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The Teacher As Revolutionary: Paolo Freire

Nancy L. Eder
St. Cloud State University

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THE TEACHER AS REVOLUTIONARY: PAOLO FREIRE

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**ANALYSIS OF THE DISCOURSE BETWEEN A NATIVE
SPEAKER AND A SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNER:
A JOINT DECODING TASK**

by

Nancy L. Eder

B.S., St. Cloud State University, 1975

Starred Papers

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty

of

St. Cloud State University

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree

Master of Arts

St. Cloud, Minnesota

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INTRODUCTION

Teaching can be a very lonely occupation. On one hand, we wonder what effect, if any, we are having on the great array of problems which life presents to our students. On the other, they may seem disinterested or rebellious. Our own lives may not accomplish the goals we devised when we were inspired, and we look about for ways to make them more meaningful. The story of a teacher whose students, illiterate peasants in the backwaters of Brazil, transformed their own lives, and his, has a certain appeal. Does this man, Paolo Freire, have anything to say to us, here in the United States, especially when it is our ethnocentric impression that most of his students would gladly immigrate here if given the chance? Freire may not be able to give us the solution to our malaise, but he may be able to help us find the questions we need to begin asking ourselves.

Speaking to a group of educators at Harvard University in 1985, Freire quoted one of his peasant students:

If you think that you can come here to teach us to cut down trees, I have to say that this is not necessary, because we already know how to do this. What we would like to know is whether you are with us when the tree falls. ("Toward a Pedagogy of the Question" 21)

Students in any classroom discussion of social problems

could well demand the same relevancy from their instructors, but they often do not, particularly in our culture. Freire sees the students here as being more difficult to challenge than the students in Brazil because students here do not recognize the extent of their own oppression. We have become cynical, and cynicism is a form of fatalism ("Toward a Pedagogy" 14). We need to learn to recognize that cynicism.

PAOLO FREIRE'S BACKGROUND

Since Freire insists that, in order to understand a people, we must understand their history and culture, we will begin with his own history. Born in 1921 and reared in a middle-class home in Recife, Brazil, his earliest recollections are of learning to know by "reading" the objects in his comfortable environment ("The Importance of the Act of Reading" 8). Benefitting from secondary instruction in critical reading, he went on to become a professor of the history and philosophy of education at the University of Recife (Sanders 5). He observed that memorization was only possible when students found the text meaningful, concluding that "reading the world always precedes reading the word, and reading the word implies continually reading the world" ("Reading" 10).

The adult illiteracy problem caught his attention; he observed that the texts used to teach adults addressed them

as if they were children, promoting passivity and reinforcing the social stratification of the society (Pedagogy in Process 12). He looked to the Recife branch of the "Popular Culture Movement," which he had helped to found, for a model. The movement met in discussion groups, or "culture circles," to discuss current issues. Topics suggested by the participants were presented visually for deliberation. Freire applied this method of inducing dialogue to his adult literacy efforts (Mashayekh 6), resulting in his being appointed coordinator of the national literacy program in 1963. The program was immensely successful, claiming to teach literacy to illiterate peasants in 45 days, adding thousands to the electoral rolls (9). A military coup in 1964 reasserted the authority of the status quo, and Freire was imprisoned for 75 days for "applying an educational policy opposed to the national interest" (9). He fled to Chile where he assisted with that government's national literacy campaign, in cooperation with the United Nations, for four and a half years (9).

Regarding the political reaction to his teaching, Freire says that the dominant classes would have been naive not to oppose him, since the role of the dominators is to protect their status. The experience of jail and exile made him more critically aware of his role as a teacher (The Politics of Education 180-81). While in Brazil, he

had had the support of a popular government. The people in the urban areas and some of the rural areas had perceived the need for literacy, having been already radicalized. In Chile, on the other hand, some of the peasants saw no need for reading, leading Freire to conclude that they had not yet reached a stage of awareness of their own subjugation (Process 11). He decided that political awakening would have to precede literacy and that new materials would have to be developed that were appropriate to each situation (10-11).

After his experience in Chile, Freire was appointed Counselor at the Center for Education and Development Studies at Harvard University, and from there he went to the World Council of Churches in Geneva, developing literacy programs for Guinea-Bissau, Cape Verde, Angola, Sao Tome' and Principe, and Tanzania (Politics 182). His experiences in Guinea-Bissau are reflected, but not described in detail, in Pedagogy in Process. Reading between the lines of these epistles to the political administrators and educators there, one senses that there were some problems relating to the use of former colonial teachers and the colonial language. Nonetheless, his books and papers are widely distributed in the "third" world, as well as the "first." He claims a large following among ESL and bilingual teachers, people in all sorts of other disciplines, and such prominent figures as Ann Berthoff and

Aida Shaw (190). According to a recent article in College English, variations of the Freirian model are used for adult education by such widely disparate groups as the Maryknoll missionaries, The Grail (another religious organization), World Education, Inc., and The Inter-American Foundation, "the chief funder for the U.S. government of 'grassroots development' projects in the Western Hemisphere'" (Holzman 183).

FREIRE'S THEORIES

To understand Freire's theories, we have to be willing to think in historical and cultural terms. He begins with a view of men as being "in and with the world" ("Cultural Action and Conscientization" 452, emphasis his. Freire's earlier works use the generic man; later writings are free of sexist referents). Like animals, men are "in" the world, but as humans, they "transform" the world ("The Adult Literacy Process as Cultural Action for Freedom" 206). They accomplish this transformation by observing reality and mediating this observation through language. Even very "primitive" people create their own culture, but they may not be aware of this, thinking instead that they, like the animals, are powerless to change things:

Although the dialectical relations of men with the world exist independently of how these relations are perceived (or whether or not they are perceived at all), it is also true that the form of action men adopt is to a large extent a function of how they perceive

themselves in the world. (Pedagogy of the Oppressed 71)

The goal of men in transforming the world is to "humanize" it ("Cultural Action for Freedom" 206), to free themselves and others from oppressive situations. Their liberation is to be accomplished through "praxis: the action and reflection of men upon their world in order to transform it" (Pedagogy 66). Praxis, then, involves both acting and thinking about the causes and results of the actions. People must become aware of the power to alter their lives. This is where education comes in. Freire's villain in education is what he calls (from Sartre) the "banking" or "digestive" concept of knowledge, in which illiterates are seen as "undernourished" (60) and literacy efforts as "eradication" ("Adult" 207). In these eradication programs, the teacher's job becomes one of pouring knowledge into empty heads, using "'controlled readings,' . . . classes which consist only in lectures, . . . memorized dialogues in language learning, . . . (and) bibliographic notes which indicate not only which chapter, but which lines and words are to be read" (207). The conception of illiterates as beings who are lacking in something results from the myth that they are "marginal" to society, while in fact they are necessary to it (208). It is society itself that is sick, says Freire, and in need of a radical transformation (211).

Reflecting upon the historical and cultural basis for the oppression of the poor, Freire concludes that oppression is the result of the domination of the "metropolis" over the third world, kept in place by a "culture of silence" ("Cultural Action and Conscientization" 457). Within the culture of silence, people exist in a "semi-intransitive" state, without "sufficient distance from reality to objectify it in order to know it in a critical way" (461). Their lives are governed by magical forces and/or political bosses. Populist movements may awaken a critical consciousness in them, but are essentially "manipulative" (465). It is extremely important, according to Freire, that true liberating educators avoid the manipulation that results from mechanistic or propagandistic methods (Pedagogy 66). Preferring to call liberating education "cultural action for freedom," he asserts that its goal must be to "conscientize" the people, to awaken their critical consciousness ("Cultural Action and Conscientization" 471).

It is impossible to separate teaching from politics in Freire's thought. He asserts that "every educational practice implies a concept of man and the world" ("Cultural Action for Freedom" 205), envisioning knowledge as "a dialectical movement which goes from action to reflection and from reflection upon action to a new action" (213), a "re-admiration" of reality (215). Believing adamantly in

the right of the people to their own voice (213), his pedagogy begins with and answers to the people.

FREIRE'S METHODS

The first step in applying Freire's method, then, is to get to know the people. The teachers, or "coordinators," must go to the people and live with them, or at least observe them in their everyday lives, seeking to understand the "thematic universe" of the people through dialogue and observation (Pedagogy 86). Their thematic universe is made up of those "limit-situations" contributing to their exploitation (89), which become more obvious when analyzed in terms of who benefits and who is limited. Themes that are paramount to Freire are work, culture, and what he considers to be "the fundamental theme of our epoch," domination (93).

Coordinators then meet with some of the people to develop "codes": visual, auditory, or tactile representations of themes inherent in the activities, speech, and syntax of the people. Codes must be "neither overly explicit nor overly enigmatic" (106) and must be representative of the specific culture of the group that will be taught. Samples of codes similar to the ones used by Freire in Brazil can be found in Education for Critical Consciousness and in the Mashayekh article. These are reproductions done by a second artist; the original codes

were confiscated and destroyed in Brazil (Education for Critical Consciousness 61). They include titles and scenes such as "Man in the World and With the World" (man with hoe in foreground; woman, child, well, small hut, trees, and birds in background), "Dialogue Mediated by Nature" (tree, cow, plants, basket, man and woman talking), "Unlettered Hunter" (native shooting bird with a bow and arrow), "Lettered Hunter" (clothed man shooting bird with a gun, and a dog), and "The Hunter and the Cat" (cat hunting two mice).

Codes are subsequently presented to small groups of students for analysis, with the coordinator acting as both a fellow learner and challenger of students' contradictions. Coordinators must not impose their own interpretations of the codes upon the students. That students can sometimes have more insight than the teacher is illustrated in a story from a class in Chile. Using the picture of a drunken man being observed by three other men on a street corner, the coordinator intended to discuss alcoholism. The students, however, observed that the drunk must have been the only worker in the picture: he had the money to purchase liquor; the other men were obviously loafers who had nothing better to do than stand around on street corners. In subverting the coordinator's intention, the students were able to discuss their view of the injustice inherent in the worker's situation that gave

impetus to his drinking (110).

Initial decoding sessions are to be tape recorded, if possible, and used by the coordinators and other groups for critical analysis of the themes. In addition to codes, supplemental materials, such as interviews with or articles by specialists, may be used, but they must be preceded by a biography of the specialist, and a picture if available, so the students can be more critical of the information, realizing that it is the product of another human being like themselves (114). In Brazil, Freire ordered thousands of tape recorders, which were delivered just before his arrest. They were subsequently labeled instruments of propaganda and destroyed. Michael Holzman reports, however, that Brazil continues to use a variance of Freire's method, minus its political implications (183).

Using the codes, Freire's Brazilian students made rapid advances in learning to read, in part facilitated by the regular spelling and phonetic patterns of the Spanish language. Once a student learned how to spell a particular syllable, he or she could generalize that phoneme to many words. By choosing "generative" words from the thematic universe of the people, coordinators could expand the students' reading vocabularies quickly. Selection of generative words followed three criteria: "phonemic richness," "phonetic difficulty (the words chosen should correspond to the phonetic difficulties of the language,

placed in a sequence moving gradually from words of less to those of greater difficulty)," and "pragmatic tone," which refers to the relation of the word to the cultural theme (Education for Critical Consciousness 51).

Words were shown to the students only after they had thoroughly analyzed the corresponding code. First the word was shown alone, then divided into syllables. Then, on a third visual, the students were shown the "phonemic families" of that particular word (53). A three syllable word, tijolo, for example, has three phonemic families: ta-te-ti-to-tu, ja-je-ji-jo-ju, and la-le-li-lo-lu. In the first session in which these were presented, students were usually able to read all of them and to construct other words from them (54), and some even went on to combine letters to produce syllables that were not yet taught (tra, nha, etc.) (55). Students then combined syllables to make other words, which led to further discussions of the themes. Arado (plough), for example, suggested "the value of human labour, man and technology: the process of transforming nature, work and capital, and land reform" (Mashayekh 39).

Coordinators, says Freire, must be continually on guard against their political or cultural blind spots. Ideally, coordinators should come from the people themselves, but often, as in Guinea-Bissau, there are not enough literates among the people. Middle-class teachers

who aspire to be coordinators must "'commit class suicide'" in order to avoid dominating their students (Process 15, qtd. from Amilcar Cabral). This "suicide" consists of giving up their privileged social position, something that teachers and others may find difficult, if not impossible, to do:

Many claim to be committed to the cause of liberation but they conform to those very myths that negate humanistic acts.

Many analyze social mechanisms of oppression and simultaneously, through equally oppressive means, they hold back the students they are lecturing.

Many declare they are revolutionaries, but they don't trust the oppressed whom they pretend to liberate, as though this weren't an aberrant contradiction.

Many want a humanist education, yet they also want to maintain the social reality in which people find themselves dehumanized.

In brief, they fear liberation. (Politics 118-19)

Freire's pronouncements often have almost a spiritual quality. He sees teaching as a call to involvement and fulfillment. In "To the Coordinator of a Culture Circle," Freire counsels, "you need to love. You must be convinced that the fundamental effort of education is the liberation of man, and never his 'domestication'" (61). Also, "it is important, indeed indispensable, that you be convinced that each meeting with your group will leave both you and its members enriched" (62).

It is clear that Freire's concept of knowledge is primarily a social one, "not strictly an 'I think,' but a 'we think'" (99). Even the scholar, alone with a book,

"assumes a dialectical relationship between [himself] and the author" (Politics 3). Students need to see reading as an active, involving enterprise: "Studying a text calls for an analysis of the study of the one who wrote it. It requires an understanding of the sociological-historical conditioning of knowledge" (1). Freire insists that students be taught to read and write about their own reality--their social reality. Knowledge also has a fundamental historical aspect that should not be ignored; knowledge cannot be separated from action:

In epistemological terms, the object of knowledge isn't a term of knowledge for the knowing subject, but mediation of knowledge. . . . In humanistic terms, knowledge involves a constant unity between action and reflection upon reality. (100)

Students should strive to maintain a critical attitude toward knowledge throughout their lives, fed by a desire to know and understand (3).

CRITIQUES OF FREIRE'S THEORIES

"Paolo Freire: A Revolutionary Dilemma for the Adult Educator" offers the opinions of six "individuals who are interested, concerned, or engaged in working with adults" (Grabowski, iii). Writing in 1972, all six see his goals as being sympathetic to their own goals for adult education, but some question his political analysis, and others find his solutions too simplistic to be universally

applied.

James Farmer divides adult education into Type A, teacher-subject centered, and Type B, student-centered, into which category he fits Freire. Farmer sees a need for both types, depending on the situation and goals of the students. Type B may be more appropriate with less motivated students, those who feel marginal, or those who are in the midst of a "paradigm shift" (9). William McLeod Rivera posits a different dichotomy, between educators who are "changers" and those who are "assimilators" (56). Freire fits the first category, but so do all educators to some extent, according to Rivera. He leaves the decision as to the extent and type of change they are willing to foster to the individual teachers.

Jack London welcomes Freire's plea for a more humane approach, one that recognizes the inequities of our society and addresses the sterility in current adult education. Manfred Stanley, on the other hand, questions the depth of Freire's analysis, reminding us of the ease with which any ideology can be misused by totalitarian organizations. Going beyond Stanley, William S. Griffith excoriates Freire's thinking as being neither new nor well-developed, and too utopian to be practicable.

It is not Freire's analysis that needs to be corrected, but his style, according to Bruce O. Boston. Freire's prose is "obscure, convoluted, dull, overly

metaphysical . . . (and) devoid of the real human experience which generated such provocative ideas" (86). Boston also finds Freire too dramatic for the United States, which will have to find its own way toward transformation, just as Freire found his (90).

Some additional comments from the Quotational Bibliography, compiled by John Ohliger and Anne Hartung, in the Grabowski article reflect the far-reaching impact of Freire's work, even back in 1972.

In an Education Studies review of Pedagogy of the Oppressed, Rena Foy suspects that "in Freirian pedagogy, as in Socratic dialogues and Maoist cadre training, the more informed and disciplined mind of the teacher is still in control."

John McFadden reports that he taught a class called Community Education as Cultural Action in 1970 at the University of California at Santa Cruz:

The quarter started as a course in teaching the method to other future educators who would use it for community education among the more powerless groups in our society. The students turned it around and demanded the time for themselves and their own conscientization. (120-21)

Responding to a request from the editors for his address, McFadden writes:

I still believe Freire education is very close to life, but very far from what we usually think of as school-- and for that reason exceptionally difficult to "adapt." I myself have gone to work for Cesar Chavez and the farmworkers. (121)

Reviewing "The Great American Dream Machine" for Educational Broadcasting Review, John Ohliger suggests using Freirian "themes" as topics for the program, in the hope that people would then begin to reflect more critically on their lives (122).

In a forecast of Blanco Facundo's conclusions, Wayne J. Urban, in a paper presented to the AESA, asserts that, because of the particularity of Freire's experiences, it would be "the rankest absurdity" to apply Freire's ideas to middle class students. Further, "when the blue collar people learn how to read and write, the middle class (moves) to keep the gap between themselves and the others by turning to notions of feeling" (125). In a paper at the same conference, Roger Woock sees a problem for North American educators: "Who specifically here in North America are the oppressors and the oppressed, Where does violence play a role, Where should it not play a role, and What is the correct praxis?" (129).

Freire insists that teachers be critically aware of the implications of their teaching, that no part of the process be hidden. It is the hidden implications of his theory that Blanca Facundo seeks to bring to light in "Issues for the Evaluation of Freire-Inspired Programs in the United States and Puerto Rico."

Facundo narrates the story of the growth of a network of Freirian educators in Puerto Rico and the United States

in the early seventies (36). "Mainly Latinos," they were "not so much attracted by Freire's literacy method, but by the educational practice of liberation and struggle against oppression implied by Freire's educational philosophy" (36). Most of them operated "in" the established educational system, but outside of the mainstream, by "creating or joining private, non-profit organizations" (37). Considering their goals, funding was a problem. Some of them discovered each other at a conference in 1978, and in 1980 they received a federal grant to form IRCEL, Information and Resources Center for Educacion Liberadora (54). Their directory listed a total of 28 projects, "all private, non-profit organizations working at the grass-roots level in urban and geographical areas where Latinos are concentrated" (49). Funding was lost in 1982. During the two years of the organization, representatives met and tried to produce training materials, but were unsuccessful, primarily due to their inability to agree upon organizational matters.

Facundo's article is an evaluation of the organization. Extremely well-documented, it traces Freire's life, the growth and contradictions in his philosophy and practice, and her own growing disillusionment with Freirianism. She believes that the members were "naive"; they never asked themselves the question they persisted in asking others: "'And what are

your class or "self"-interests?" (38). Discarding explanations by Alinsky, Kennard, and Marx, Facundo instead chooses Alvin Gouldner's perception of a New Class: "the cultural (as opposed to monetary) bourgeoisie" (40). This New Class has fallen into the same old trap as have traditional professional educators: "shielded by their self-righteous, salvationist, reformist rhetoric, they lost the the capacity either to accept criticism or to criticize themselves" (Dianne Ravitch, qtd. in Facundo 43). Caught up in their utopian mission, the would-be Freirians ignored the real desires of their students for more practical attainments, says Facundo. The left, she continues, has never dealt with the tension between freedom and equality; the poor lack the luxury of doing so (45).

Is the answer, then, to give up on the idea of education as a step toward political transformation? Maybe not, but, according to Facundo, the poor should not put their hopes in aspirants to the transformational New Class, whose goals are individual and emotional or spiritual (90-91). Citing Marilyn Ferguson's observation that "until technology freed us from the struggle to survive few had the time or opportunity to look within to explore the psyche" (91), Facundo wants to know who us is. She points out that the transformation movement "rejects sharp dichotomies," while the hungry of the world live them (92). In accepting the transformationalist culture

uncritically, Facundo's fellow educators were able to avoid confronting their own contradictions (95).

Returning to Freire, Facundo finds contradictions between his description of the literacy campaign in Guinea-Bissau and another report. Linda Harasim, in Literacy and National Reconstruction, disagrees with Freire's representation of the facts, concluding that, contrary to what Freire implies in Pedagogy in Process, the campaign "results were practically nil" (Facundo 109). Harasim accuses Freire of romanticizing the situation and ignoring the cultural and language diversities of the people (110), as well as the limited resources available (113). Facundo sees Freire as doing what she perceived being done within her own group, trying to "force a reality to 'fit' his pre-formulated theory" (116). She leaves the question of where to go from here to the reader (119).

REPORTS OF SUCCESSFUL APPLICATIONS OF FREIRE'S THEORIES IN THE USA

Disciples of Freire's in the United States are not always easy to trace. Since his views conflict with the institutionalized assumption (he would call it a myth) that our educational system affords equal opportunity to all, those who operate within the system face certain obstacles. John Ohliger speaks of the most obvious one:

There is no doubt that those who carry out effective adult education programs for social action get into

trouble. It would be surprising if they didn't. Freire was exiled. Ivan Illich, when a monsignor in the Catholic Church, was called to Rome for a modern form of the inquisition. Warren Hagstrom, when a professor at Syracuse University, had his program shot out from under him, when the poor people he worked with marched on the mayor's office. (Grabowski, 121)

Facundo describes the deceptive practices necessary in order for a Freirian group to receive federal or private funding (37), resulting in a reluctance of the "in-group" to let the "out-group" know what it is doing, hence the scarcity of published material. There is no organized attempt to promote Freire's theories; his followers vary in their adherence to his socio-political-cultural themes. The following, therefore, is only a partial survey.

Dennis Sayers used some of Freire's techniques in an adult vocational training program. Along the continuum in adult education between education and training, Sayers' program belongs toward the training end. Radical Freirians may not believe that a training program can be called Freirian unless the students themselves are involved in the evolution of the curriculum. Sayers admits that his program was not "pure" in the strictest sense:

The task of elaborating tools and techniques deemed relevant by the staff to bilingual skill training often devolved on the Program Developer . . . Similarly, the occupational areas had been pre-determined by the vocational school administration, and not by the Hispanic trainees. (13)

Sayers' "codifications" were visuals of the competency skills, plus a few of the "learning act," possibly the

culture circles, used by Freire in Guinea-Bissau. Sayers' instructors used the dialogue method in training sessions among themselves, but even here the goals were established beforehand by Sayers.

Analysis of the competency goals in the area of "Preparing Students to Get, Find, and Keep a Job" reveals how far Sayers has strayed from Freire's socio-political goals:

Develop a bicultural curriculum to teach survival skills and self-advocacy,
 Assist students in making realistic career plans,
 Explain how to hold a job and gain advancement,
 Explain what will be expected in a specific job environment,
 Assist students in preparing resumes,
 Assist students in preparing for interviews with employers,
 Assist students in applying for employment, and
 Encourage employers to hire LEP persons who successfully complete the training. (20-21)

With the exception of the first goal, all seem to be geared toward adapting the students to the current environment. The pleading tone of the last goal is obvious.

Sayers reports that students were encouraged to develop an "informal support network" to handle all of their "personal difficulties" (21), thus keeping these out of the classroom. Freire would probably see this program as the sort of populist effort that may awaken some consciousness but may also serve to reinforce existing structures. It is, however, a step toward making a training program more humane.

Richard Stracke and Sara Snow applied Freirian ideas to a college first-year composition class. In order to allow students to "know" as much as the instructors, assignments centered on the students' own experiences, with dialogue between the students themselves and the instructors preceding writing. Assignments focused on work, television, editorials, and personal "tours" of the city.

Illustrating the identification with the upper classes often found in oppressed people, Stracke and Snow's students chose to "interview" the more elegant employees in Turkel's Working, even though their own personal working experiences were in lower status jobs, and their own stories of working were very powerful. Stracke and Snow noticed, nonetheless, a growth in students' validation of their own experiences and in their sense of community within the class. A corresponding growth in the quality of student writing did not, however, take place. A solution to the problem of improving writing while at the same time increasing students' political awareness still eludes Stracke and Snow.

Ken Smith, Ron Tanner, and Allison York report on the basic reading/writing course at the University of Iowa. The two-semester course involves a writing lab where students spend two hours a week in dialogue with tutors. Using Lou Kelly's curriculum, they start with "the

student's own language and the experiences--external and internal--that he shares with the class" (Kelly 348). York uses open-ended questions, such as "Can you tell me more?" to prod students into providing evidence for their assertions. According to Smith, instructors focus on what the students are trying to say, rather than form, for the first part of the first semester, building toward the essay form, which Kelly calls "thinking on paper," at the end of the second semester.

Tanner taught the reading component of the course (he is now at another institution). He cites Freire's "banking" notion of education, seeking to overcome his students' materialistic notion of knowledge by using texts that have a "strong sense of person" and to promote their critical thinking by asking students "dumb" questions about the text. He allows students to try their answers in small groups before going before the whole class. Rendolent of Freire, he encourages students to tolerate the "mystery" in a difficult text, rather than skip the hard parts.

This set of courses seems to obey Freire's injunctions to validate the experience of the students, read texts closely and critically, and to recognize the author's voice in the text. It does not, however, address the need for social change, a need reflected partially in one instructor's observation that the center retains its funding, not only because it provides an opportunity for

higher education for those students lacking basic skills, but also because it keeps the football team on the field.

Using the internal learning theories of Lev Vygotsky with Freire's pedagogy, Nan Elasser and Kyle Fiore designed a remedial English course for minority college students. They decided that a "pure Freirian approach" was inappropriate to their "traditional universities," nonetheless choosing to emphasize a critical consciousness of the students' "social context" (116). Elasser tried the approach they worked out at The College of the Bahamas. All of her students were women, many of whom worked by day and attended school at night. Most were black. Students were required by the college to take an English test at the end of the quarter. Initial written responses to the assignment "What You Need to Know to Live in the Bahamas" were disorganized lists of suggestions and recipes.

With the help of her students, Elasser devised a term-long thematic assignment about the role of women in their society. Using in-class dialogues, students developed ideas for research and became more critical of their unsupported platitudes. They analyzed the reasons for certain stubborn errors in their English. At the end of the course, the students published in local newspapers "An Open Letter to Bahamian Men," which concludes with the following recommendations:

- (a) That men join in family worship at least twice a month.
- (b) That men stop putting most of the financial burden on women. 75% of the household responsibilities should be handled by men.
- (c) That men at least buy their children's groceries, pay school fees and buy clothes.
- (d) That men take their children out for recreation at least once a week.
- (e) That men do an equal share of the housework.
- (f) That men do not allow extra-marital affairs to damage or destroy their marriages.
- (g) That men make more effort to sexually satisfy their wives. (127)

They all passed the English exam. Elasser concludes that this experience "demonstrates that advanced literacy teachers can modify Freire's pedagogy to fit the needs of their students and demands of the college" (128).

Nina Wallerstein used Freire's method in a bilingual Spanish-ESL program in New Mexico. Teams of from five to seven instructors interacted with the residents of a public housing project for two months prior to developing codes for use in class. Because the students were not as homogeneous as Freire's, Wallerstein did not borrow his method whole, but she hoped, nonetheless, to "compel people to analyze and challenge those forces in society which keep them passive" (Language and Culture in Conflict 12). Her methodology proposes to take students beyond analysis to action, using Hilda Taba's five cognitive steps: describe, respond, infer, generalize, apply/evaluate (18). She suggests using fictionalized stories to conceptualize problems which may be dangerous for students to discuss

openly, eg., "What do people do to survive if they are illegal aliens?" (39). Her curriculum uses written dialogues and pictures from the students' own environment as codes. Wallerstein's dialogues avoid the paternalizing tone found in many ESL texts, and are meant to be used as situational prompts, rather than as models to be memorized by the students.

In "The Teaching Approach of Paolo Freire," she reports the following exchange between students and teacher:

(Teacher) What's on your street?--(Students) There are houses on one side and there's a farm on the other side.
 What do you like about your street?--I like the school and the Mexicans. I can talk to them.
 What don't you like?--I don't like the smelly farm. I don't like the noise. There are too many dogs.
 Why are there so many dogs?--Because there are a lot of robberies.
 Why are there so many robberies?--People don't have money. They need money to eat, for clothes.
 Why don't people have money?--There's too little work.
 (198)

Wallerstein cautions: "Teachers must be careful not to impose their world view but to encourage students in their own critical thinking. Likewise, teachers should be cautious about assuming leadership on solutions to local problems" (198). Tabor's five steps, elicited through teacher questions, are Wallerstein's guarantee of critical thinking. But she gives no hint as to how to proceed if students in a situation like the one above were to respond with a superstitious or racist reason for the number of

thieves. The assumption that the students will come up with structural reasons for poverty seems to imply that they will have intuited the structural approach of their teacher, which is, after all, a world view. Also, if the teacher is to lead them so far in their analysis and then leave them to their own devices to decide upon the action to be taken, might not the teacher be guilty of not being around when the trees have fallen?

Concerning the issue of bilingual education for children, Wallerstein narrates a dialogue in which the students conclude that the conflict between their children and themselves about language comes about because Spanish is not respected in the schools, at which point the parents "may stop blaming themselves for inadequate parenting, or they may gain the self-confidence to take action" (202). Might they not also wonder why the teacher, whom they can hardly fail to perceive as a person with more power than themselves, fails to do something? There is also the issue of political pragmatics. Students may need more than just critical consciousness to be politically effective in this society.

Linda Crawford-Lange "has been interested in problem-posing (Freirian) education since first introduced to it in 1972" (program notes). Currently Director of Instructional Support Services for the Osseo, Minnesota, Area Schools, she has held a variety of teaching and administrative

positions in elementary and secondary schools. Apparently her involvement with the Freirian approach has not resulted in the loss of her ability to get a job.

Crawford-Lange believes that teachers, ESL teachers in particular, can use Freire's theoretical guidelines to make their teaching more effective and humane. Most importantly, she says, we need to learn to listen, to be quiet sometimes and allow the students, or even pressure the students, to talk. We need to recognize their real-life concerns and structure our lessons around them, but we need to use our judgment to decide what are real-concerns and what are "passing fancies."

Second, we need to "show" these concerns to students in ways that promote their critical understanding of them. Third, we need to engage the students in real problems, not phony problems for which we already have the answers. Fourth, we need to become aware of the results of our questioning practices. Teacher responses to student replies are often "closed," even when they are positive, as in the case of praise. Praise is indeed needed, but it can shut down the dialogue that may lead to more critical answers. In order to leave the process open, Crawford-Lange suggests we use more tentative answers: "Yes . . .," paraphrase, clarification, facilitation (referring the students to other sources for more information).

Lastly, Crawford-Lange says that students need to act. They need to do jobs that really need doing. Language assignments can be useful to them and to others. Students can be assigned to produce newsmagazines, literary magazines, handbooks for new students or parents, storybooks for siblings, or videotapes. Teachers should ask themselves, "What does the way I teach reveal about how I define my students?" She hopes that we conclude that they are useful and productive.

In a question-and-answer session following her talk, Crawford-Lange reflected on problems that several teachers in attendance were having in applying Freire's method. She reiterated her belief that we may have to "take it in steps." Like Wallerstein, whom she cited, she suggested using fictional situations to role-play emotion-laden problems. One teacher was discouraged by the racial prejudice of her minority students, as well as that of the non-minorities. Crawford-Lange suggested using a fictional situation of prejudice toward some other characteristic to enable students to express their feelings in a non-threatening atmosphere.

One teacher had used the Freirian method in a Philippine refugee camp. Students there became very concerned about a problem with busing to and from the school. Teachers were not willing to confront the

authorities of the camp, so there seemed to be no way to take action. Crawford-Lange suggested that the students needed to confront the authorities, that their frustration was a result of their having "given away their power" to the teachers. One wonders if Freire might suggest that both the students and the teachers needed to confront the authorities, since the problem affected them all.

Another teacher had problems with student conflicts on the playground in an Indian bilingual school. Crawford-Lange proposed three steps in dealing with the conflicts:

1. Abstract the problem so students can discuss it at a distance.
2. Have faith in the students' ability to address and solve problems. The teacher who is uncomfortable with conflict should use "her own comfort level plus one" as a gauge of how much to allow in the classroom. She may want to inform the administration of any planned action.
3. Accept the fact that change does not always happen the way we predetermine it.

The preceding section indicates the variety of Freirian approaches being used in the United States. Not all who are inspired by Freire apply the full measure of his political utopianism to their teaching or are still around when the tree falls, if it ever does.

CONCLUSION

It is obvious that the political implications are the most controversial aspect of Freire's theory. He gives us only a vague idea of how to implement them in our society, which he sees as being mystified by our belief that we must maintain power over other people ("A Conversation with Paulo Freire" 22). He suggests that we teach each other to be more critical, to read texts more thoroughly rather than more quickly, and to admit to our students that we also find some things difficult to understand (218-219). But he also insists that we must be willing to carry education one step further, to act on our beliefs: "One thing is to proclaim beautiful and democratic proposals, another is to be reactionary in your practice" (223).

Compared with other radical educators, who see educational practice in terms of either "the discourse of domination or the discourse of despair," Freire has a hopeful philosophy, according to Henry Giroux (Introduction to The Politics of Education xi). If, as radical theorists maintain, schools function to "reproduce" the inequities of the society, a way to challenge this situation may be to use Freire's dialogues with the students (Aaronowitz and Giroux 69). But, says Freire, "We have to know that we are not in school to transform the world. This is not the task for the schools" ("Toward a Pedagogy of the Question" 14).

It is not clear if this is a moderation from his earlier stand or if he is making a distinction between schools and adult education. The task of the schools, at any rate, is to "challenge our students to think differently, that is, to go beyond a certain mental bureaucratization, which is terrible" (14).

Some of the educators using his method have achieved apparent success in promoting critical awareness. But the measure of that success is as elusive as the definition of it. As Facundo points out, we are all immersed in our own culture, and our recognition of our own blind spots does not come easily. The problem of training oneself or others to practice a liberating educational pedagogy is similar to the problem of training psychoanalysts, a similarity noticed by Michael Maccoby in 1971:

I suspect that this danger [the tendency of the therapist to assume a dominant role in the therapy] is present also in Freire's "social psychoanalysis" and that his pedagogues or "coordinators" must themselves go through some process of conscientization or critical self-awareness as well as methodological and theoretical training, if they are to guard against becoming manipulators, oppressing others with their own demands for greater militancy, cooperation, and so forth. (673)

Since some of those very myths which Freire sees as the problem also provide us with our sense of identity and purpose, we cannot simply throw them out with nothing to replace them. But it is our task as educators to continually examine the implications of our practices and

to seek to identify our myths, however painful that may be. We tend to forget that our own education has been purchased at some cost, and therefore carries an obligation:

The whole matter can be summed up in the question: what is education for? I think it was the Chinese, before World War II, who calculated that it took the work of thirty peasants to keep one man or woman at a university. If that person at the university took a five-year course, by the time he had finished he would have consumed 150 peasant-work-years. How can this be justified? Who has the right to appropriate 150 years of peasant work to keep one person at university for five years, and what do the peasants get back for it?

These questions lead us to the parting of the ways: is education to be a "passport to privilege" or is it something which the people take upon themselves, almost like a monastic vow, a sacred obligation to serve the people? (Schumacher 207)

Things are not so graphic in our own society. Oppression is much more visible in the Third World than here in the First, and our own privileged position may not allow us to see it here unless we look. But the fact that it is not evident to us does not mean that it does not exist. Paulo Freire's challenge to us is to become aware of the part we play in perpetuating that oppression and to seek ways to change the system, starting with our own classrooms.

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