti," like this: "ta te ti to tu." At first the group recognized only "ti," but by

reading these five syllables aloud they learned that the "t" sound was constant and they learned the sound of the five vowels. Next, "jo" was introduced in the same manner, "ja je ji ju," and was followed by "la le li lu." Finally, these three presentations were combined in a chart, called the "card of discovery":

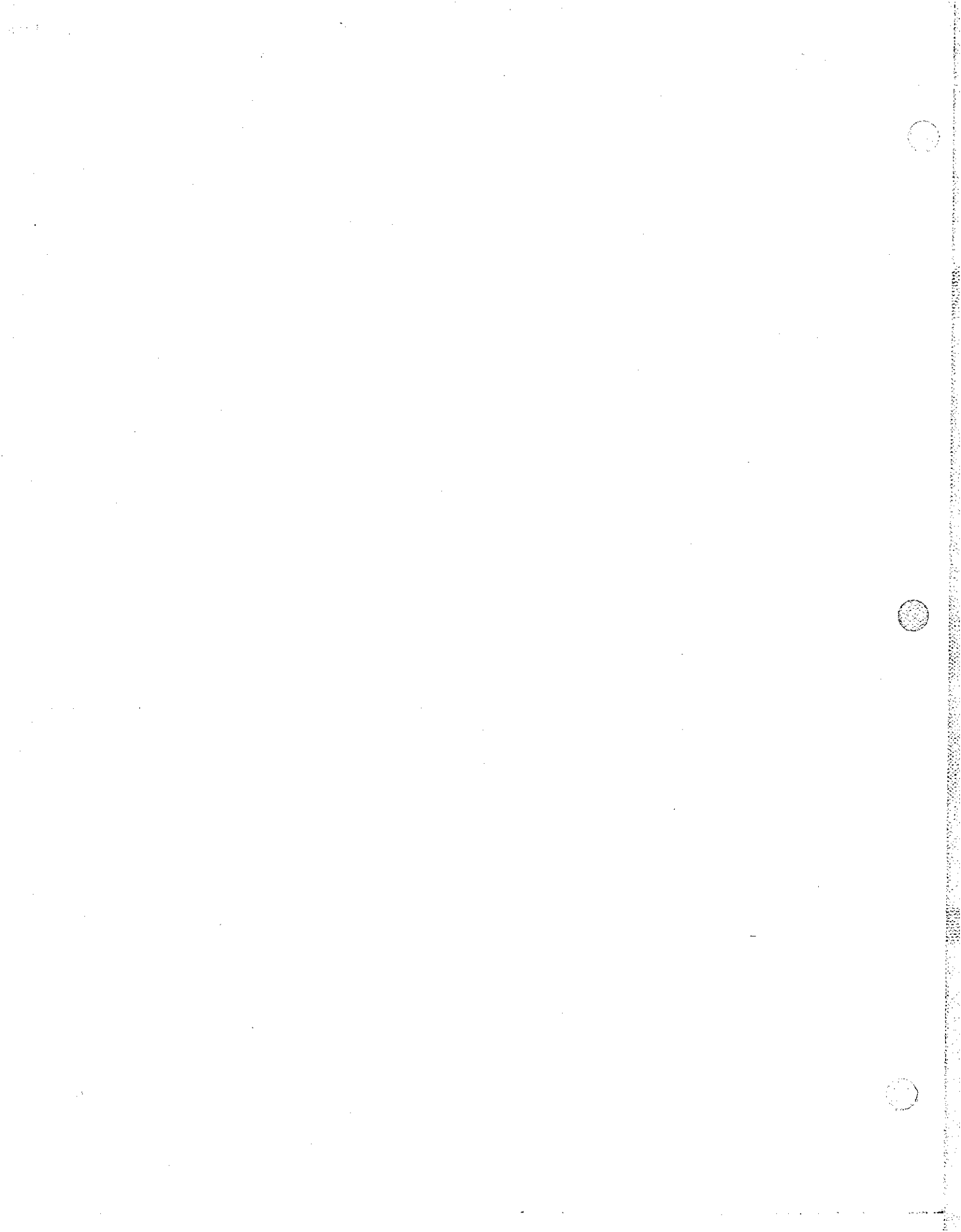
ta	te	ti	to	tu
ja	je	ji	jo	ju
la	le	li	lo	lu

After one horizontal reading and one vertical reading, the coordinator asked the group to put together other words by combining the syllables on the chart in different ways. Often the group began to do this with no suggestion. For example, they might recognize *luta* (struggle) or *loja* (store). Other possibilities are: *atu* (armadillo), *jato* (jet), *tula* (squid), *lote* (lot), *talo* (stalk), *tata* (tin can), and *tulle* (tulle). Sometimes they combined syllables in ways that were not actual words, which did not matter so long as they discovered the mechanism of combining syllables. Coordinators were trained to accept any combination of syllables and to let the group discuss which words were actual ones.

In the state of Rio Grande do Norte a group called combinations of syllables that were actual words "thinking words" (*palavras do pensamento*) and others "dead words" (*palavras mortas*). In a circle of culture in Angicos, Rio Grande do Norte, one of the participants went to the blackboard on the fifth night of meetings to write, he said, a "thinking word." Easily he wrote: *o povo vai resolver os problemas do Brasil votando consciente* ("the people will solve the problems of Brazil by informed voting").³

It is important to notice that Freire and his colleagues chose not to use

³ This may be compared with accepted literate Brazilian Portuguese: *O povo vai resolver os problemas do Brasil, votando consciente*. Of the three variations, two are due to the fact that Portuguese is not perfectly phonetic, i.e., the "t" in *resolver* sounds like "u," and "c" records the "s" sound in *consciente* without requiring the "s." The third variation is a difference in speech; the man from Angicos says *problemas* rather than *problemas*.



List 1

Used in Cajueiro Sêco, a slum in Recife

tijolo	brick
voto	vote
siri	crab
palha	straw
biscate	odd job
cinza	ashes
doença	illness
chafariz	fountain
máquina	machine (sewing)
emprego	employment
engenho	sugar mill
mangue	swamp
terra	land, soil
enrada	hoe
classe	class

List 2

Used in Tiriri, an agricultural colony in the city of Cabo

tijolo	brick
voto	vote
rocado	manioc field
abacaxi	pineapple
cacimba	well
passa	raisin
feira	market
milho	corn flour
maniva	kind of manioc
planta	plant
lombriga	roundworm
engenho	sugar mill
guia	guide (for a blind person)
barracão	small store rooms near market place
charque	dried meat
cozinha sal	kitchen salt

List 3

Used in Maceio, a city on the sea

tijolo	brick
voto	vote
casamento	wedding
carroça	cart
peixe	fish
jangada	fishing boat
balança	scale for weighing fish
Brasil	Brazil
máquina	machine (sewing)
farinha	flour
coco	coconut
fome	hunger
comida	food
sindicato	union
trabalho	work
limpeza	cleanliness

List 4

Used in the state of Rio, a rural area and satellite of the city of Rio de Janeiro

favela	slum
chuva	rain
arado	plow
terreno	plot of land
comida	food
batuque	popular dance with African rhythms
poco	well
bicicleta	bicycle
trabalho	work
salário	salary
profissão	profession
governo	government
mangue	swamp
engenho	sugar mill
enrada	hoe
tijolo	brick
riqueza	riches, wealth

books, or primers, as the format for their program. Instead they used large posters, filmstrips, or slides. They found Polish slide projectors available at about \$13 each, and they used the whitewashed stucco walls common to community buildings for screens. They avoided primers on the grounds that they are mechanical and do not lend themselves to much flexibility in discussion. Furthermore, primers discourage people from expressing and writing their own ideas and words. The generation of words, the decision about which formations are actual words, the use of the words, and the messages, that the words should convey—all these decisions should be,

they believed, jointly undertaken by nonliterate adults and the coordinators of the discussions.

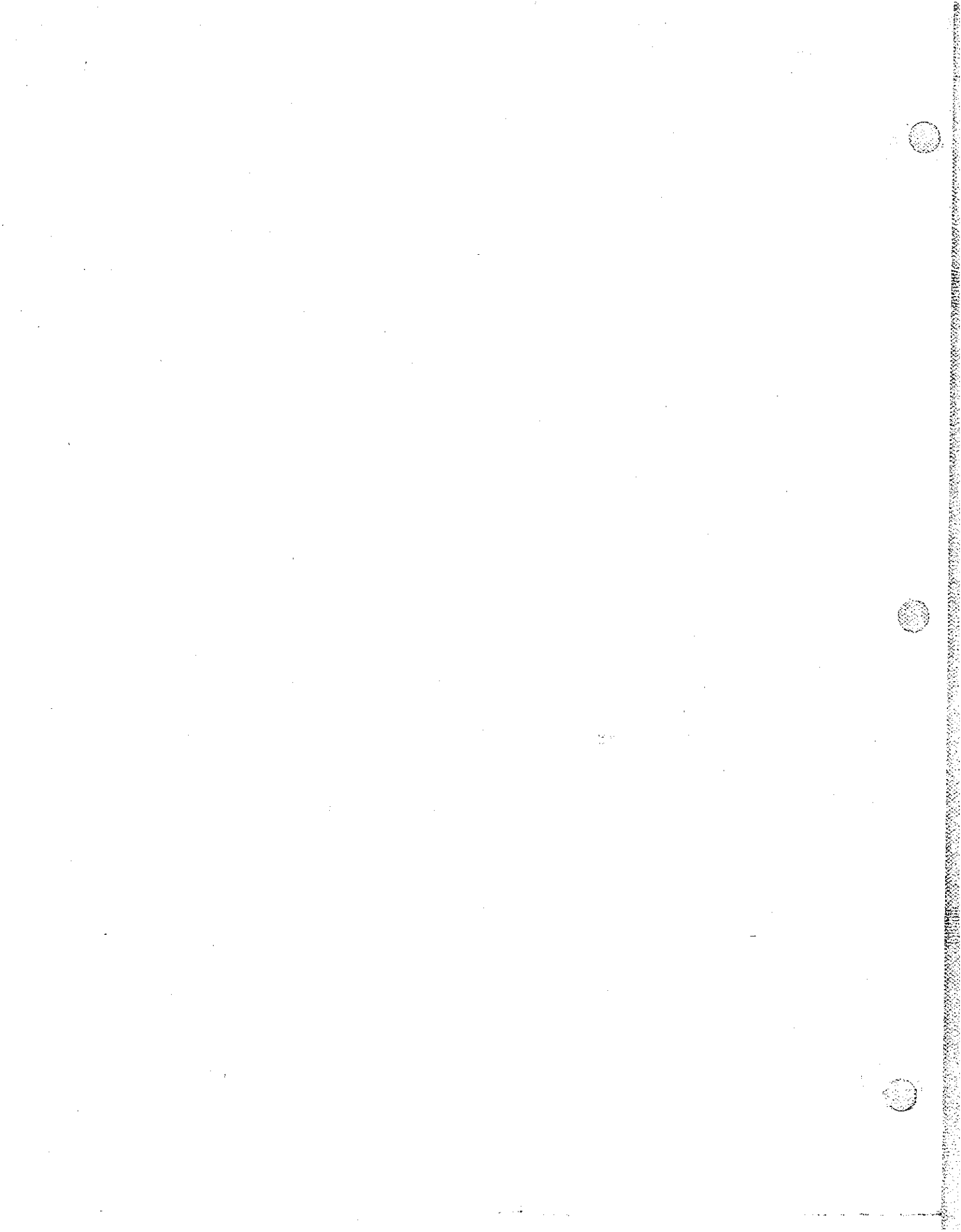
Two colleagues of Freire's in the Popular Culture Movement felt differently about this issue and wrote a *Primer for Adults*. In this primer five words—*povo* (people), *voto* (vote), *vida* (life), *saúde* (health), and *pão* (bread)—are introduced, broken into syllables, and varied in the style used by Freire's teams. The first sentence reads: *O voto é do povo* ("The vote belongs to the people"). The words and messages continue: "People without a house live in shacks." Then the final word "peace" and its messages: "The Northeast will only have peace

when the roots of its ills have been eradicated." "Peace grows out of justice."⁴

This primer is extraordinarily better than the usual ones. Anísio Teixeira, the director of the Brazilian National Institute of Pedagogical Studies, said of it in 1962:

This book effectively teaches reading as if the northeastern nonliterate were introducing his own

⁴ This primer was written by Josina Maria Lopes de Godoy and Norma Porto Carreiro Coelho. I was given a copy in 1965 by officials of USAID in Recife. The military confiscated all known copies, but USAID saved one to show how communistic the area had been before the takeover.



life. The words, the sentences, the phrases are those that would inevitably occur to the non-literate if he himself were writing his own primer. . . . Learning to read ought to be a simple transposition of one's actual oral language to a written language. This has been realized to an unprecedented extent in the *Primer for Adults*. . . . Those who consider it subversive must consider life and truth subversive and deceit and nonsense orderly.⁵

But the very excellence of this primer reveals the basic difficulties of primers as a format: the phonetic variation becomes tedious and the messages are not the direct opinions of the learners. Because the ideas are those of the teachers, the book is an instrument of propaganda; in supposing what nonliterate may believe, it tells them what they should believe. As long as the message is donated, it domesticates those who accept it to the uncritical acceptance of whatever teachers and writers say should be believed.

APPLYING FREIRE'S PROCESS

To summarize a bit, the following preparations were made by Freire and his colleagues before convening a meeting of nonliterate to be taught.

1. Acceptance by the political authorities of the necessary conditions was sought. Freire's requirements of mayors and governors were: no partisan interference, technical independence, and acknowledgment that the education provided would cause an internal and external liberation of the people.
2. The life and vocabulary of the community were investigated.
3. The 16 or so generative words were "codified," that is, a poster, slide, or filmstrip of the local situation described by each of the chosen words was prepared.
4. A card of discovery for the initial word was formulated.
5. A place to meet—a church,

school, or whatever community building was available—was arranged.

6. Coordinators, not teachers, for each group were selected and trained. This was a major problem in setting up the program. The technical aspect of the procedure was not difficult to impart, but the creation of a new attitude required a period of supervision to help coordinators avoid the temptation of "anti-dialogue."

"After choosing 16 or 17 generative words Freire and his colleagues found they must analyze carefully the sequence in which to present the words."

7. A circle of culture, not a school or class, was organized consisting of 25 to 30 nonliterate who would be participants, not pupils.

Once the groups convened the procedure went as follows:

1. Meetings were held every week-night for one hour during six to eight weeks.
2. The first two to eight sessions were devoted to analyzing the 10 pictures illustrating the distinction between nature and culture.
3. At the next session the first generative word was introduced, as described above. At the end of this session participants were asked to make up more words from the card of discovery and to bring their lists to the next meeting.
4. At the remaining sessions the other 16 or so generative words were introduced one at a time. Participants practiced writing and reading aloud, they expressed opinions and wrote

them down, they examined newspapers and discussed local issues.

Those who finished the literacy course, perhaps three-quarters of those who began, could read and write simple texts, make something of the local newspapers, and discuss Brazilian problems. On one occasion a woman in a circle of culture in Rio Grande do Norte read aloud a telegram in a newspaper as an exercise. The telegram discussed the exploitation of salt in Rio Grande do Norte. A visitor to the circle asked the woman, "Lady, do you know what exploitation means?" "Perhaps you, a rich young man, don't know," she replied. "But I, a poor woman, I know what exploitation is."

It was most important to Freire that the discussions of problems did not lead to demagogical solutions. The woman who spoke of exploitation did so not with hatred but with a legitimate determination to overcome conditions that seemed to her and to all the participants highly subversive of the interests of the people.

Another participant in Rio Grande do Norte discussed the fact that he and his comrades knew how to "brand" (*ferrar*) their names. When asked by a guest what it meant to brand their names, he explained: "It means to copy our name, which the landlord writes on a paper, until we get tired, and the landlord keeps saying 'more! more!' until we learn it by heart. Then we have to brand our names—the landlord gets us a voting certificate and sends us to vote for whom he wants." (Brazilian law refuses the vote to nonliterate, but at that time a person could qualify as literate merely by signing his name to an application form.) "But now," he continued, "we are going to un-brand our names, to really learn to write, and then vote for whom we want."

Freire and his colleagues were planning a postliteracy curriculum based on the investigations of Brazilian themes carried out by the circles of culture. They expected that 20,000 literacy circles would have been functioning in Brazil in 1964 if the military coup had not terminated the program. ■

⁵ From an interview with Dr. Teixeira reprinted in the *Revista Brasileira de Estudos Psicológicos* XXXVIII, 88 (October-December 1962), pp. 158-159.