

Problem-Posing at Work: Popular Educator's Guide

Nina Wallerstein and Elsa Auerbach



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Table of Contents

Preface	1
Who is this book for?	1
What is our philosophy?	1
Who are we?	3
Why are we revising?	3
How is this popular education book structured?	5
What are our next steps?	5
References	6
Chapter 1: Teaching Approach	7
What is problem-posing?	7
What is empowerment and power?	9
How do we engage in the cyclical process of reflection and action?	13
How do we develop a problem-posing curriculum and process?	20
What are our own problem-posing themes as educators?	21
References	28
Chapter 2: Teaching Strategies and Tools	31
Introduction	31
Listening in class or in structured settings	32
Listening outside class	33
Dialogue with codes	35
Questions for dialogue	37
Role of the educator in group dialogue	41
Example of problem-posing dialogue	43
Action	46
Visioning	47
Written dialogues, role plays, or case studies	48
Life stories	48
Realia and outside texts	49
Pictures (photographs, drawings, collages, slides, puppets)	50
Photovoice	51
Risk maps or charts	52
More social analysis and action planning methods	52
Participatory research	53
Immigrant participatory arts: (contributed by Pia Moriarty, 2004)	54
Hands-on activities and physical activity	54
Additional language instruction issues	55
Evaluation	57
<i>Language and Culture in Conflict</i> triggers	58
References	61

Chapter 3: An Example of a Problem-Posing Workplace ESL Cycle	65
Introduction	65
The students	65
Hospital and union goals	66
Teacher goals	66
Reading, writing, and talking about work	66
Class rituals, routines, and language work activities	67
Speak up for your rights	68
Workers' rights in Massachusetts	69
Looking at the union contract	69
Union steward roles	70
Visit from a union representative	70
Successes	70
Challenges	71
Taking action	72
References	72
Chapter 4: Connecting Local and Global Action:	
The Role of Pedagogy in Social Change	73
Forces of globalization	74
Implications for education	78
Diversifying contexts for education	79
Social change organizations or movements	80
Conclusion	85
References	86
Chapter 5: Guide to Activities in Problem-Posing at Work:	
English for Action (revised edition)	89
The book as a whole	89
Within each lesson of English for Action (revised edition)	94
A final word on "hot topics"	98
Appendix	
Selected resources	99
Resources on labor education and participatory labor education	99
Resources on workplace issues	100
Resources on globalization	101
Resources on popular and participatory education	102
Newsletters and journals	105
Organizational addresses	106

Preface

Who is this book for?

This is a book for educators who are interested in engaging in critical reflection and social action. It is for educators from diverse fields: community and adult educators, English as a Second Language and literacy teachers, public health educators, labor organizers, health and safety educators, community psychologists and facilitators, high school teachers, and faculty in teacher education and other professional education programs.

This is also a book for organizers and activists who want to engage in reflective practice and who believe in personal and community transformation as part of the organizing process. It is for all of us who envision a different world—one that respects learners, creates democratic opportunities for learning, and views people as creators of their lives, both inside and outside the classroom. It is a book for those of us who believe in the promise of personal and social change, not just for the communities with whom we work, but also for ourselves and for our own participation in societal change.

This book has two purposes. It is both a companion teacher's guide to the revised edition of the student book, *Problem-Posing at Work: English for Action*; and it is a separate educator's guide that explores problem-posing, critical reflection, and action. One of the challenges we faced in revising the earlier *ESL for Action* was the question of audience and readership. We wanted to continue to speak to ESL teachers, yet at the same time speak to the reality of educators and organizers across many content areas.

The educator's guide, therefore, presents our philosophy, and our strategies that have been helpful over the years in practicing problem-posing education in many different workshop, classroom, and community settings. In addition to strategies, we have taken the opportunity to pose dilemmas we have faced in doing this work in order to promote critical discussion. These dilemmas have included the challenges within our own institutions; within the changing international, national, and local contexts; and within our own practice as educators.

The revised student book, *Problem-Posing at Work: English for Action* extends the previous problem-posing approach to learning English in worksite settings by providing greater depth, range of activities, stories, and examples that promote English language dialogue and actions. It covers the themes of the daily work lives of immigrants, both past and present; their interactions with each other, with American co-workers, supervisors, and unions; their concerns with working conditions, health and safety, and stress; and their legal and organizing rights to improve conditions; and it extends these themes across the U.S.-Canadian border.

What is our philosophy?

The two books together are based on an educational process of dialogue called "problem-posing" that starts from students' lives and asks them to "believe in themselves . . . that they have knowledge." Problem-posing assumes that education is not value-free

but is embedded in a social context. Immigrants or community members bring to the classroom a richness of experience: their knowledge, their troubles, their strengths, and their skills. By inviting students and teachers to participate as co-learners, problem-posing enables students to shape their own learning, to think critically, and to make decisions outside the classroom that may set new directions for their lives.

In addition to the term “problem-posing education,” related and overlapping concepts have circulated in this field. These include: “popular education,” from the historical legacy of education and organizing in Latin America; “Freirian education,” from one of its major theorists and practitioners, Brazilian educator Paulo Freire; “participatory education,” with its focus on learner participation in curriculum development and community activism; “empowerment education,” with its recognition of the role of power dynamics; and “educating for social change,” with its focus on the goal of problem-posing.

While the concepts have historical or contextual differences, they share several premises, each of which builds on the other. The first premise is that we as educators are constantly learning, that we benefit from critical reflection on our own values and knowledge bases, our own teaching styles, the material we present, and the methods that we choose. We are truly co-learners with our students.

The second premise is that we as educators have an important role to play with our students: to prepare and direct learning opportunities that encourage students to believe in their capacities as critical thinkers and actors in their own lives. This premise reclaims our responsibilities as educators to be more than co-learners: to be leaders who bring our resources to contribute to the learning and to foster a safe environment for critical dialogue.

The third premise is that education is political, and that “power” and “empowerment” are central to the educational process. Education either acts to disempower students and ourselves to accept life situations, or it engages us to challenge oppressive or difficult conditions in our lives. Within this premise, we look to understand how power operates at a societal or institutional level, within our personal interactions, and within ourselves.

The fourth and final premise is that this type of education opens the door for multiple paradoxes, questions, or dilemmas that are not always solvable. These “problem-posing” opportunities mirror what may happen in the classroom with our students, and they require us as teachers to make choices in the context of each specific teaching opportunity. We will find ourselves making a variety of choices in different situations, especially as we grow in our own teaching careers.

We may not always have answers or there may be several possible answers, but adopting a problem-posing stance gives us a unique opportunity to practice a process of critical reflection and action with other educators and organizers that is similar to the process we foster with our students and community members.

The educator's guide explores these premises and paradoxes; provides a guide to the problem-posing approach, methods, and tools that can help in the classroom and community; and, finally, articulates a set of reflections for becoming more mindful and skillful in our teaching. By applying this approach to language education, the revised student book, *Problem-Posing at Work: English for Action*, provides one model of practice with the hope that we will contribute to the capacity of educators to engage in problem-posing education.

Who are we?

We come to the writing of this book from our own personal, educational and political histories as well as from our desire to sharpen our own reflections from the past twenty years.

More than twenty years ago, Nina Wallerstein wrote *Language and Culture in Conflict: Problem-Posing in the ESL Classroom*, one of the first Freirian texts for teachers of English as a Second Language. Starting when she was twenty years old, she taught English as a Second Language for ten years; in the early years, co-developed teacher training workshops (with Pia Moriarty); and simultaneously participated in the anti-war and women's movements. She later moved into the health arena, receiving her master's and doctorate in public health, and adapted Freirian approaches to public health and health education with the goal of integrating educational approaches and organizing. She has developed empowerment and community organizing trainings within the U.S., Canada, and Latin America, and has worked with immigrants, union members on health and safety efforts, youth, women, and tribal populations, and healthy community efforts world wide. Her latest book is *Community-Based Participatory Research for Health* (co-edited with Meredith Minkler). As a white woman, often working in communities of color, she has reflected on issues of power and privilege, and on her responsibility to use the resources available to her to challenge conditions of racism and marginalization.

Elsa Auerbach started as a young activist, trying to join the NAACP when she was twelve, marching against apartheid when she was eighteen, joining an anti-imperialist research group when she was twenty-two, and working in an auto factory for five years as a would-be labor organizer after getting her doctorate in linguistics. Freire's work guided her in integrating her political and academic background. She has provided teacher education classes and workshops for twenty years and, as a professor of English at the University of Massachusetts, has written such books, as *Making Meaning, Making Change: Participatory Curriculum Development for Adult ESL Literacy* (1992), and *From the Community to the Community: A Guidebook for Participatory Literacy Training* (with Barahona, Midy, Vaquerano, Zambrano & Arnaud (1996)). Like Nina, she has reflected on her own positionings in terms of class, race, and educational background and has attempted to use the resources available to her in service of social change.

In the mid-1980s, Elsa and Nina joined together to co-write an ESL book for immigrant workers and a teacher's guide, *ESL for Action: Problem-Posing at Work*. Now, fifteen years later, with both *ESL for Action* and *Language and Culture in Conflict* out of print, we decided to revise the student book as *English for Action*, and to produce a new Popular Educator's guide that provides guidelines into Freirian pedagogy and educational tools, but also reflects on the paradoxes and dilemmas of problem-posing education.

Why are we revising?

The timing of this revision is paradoxical. Within the last two decades, globalization and the continued movement of capital and populations has produced a world with greater inequities than ever before—inequities between richer and poorer countries, and between richer and poorer peoples within countries. The disparities in the U.S.

and Canada have grown, with immigrants having less access to educational and social services, and worse health and economic status. In addition, factors of race, gender, neighborhood conditions, and educational status have intensified the gaps between rich and poor. The flip side to the growing inequities has been that globalization has also increased technological connections between historically disenfranchised peoples and made world-wide mobilization a possibility (as we saw with the international anti-Iraq organizing and the disruption of the World Trade Organization free trade agreements, mobilized through the web).

It is a different world now than when we first started working together. We have new understandings based on changes in our practice in these intervening years (Nina in public health and labor education; Elsa in ESL and teacher education). Our dialogue within a community of Freirian educators and our recognition of changed global conditions have shaped these understandings.

Within our practice, when we first started doing this work, we were passionate and believed that all educators who cared deeply about student respect, critical thinking, and political change would welcome this approach. Over the years, however, both of us have experienced questions and concerns, hesitations, and even resistance to the problem-posing approach. We have heard, "Problem-posing is too difficult. It's too hard to get discussion going with students." Or, "Issues take too much work. It's too hard to track down all the answers." Some have expressed their fears. "This is too dangerous. I'm scared I won't be able to handle the issues that arise. What if I can't solve the problems?" Some fear being too political. "How do I know that I'm not imposing my own views of change on students?" "My students don't want to think about their problems. They think their life here is okay." Or, "It's arrogant to think I'm more enlightened or think more critically than my students." And, for beginning ESL students, "My students don't know enough English to do this stuff."

While we remain passionate about our educational approach, we have learned that these challenges represent an important set of paradoxes for us as political educators to take seriously: to identify, think about, and "problematize" so that we can learn about and deepen our own stances and the stances of others. In this educator's book we hope to provide a context for reflecting on some of these paradoxes and for encouraging continual reflection on teaching.

Within our national contexts this is also a paradoxical time for educational policy. Standardized tests are on the increase, accelerated with the "No Child Left Behind Act" in the United States. Teaching to the test has been part of citizenship classes for the last several decades. Yet, despite the potential stifling of educational creativity, participatory approaches to education have become accepted practice within the profession. Freirian educational texts have become standard fare for many teacher education and health education programs. Community programs, foundations, non-profits, universities, as well as child and adult educational systems are looking for strategies that hold promise for dealing with the complex social reality of our world. Other perspectives from post-structuralism, post-colonialism, and feminism have become part of the dialogue in educational circles.

We owe a great tribute to the surge of popular education/problem-posing books during the last two decades and to the countless others world wide who have engaged

in this kind of work, but who may not have had the opportunity or time to write about their experiences. While we don't pretend to know the richness of all the Freirian and problem-posing work internationally, we have attempted to provide a list in the Appendix of selected adult education and training books and groups who have been most influential in our own work, particularly with regard to English as a Second Language and literacy education. We also owe a tribute to our colleagues who have written thoughtful critiques of Freirian education and who have enabled us to articulate more clearly the paradoxes we face.

How is this popular education book structured?

Chapter 1. Teaching Approach introduces the general framework for problem-posing education; it includes several models such as listening/dialogue/ action, the praxis cycle of reflection and action, and the participatory spiral; and it explores the paradoxes and myths of the overall framework of Freirian education.

Chapter 2. Teaching Strategies provides specific tools for implementing problem-posing education, and updates the tools from *ESL for Action* to include new strategies from labor, public health, and adult education as well as from community-based participatory research. It includes guidelines for the development of codes, provides examples of codes from *Language and Culture in Conflict*, presents an elaborated problem-posing dialogue, and discusses evaluation of codes.

Chapter 3 is an account by labor educator Jenny Utech of a one-year participatory cycle in an ESOL class for union workers, jointly sponsored by union and management in a large urban hospital.

Chapter 4. Connecting Local and Global Action gives an overview of the context of globalization and its implications for literacy, ESL, adult basic education, public health, and the broader arena of educational programs that aim to support social change.

Chapter 5 provides an inside look at how the accompanying student book, *English for Action*, embraces a problem-posing approach through its flow of activities, its specific exercises, and its emphasis on the praxis of action and reflection.

What are our next steps?

Change—personal, educational, or social—is an ongoing and difficult process. In problem-posing, change can start with education in the classroom, enabling students to gain self-confidence within the classroom community as co-learners and decision-makers. Change can start in community organizing settings such as advocacy organizations, support groups, and neighborhoods.

But the process of change demands time and continuing commitment. We therefore insist our educational approach is problem-posing, and not problem-solving. We must be "patiently impatient," Paulo Freire tells us, as we painstakingly move toward improving our communities. Although change comes slowly, problem-posing nurtures the process.

Our students and community partners have dreams for themselves, their families, and their work; we can help them to explore their visions and to develop new skills, group support, and capacities to become actors in their lives. These dreams often mirror our own dreams as educators.

We also believe that education alone is not the solution to the problems our students face in their work, their lives, or in society. We believe that education is only one piece of a larger process of social change, and the closer we can align our education to historical and current social movements, labor or environmental organizing, or community change processes, the more likely that people will have the support to participate in change.

We've included ideas in this work that we've been thinking about and which may or may not resonate with your own practice. We encourage you to engage critically with the work presented here and to continue an ongoing exchange of ideas among educators, organizers, students, and communities. We hope all of our practice will be enriched with these efforts.

Myles Horton, the founder and long-time director of the Highlander Educational and Research Center (a school that was influential in the civil rights, labor, and environmental movements), counseled that if you believe you have a goal that you can reach in your lifetime, then it's the wrong goal (Horton, 1990). Taking these words seriously, we, like Horton, believe in the power of problem-posing education as part of our long-term practice to reach our visions. We need to hold on to our visions even if we won't reach them in our lifetimes. If we put our work in perspective, we are part of a longer struggle. The point of an ideal is **not** to reach it, but to let it guide our journeys. What we've proposed here is a direction. And, as Horton says, once we decide what our vision is, all we can do is "just hack away on it" (p. 228).

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2004

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Chapter 1

Teaching Approach

What is problem-posing?

The problem-posing approach to education was inspired by the work of Brazilian educator Paulo Freire. In the late 1950s, Freire initiated a highly successful literacy program for slum dwellers and peasants in Brazil. Concerned with his students' fatalistic outlook, he started "culture circles" that used drawings and paintings to challenge students to think critically about their lives and to begin to shape their own destinies. Culture circles evolved into literacy classes with carefully chosen words that represented the emotionally loaded and socially problematic issues in participants' lives. The dialogue about each "generative" word stimulated their analysis of the social root causes of problems and how they could effect change. Described in *Education for Critical Consciousness*, Freire's literacy programs enabled students to participate in the political process (Freire, 1973). Because his work threatened the dominant political forces, Freire was imprisoned and then forced into exile when the Brazilian military staged a coup and took over the government in 1964.

For more than four decades, Freire's ideas and vision of "education for transformation" have been a catalyst for programs focusing on literacy, English as a Second Language, adult education, labor and health and safety education, health promotion, public health education, and community development world wide. In exile, Freire worked for many years with the World Council of Churches in Geneva, consulted for countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, and lectured throughout the United States, including linking with the Highlander Center for Research and Education in Tennessee. His dialogue with Highlander's founder, Myles Horton, is documented in *We Make the Road by Walking* (1990).

Freire returned to Brazil in 1991, where he joined the Workers Party and became the minister of education in Sao Paulo, having the opportunity to put his educational ideas into practice from a governmental position. Freire died in 1997.

Freire's central premise is that education is never neutral. Whether it occurs in a classroom or in a community setting, the interaction of educator and student or community member does not take place in a vacuum. People bring with them their cultural resources and identities, experiences of social discrimination and life pressures, resistances to oppression, and strengths in survival. Education either reinforces or challenges the existing social forces that aim to keep them passive.

In Freire's terms, the purpose of education is human liberation, which "takes place to the extent that people reflect upon themselves and their condition in the world—the world in which and with which they find themselves . . . to the extent that they are more conscientized, they will insert themselves as subjects into their own history" (Freire, 1971).

This goal of education is based on Freire's view of the learner and of knowledge: the learner is not an empty vessel to be filled by the teacher, nor an object of education (Freire, 1970). To Freire, to be a good educator "means above all to have faith in people;

to believe in the possibility that they can create and change things” (Freire, 1971). Said another way, “Studying is a form of reinventing, recreating, rewriting, and this is a subject’s, not an object’s task” (Freire, 1985, p. 2).

Freirian education is humanistic, based on a compassionate view of the world: learners have a right to construct their worlds. They enter into the process of learning not by acquiring facts, but by co-creating their knowledge and reality in social exchange with others.



From *Language and Culture in Conflict* (Wallerstein, 1983)

To enact this education, Freire proposes a dialogical approach in which everyone, educator/student, administrator/teacher, health educator/community member, participates as co-learners. The goal of dialogue is critical thinking and action (or conscientization, from the Portuguese). Critical thinking starts from perceiving the root causes of one's place in society, and continues with analyzing the interaction of our personal lives within these socioeconomic, political, cultural, and historical contexts. But critical thinking continues beyond perception, towards the actions and decisions people make to shape and gain control over their lives, which includes developing an understanding of the barriers to, and supports for, change.

Knowledge evolves from the continual interaction and cycles of reflection and action (defined as praxis) and occurs “when human beings participate in a transforming act” (Freire, 1985, p. 106). Problem-posing is a group process that draws on personal experience to create social connectedness and mutual responsibility for change.

The curriculum, therefore, is situated within the reality of people’s lives—their concerns, problems, and strengths. Its goal is to enable students to envision different working and living conditions and fashion individual or community responses to problems. Unlike other approaches, where the educator creates both the content and structure of learning, in problem-posing much of the content comes from students’ lives which are situated within the larger historical, political, and social context. Because of its social and emotional affect, problem-posing becomes a powerful motivating factor in language and knowledge acquisition. As students apply the approach, they also assume increasing responsibility for the structure of learning.

While Freire’s problem-posing ideology was the central organizing principle of *ESL for Action* in 1987, this revised popular educator’s guide and the accompanying student book maintain Freirian grounding, yet expand to include other perspectives on power drawn from feminism, post-colonialism, and post-structuralism as well.

What is empowerment and power?

In the last several decades, power, powerlessness, and empowerment have entered the discussion of educational pedagogy, community psychology, and public health and have been particularly influential to Nina’s work (Shor & Freire, 1987; Rappaport, 1987; Wallerstein, 1992). With powerlessness identified as a risk factor for poor health, much thinking has gone into understanding empowerment, how to support people to develop a greater sense of their own power, as advocates for themselves and others, as members of groups and communities, and as participants in social movements to improve community and work conditions and to reduce inequities.

Within public health, empowerment has been defined on three levels: psychological, organizational, and community. Psychological empowerment includes people’s beliefs about their ability to engage in change efforts; their actual participation in change efforts; and their belief in the ability of groups to make a difference (Zimmerman, 2000). Part of what enables people to develop psychological empowerment is their connection to others, their sense of community with others, and their empathy with others—in other words, developing a “social identity.” This social identity can be fostered in the classroom or community setting through the process of dialogue and sharing their lives.

By engaging in actions as part of the classroom or in community-based educational strategies, students and community members may also strengthen organizational and community empowerment by participating in immigrant organizations, by demanding better health and safety conditions, by joining union organizing efforts, or by organizing around community issues.

Because the term empowerment has been used and misused in so many contexts, we define it here “as a social action process that promotes participation of people, groups, and communities towards the goals of increased individual and community control, political efficacy, improved quality of community life and social justice” (Wallerstein, 1992). Ron Labonte has cautioned that empowerment is not a state of mind that can be imposed or “given” to students by teachers or organizers (Labonte, 1994). Rather, empowerment is transactional, coming from processes generated with others and from within.

Changes resulting from participation with others can increase people's own capacity, feelings of control, and belief they can have a voice in political change. People may gain skills, such as working with others to plan a classroom activity, writing a letter to the newspaper, circulating petitions within the school or community, participating in demonstrations, speaking up at meetings, or even testifying at policy hearings. Ultimately, they may have a chance to influence change, whether it is personal (such as making decisions about jobs, future education, and families); or as part of the class (such as making recommendations for curriculum changes); or as part of a group and community (such as advocating for new policies and practices for how immigrant parents are treated at their children's school, or for improving access to the local health systems).

To better understand how to engage in empowerment processes in the classroom or community setting, we can look to post-colonial and post-structural theories. In earlier Freirian pedagogy, power was often defined as either/or: either you are oppressed or not, either you have false consciousness or not (Martin, 2001). But power structures and relationships are much more complex. Power that oppresses others may be overt and direct, such as military force or detaining immigrants without legal counsel on a national scale; or local, such as rigid work rules or supervisor styles that provide little or no opportunity for workers to have input into decisions.

Power may also be hidden and expressed indirectly through dominant ideologies. In North America, the common ideology is that the market economy creates equal opportunity and success is available to everyone who works hard. Phrases, such as "people on welfare are lazy," "it's your fault if you can't get a job," or "immigrants are taking away American jobs," become infused into society as community norms and beliefs. People on all sides of these statements can become complicit in their acceptance, from those in the dominant culture who may take these norms for granted, to the working poor and disenfranchised, who internalize a sense of powerlessness. The ideological realm is extremely powerful and can shape what we consider to be truth, what we take for granted, and what we internalize as impossible to change.

Yet the complexity of power relations also offers hope. In addition to understanding the ways "power over" people limits their lives, Michel Foucault, as a post-structuralist, offers an expanded view of power as productive and not just repressive (Foucault, 1977). Even without much reading in this area, many of his ideas make basic sense. Foucault examines how language shapes our understanding of power within a web of relationships and practices that permeate all institutions, families, and communities.

Power according to Foucault is based on multiple relationships that change according to context and role. A woman may have influence in her church or neighborhood association, for example, but may be frightened and abused in her family. An older man who has authority in his family may occupy the lowest rung of his worksite hierarchy. Because of the multiplicity of relations, power is inherently unstable and therefore able to be challenged. People and communities can engage in resistance through organizing or through community building in ways which may sometimes be hidden from the dominant culture. As people work to maintain their culture, they can develop new networks and pass on their beliefs, survival strategies, and strengths to their children.



David Bacon

Post-colonial theory, or how, in particular, communities of color create their understandings of the world may be helpful here. For example, one important post-colonial theory, “historical trauma,” has emerged within Native American communities, as they seek to understand their own history of genocide and resistance as well as patterns of drinking and other abuse. Defined as the cumulative emotional wounding over life spans and across generations, historical trauma can be applied to other communities who have faced attempted genocide or destruction of culture: the Jewish holocaust, the African slave trade to the Americas, the Japanese-American internment during World War II, and the different waves of political and economic refugees and immigrants who have come to North America. Reactions to these traumas can continue generations beyond the historical events themselves and be replicated in current relationships, i.e., people experiencing family survivor’s guilt or inability to see their own community’s strengths.

By naming this phenomenon as historical trauma, Native American communities have shifted the burden of blame and internalized oppression away from the individual. Native American educators and mental health providers have helped community members talk about historical trauma as a community-wide concern, with strategies therefore possible within community healing, support, and organizing mechanisms (Duran and Duran, 1995).

As one example only, historical trauma shows how psychological feelings of powerlessness are deeply embedded in a social context. In another arena of powerlessness, Jenny Horsman studied the impact on literacy instruction of violence against women, and the need, therefore, to develop educational programs that can enhance learning in the context of childhood and adult traumas (Horsman, 2000). She asked the question, “How does childhood abuse affect the experience of trying to learn to read as a child, and then

later in literacy classes as an adult?" Her research identified individual trauma, as well as institutional violence such as racism or restriction of women's choices, and women's feelings of despair and hopelessness.

In seeking to develop a response, Horsman argues that silence about these issues reinforces a "normalization" of violence. Interventions need to go beyond individual healing towards looking at ways communities must change. In classroom or community group settings, she advocates creating safe environments where people can tell their stories as they are comfortable, but where those who want a respite in their lives from crises can be respected. The goal is the same as in all problem-posing education: to create a space where people can gain belief in themselves and their own abilities to make changes in their lives.

Our intention in discussing these issues is not to "psychologize" our students as much as to recognize the historical and social context of people's lives and our responsibility as educators to understand the complexity of change. By promoting critical reflection and dialogue, we, as problem-posing educators, can provide support for people to rethink their choices; to create opportunities for healing through new understandings; to help themselves and their communities; and to acquire the language, literacy skills, and organizing tools to take their next steps.

Problem-posing dialogue enables people to connect their personal lives to each others' and to understand the social, political, economic, and historical contexts of their lives. Through personal stories, role plays, and dialogue, we can examine with people the multiple roles they have, sometimes with power and sometimes not. Dialogue enables people to share their strengths and the ways they may resist being labeled in situations where they may have less power. They may be able to articulate what and who supports them to make changes and what obstacles they still face. Problem-posing therefore expands beyond the individual's problems and concerns, and engages students and community members in their strengths and existing knowledge of how power operates in their worlds.

Adding a critical discussion of language can uncover how community-accepted words or beliefs often are used to serve powerful interests or to stereotype communities. Discussion of language can also serve the opposite agenda by uncovering the ways communities and students can use language to define their own identities and their own interests. In the tradition of critical language awareness, educators can work with students to unpack the relationships between language and power, examining how specific linguistic choices—the words that are used, the verb forms (imperative, passive, etc.)—convey meanings (Janks, 1993). Students can look at what information is included in texts, what is left out; they can compare different texts about the same subject to see how readers are positioned by the texts.

This discussion may seem overwhelming for us as educators or organizers in terms of developing meaningful learning opportunities and curriculum that address issues of power. In *Making Meaning, Making Change*, Elsa has articulated four elements that can help educators craft emergent and context-specific curricula based in people's lives: 1) a clear conception of the rationale for problem-posing education; 2) an overview of how to develop a collaborative participatory process with students or community members; 3) a set of tools for teaching the content of the program, whether it be language learning,

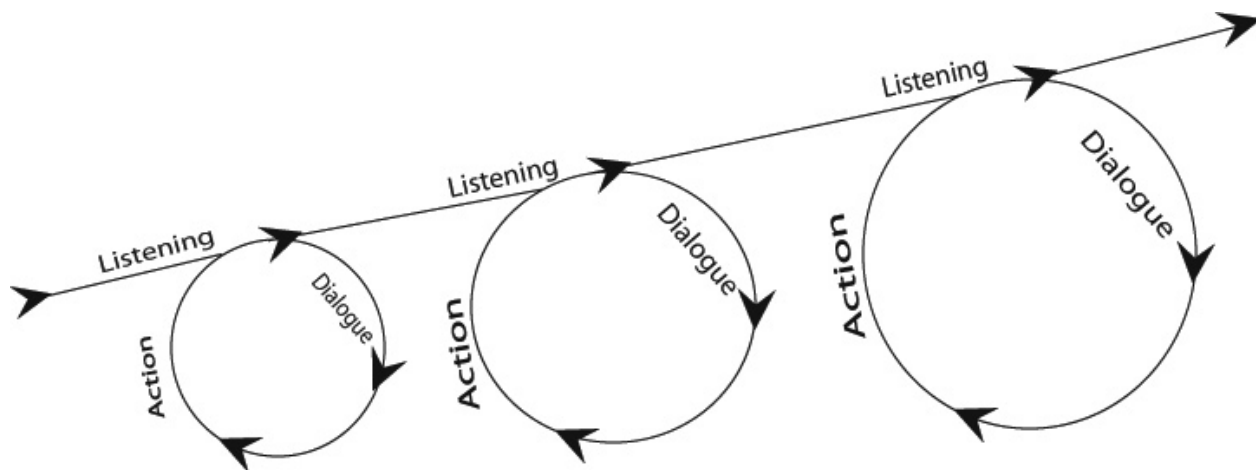
health and safety education, leadership, or advocacy; and 4) resources and dialogue with other co-workers, educators, or organizers to address the challenges of this process.

In this *Popular Educator's Guide* we address the first two of these elements in the present chapter; the third in chapter 2; the fourth in the resource list; and we show in chapter 3 how these elements can be integrated in a reflection-action cycle.

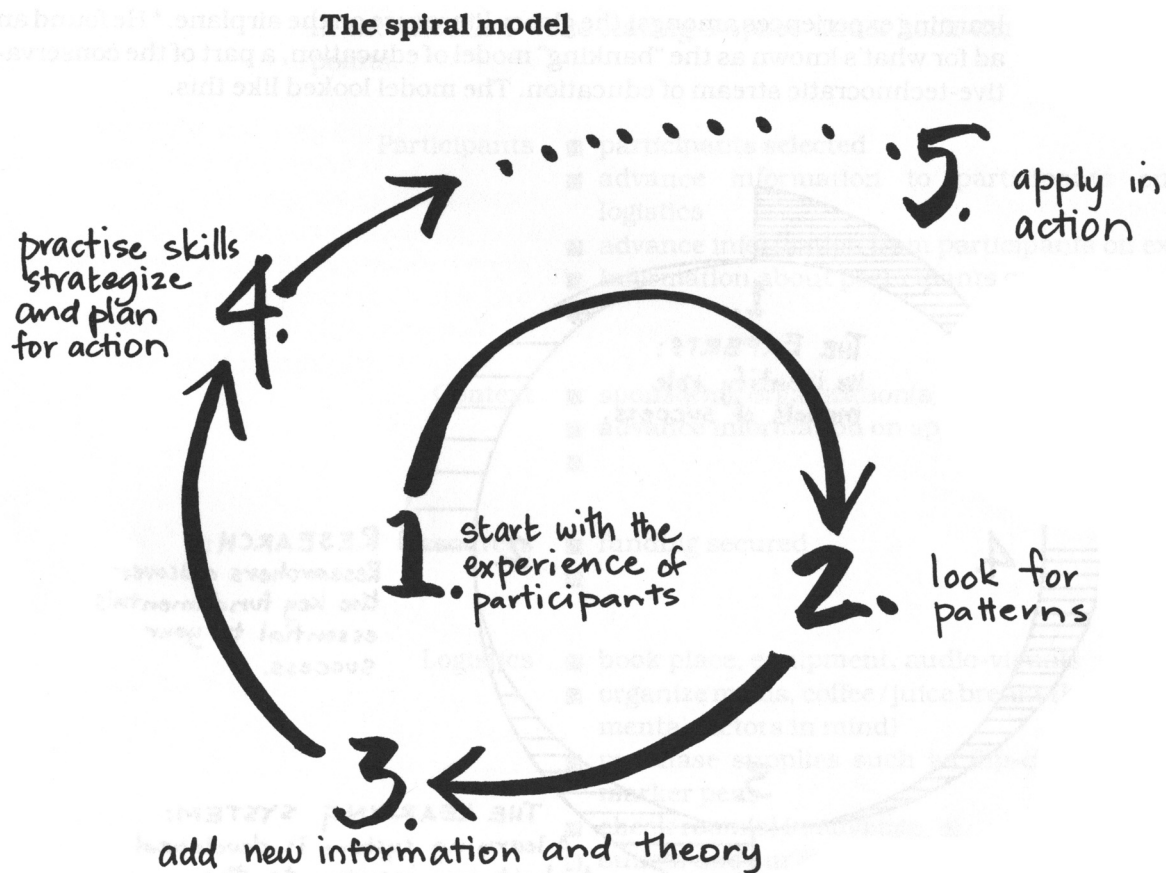
How do we engage in the cyclical process of reflection and action?

The goal of problem-posing is to inspire a continual cycle of reflection and action, or participatory praxis. “Praxis” goes beyond “practice” in that it embodies the continual interaction of action (or practices) and reflection on the actions. It entails reflecting on what worked and didn’t work in the actions, and choosing subsequent actions based on the dialogue. It is a cycle used at every step of the process, from creating the workshop or curriculum, to teaching/learning, to action. While community development and organizing may leave less time for self-reflection than we might like, this educational process is essential for re-thinking and planning the next strategies or steps.

For Nina, the methodology that has proven to be most useful in her work is the cyclical model of listening, dialogue, and action: listening (investigating the issues or generative themes of the community), dialogue (promoting critical discussion through various strategies including codes or triggers), and action (strategizing the changes students envision following their reflection). A process of listening and engaging in problem-posing dialogue follows each action as an ongoing opportunity to reflect on the successes and difficulties of the previous action, and to enable careful consideration of the next action.

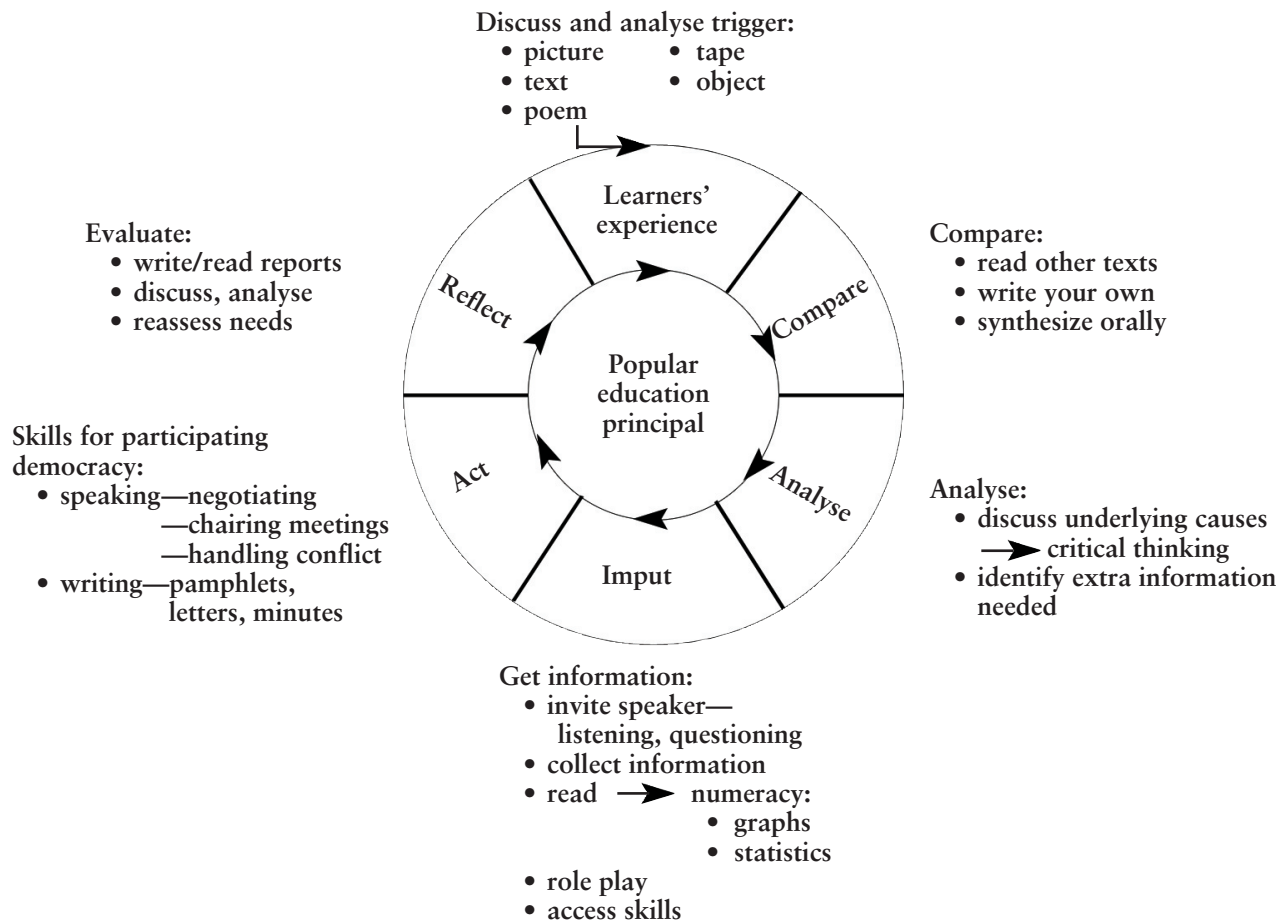


Many Freirian texts have embraced similar spirals or cyclical processes. From *Educating for a Change*, we see five steps to the cycle (Arnold, Burke, James, Martin, & Thomas, 1991). 1) Start with the experience of the participants; 2) ask them to look for patterns; 3) add new information or develop theory from their patterns; 4) practice skills and plan for action; and 5) apply skills in action, followed by a new cycle of reflecting on the action from the point of view of their experience. Each step has multiple questions that can help guide educators and participants.



Source: Arnold, R., Burke, B., James, C., Martin, D., & Thomas, B. (1991). *Education for a change*. Toronto, ON: Between the Lines and the Doris Marshall Institute for Education and Action. Permission to reprint.

From South Africa, Elsa has found Caroline Kerfoot's circle a useful tool for literacy and other adult education instruction (Kerfoot, 1993). 1) Start with a code based on a generative theme; 2) engage the learners' experience in the analysis of the code; 3) compare this experience with other texts and have students write their own texts; 4) engage in deeper analysis through critical thinking about the theme and about the underlying issues of the theme; 5) seek input through speakers, information, role plays; 6) develop action skills and plan for actions, such as speaking up in groups, negotiating, chairing meetings, handling conflict, writing up concerns or demands; and 7) reflect on or evaluate the actions. The cycle would then start again. This cycle was designed to foster, through adult ESL classes, the skills for participatory democracy in post-apartheid South Africa; it is a model that could be transposed to other contexts where students are becoming activists in social and political processes.



Source: Kerfoot, C. (1993). Participatory education in a South African context. *TESOL Quarterly*, 27(3), 431 – 447. Permission to reprint.

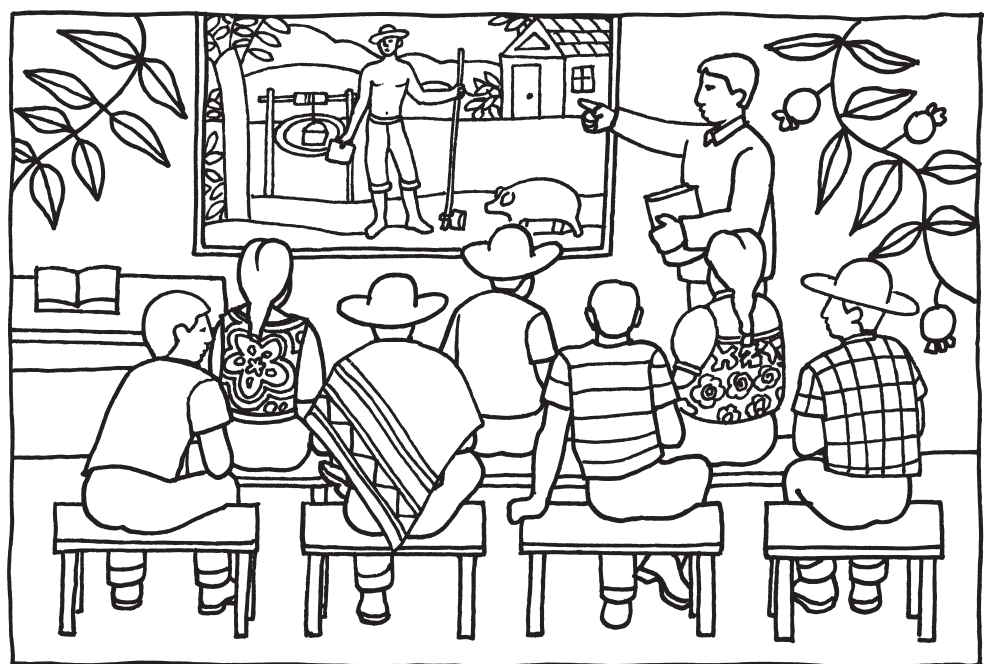
Pia Moriarty calls the praxis of reflection and action, knowing and doing, “deep learning” that has intense ramifications for educators engaged in the serious process of adult education (Moriarty, 1993). She reminds us that, for fully formed adults to move beyond their status quo, a status quo “that in some real sense is killing them,” they must inevitably undergo dislocation and loss, even as something new is being born.

Deep learning involves the whole body, blood and bone. It cannot confine itself to theoretical consciousness raising or cataloguing insightful analyses. . . . Deep learning is cultural, in that it involves the processes by which people make their lives together. . . . Its process is intensely disruptive and creative. Because it happens in groups, not only within the individual person, deep learning has the potential mass to make for social rumbles and shifts and earthquakes. It challenges people to begin working together to fashion a new reality *now*, as part of their shared learning process. (p. 127)

Moriarty cautions however that teachers are not the ones to cause the earthquakes as that would be “massive egotism. . . . The earthquakes are ripe for happening within the contradictions of the living world.” The role of the teacher however is to be willing to “enter consciously into the moments that open up for deep learning” (pp. 133-134).

LISTENING

Listening is the starting point for uncovering generative themes, those contradictions and issues that matter in people's lives. In Freire's early work developing culture circles in Brazil, to start the listening process, local artists drew pictures of people's daily lives: making pottery, hunting for food, feeding their families, farming.



Through discussion of these pictures, Freire listened for people’s view of their role in the world, a powerful generative theme. Did people reflect on their role as culture-makers: in what they taught their children, in how they made their living, in how they struggled to solve their problems? Culture circles also enabled listening for the generative words, words that would generate critical dialogue. Words like *trabalho* (work), *fome* (hunger), and *saude* (health) were then crafted into literacy curriculum to be used for language instruction as well as continued dialogue about people’s lives.

In contemporary ESL, adult education classrooms, public health, labor, health and safety, and other classrooms and community settings, we all “listen” to students or community participants in class, workshops, meetings, or during breaks. But which issues are important? Which are generative themes? And how do we listen for deeper understanding? What in fact are we listening for?

In typical ESL or literacy classrooms, for example, teachers often ask about our students’ families. The simple question “Where do you live?” may unwittingly send an undocumented worker into a state of anxiety or fear. Or we may discuss a work accident that kept a student home for a week. We may ask how and why the accident happened. But, do we compare versions of the accident: hers, her co-workers’, and her supervisor’s? What if she was afraid she would be fired? What if her manager did not tell her about Workers’ Compensation and she could not afford her medical bills? How sympathetic or devastating were her encounters with clinic staff, with her boss, with her family during the time she lost at work? Such encounters and underlying issues certainly affect the worker’s view of herself in the United States, her view of English, and possibly her view of the educator or organizer.

These emotions or “hidden voices” that students bring with them are essential for educators to be aware of, as these have the power to block learning. The blocks can be emotional (such as not believing your opinion matters or being afraid of repercussions if you speak out); structural (such as lack of contact with English speakers); socioeconomic (such as job instability or poor pay); or racial (such as discrimination). Yet the emotional power behind these hidden voices can also inspire learning. By helping students articulate their concerns or their generative themes, teachers help create the conditions for students to understand the blocks and move beyond them.

DIALOGUE

After identifying the issues, what do we do in the classroom to support safety in the dialogue? These issues by definition are loaded and offer no immediate solutions. For instance, how easily can students resolve their conflicts with American workers when their supervisors demand faster work? Our students often comply to get a good work record. American workers, on the other hand, may resent the increased pressure when they’ve worked to stabilize a slower pace. We need a structure for positive group dialogue, so people don’t give up in frustration or only articulate their resentments.

To Freire, dialogue provides the opportunity for people to situate their issues, their objects of learning, within a group context of reflection. “The object to be known is not an exclusive possession of one of the subjects doing the knowing, one of the people in the dialogue. . . . Knowledge is not the sole possession of the teacher, who gives knowledge to the students in a gracious gesture . . . the object to be known is put on the table between

the two subjects of knowing. They meet around it and through it for mutual inquiry” (Shor & Freire, 1987, p. 99).

One strategy for triggering mutual inquiry and dialogue about the issues is what Freire called codifications and we call codes or triggers. Codes are photographs, stories, pictures, images, songs, models, or other constructions that “codify” a generative theme of a conflict or problem into a physical form. The theme, which carries emotional or social force, is distilled into one de-personalized representation. A code is more than a visual aid or a structured language exercise, as its purpose is to trigger critical thinking and action. This is the strategy used in *English for Action* as a way to launch each lesson (it is explained in greater detail in chapter 2 of this *Popular Educator's Guide*). By objectifying issues through codes, followed by an inductive questioning strategy, students can ground their discussion in personal experience, integrate that experience into the broad social context, and together evolve alternatives.

Why might it be important to have a physical form or object to mediate dialogue? By our process of listening, we are dealing with loaded issues that may be too threatening to approach directly or too overwhelming or embarrassing to confront individually. A code on sexual harassment, for example, allows educators the opportunity to re-present the issue back to the group one step removed from personal incidents. People can project their concerns into the problem, and can offer similar experiences of friends or their own as they feel comfortable. If the discussion becomes too personal, you, as teacher, can redirect attention back to the code and the neutral object.

One example of the value of a code is a dialogue that Nina led with a group of high school girls from a youth leadership program. They were discussing a photograph of a young woman holding a toddler looking out from behind a chain link fence. They were talking about how they interpreted the feelings in the picture. Nina asked if they or anyone they knew felt like the people in the photograph. A student said, “I feel this way...sad, all the time, all the time. Everyone has to feel this way.” Taken aback by the intensity of her response, Nina noted to herself that she should talk with this girl after the group, but wanted to keep the focus on the group process and on the group's interpretation of the sadness.

Nina therefore returned to the code and asked, “What do you think could make this woman feel sad? What makes people in general feel sad?” Responses included: losing a job; getting there late; you want to be where you can't be; not being able to have ambition because of your environment. To take the dialogue into high school issues, Nina then asked, “What do you think about high school students? What makes young people feel sad there?” This started the youth talking about their school, about not having good teachers, about having too many substitutes, and about the poor school conditions without temperature control and with only one working bathroom. Continuing through the dialogue, they eventually talked about what issues their leadership group was addressing at the school. (See chapter 2 for the complete dialogue based on the code, p. 43)

In this process, neither the code nor the educator offers solutions as people grapple with constructing their own understandings of their realities. Freire's firm declaration of the role of dialogue is important to restate. “Dialogue is not a mere technique . . . which we use to get some results . . . or a tactic we use to make students our friends. That would make dialogue a technique for manipulation instead of illumination. On the contrary,

dialogue must be understood as something taking part in the very historical nature of human beings. That is, dialogue is a kind of necessary posture to the extent that humans have become more and more critically communicative beings. Dialogue is a moment where humans meet to reflect on their reality as they make and remake it” (Shor & Freire, 1987, p. 98). The goal is for participants in collective dialogue to come up with their own analysis and options for action.

ACTION

Actions, large or small, are the goals of a problem-posing learning process. As students or community workshop participants test out their analyses in the real world, they begin a deeper cycle of reflection that includes input from their new experiential base. Actions can start immediately in the classroom and continue throughout the learning process. Early actions may entail individuals conducting research or seeking new information on an issue, or bringing in photos about people’s own connections to the issue. Participants may then write up a mini-report on collected information, write stories about their pictures, or even develop codes for further dialogue. Later actions, such as writing a letter to the editor or contacting outside legal help, may be generated from the group to begin to address the issue.

Actions can also start outside the classroom or workshop, especially if community members are engaged in advocacy or the class is located in a community center with multiple community projects. The educators and learners can then take advantage of these actions and bring them into the classroom to discuss and interpret. Each time community members or students engage in action, the opportunity for reflection establishes the basis for praxis. As students understand the cycle of action and reflection, they can celebrate achievements, analyze mistakes or disappointments, and persevere in formulating new approaches to the problem.

Because it is inevitable that our actions may sometimes fail, critical analysis becomes even more important to prevent frustration and greater helplessness. The Naming the Moment Collective from Canada talks about analyzing conditions to assess which are the “limit-situations” and which are the “open spaces” that may have more opportunities for successful actions (Barndt, 1989). Community organizers talk about “selecting issues” that are winnable and that build constituencies (Minkler, 2004). These are skills that are all part of the critical thinking repertoire.

An important action strategy is the cultivation of allies to support community member and student actions (Bishop, 2002). Problem-posing educators can be allies and can support the reaching out to others. Although lawsuits can create policy change based on the action of a single individual, much social change depends on the development of group efforts, with media involvement, pressure on politicians, and ability to mobilize public opinion and action.

Yet actions don’t emerge in a vacuum. People participate in issues that are meaningful to them, and they may choose to participate in actions around those issues because they have networks of friends and allies who encourage them. It is a given that if we want people to show up for a neighborhood meeting, it is not enough to put flyers in mailboxes. Door to door recruitment, phone calls from people we know, an appeal from a friend to participate, these are the strategies that can create greater participation in actions.



David Bacon

Action, just like dialogue and critical thinking, is a developmental process. People choose the actions that seem doable, and are appropriate within their work and community context. Organizing skills can be taught as part of problem-posing classrooms, but educators may see only the beginning of students' changes. We may see actions related to researching a topic, group classroom projects, or possibly actions directed outward, such as letters or petitions crafted in class to challenge a particular issue. It is our hope, however, that successes within a safe environment enable people to engage in praxis, individually and collectively, for themselves, their families, and their communities.

How do we develop a problem-posing curriculum and process?

The problem-posing cycle of reflection and action using codes, dialogue, analysis, and action exercises may be a fluid process, but it requires careful development and continual engagement with the community or students. How do we know we have listened for the appropriate generative themes? How do we know what codes to develop (or if we should develop codes) to discuss the generative theme? And how do we support concerted action, leading back to reflection and hope for change?

As an example of developing a problem-posing workshop, a community organizer and substance-abuse counselor discussed with Nina his interest in presenting “desire” as a generative theme for people who struggle with addictions. This organizer had been asked to pull together an education workshop for therapists and wanted to engage participants in thinking more deeply about the conflicts related to “desire” that their clients faced. Desire has both attractive qualities (people deserve to have what they need and want in life) and negative consequences, such as abusers thinking it is their fault they can't overcome the addiction even though treatment options are extremely limited. In the larger society, desire is manipulated through advertisements and marketing strategies that can make people with few resources feel even more impoverished. How could this organizer generate critical discussion on the social, historical, cultural, and personal context of desire? Should he plan to hold an open-ended brainstorm? Or what codes might be appropriate?

One of his ideas was to use short clips from the video, *Affluenza*, which insightfully, if humorously, analyzes U.S. consumerist obsessions and the dire consequences of over-extended credit, bankruptcy, and inequitable distribution of resources (*Affluenza*, 1998). As a code, these video clips could provide a focused structure to engage in dialogue about both the societal and personal issues related to desire, and would lead to different action steps, depending whether the participants were therapists, organizers, or community members. The value of codes is in the focus, the ability to re-present the different sides of an issue, the ability of participants to project their own interpretations, and the ability of people to collectively build strategies that are appropriate for their own practice.

What are our own problem-posing themes as educators?

Before detailing tools that engage students and community members in listening, in dialogue, and in action (see chapter 2), we thought it useful to pose some questions for ourselves as educators, so that we can explore our own issues, engage in a self-reflective dialogue, and imagine different sets of actions based on these reflections.

As Elsa has articulated elsewhere, the field of problem-posing Freirian education has become replete with myths of “how it is supposed to be done,” or “how we as teachers are supposed to become facilitators of the process” (Auerbach, 2001). These myths she has labeled “Freire tales,” based not so much on Freire’s writings (largely philosophical, inspirational, or narratives of his experience), but on the interpretations over the years that have sometimes reduced his philosophy to method or dogma. We suggest these Freire tales be unpacked and explored so we don’t fall prey to single-mindedness or dogmatism ourselves. By “problematizing” these myths and tales for our own reflection, we can continue to become more skillful in our educational processes and personal growth.

Here are five myths from our own experience and interpretation that deserve dialogue and reflection:

- Freire Tale 1. Freirian education is a learner-centered approach.
- Freire Tale 2. Freirian education requires teachers to be political activists.
- Freire Tale 3. Freirian education focuses too much on problems.
- Freire Tale 4. Freire is out-dated, with an analysis that is overly class-based and does not represent the current complex realities.
- Freire Tale 5. Freirian education is a method or technique.

FREIRE TALE 1. FREIRIAN EDUCATION IS LEARNER-CENTERED.

Learner-centeredness has been in vogue in educational pedagogy since Malcolm Knowles defined andragogy and espoused the central role of adult learners in their own education. In recent years, learner-centeredness has been narrowly defined as individual goal setting and tailoring of curriculum to meet individual needs. Although potentially useful for individuals, this model can become a means of victim-blaming, i.e., it is the students’ lack of goal setting or lack of attention to their own skill deficiency that inhibits their progress. Even for those educators who espouse a broader community-based learner-centered perspective, there is confusion about how learner-centeredness is seen from a Freirian problem-posing perspective. Is it okay just to get the students talking? Is it okay to do whatever the students want to do? What in fact is the role of the educator?

Freire has often declared that education is co-learning: “A cultural circle is a live and creative dialogue in which everyone knows some things and does not know others, in which all seek together to know more. This is why you, as the coordinator of a cultural circle, must be humble, so that you can grow with the group, instead of losing your humility and claiming to direct the group, once it is animated” (Freire, 1971).

Although some may interpret this statement as liquidating the educator’s role, Freire has clearly articulated the responsibility of the educator to direct the learning process beyond neutral facilitation. “Dialogue does not exist in a political vacuum. It is not a ‘free space’ where you may do what you want. Dialogue takes place inside some kind

of program and context. . . . To achieve the goals of transformation, dialogue implies responsibility, directiveness, determination, discipline, objectives. . . . Nevertheless, a dialogical situation implies the absence of authoritarianism” (Shor & Freire, 1987, p. 102). He further states, “When I am against the authoritarian position, I am not trying to fall into a laissez-faire position. When I criticize manipulation, I do not want to fall into a false and nonexistent nondirectivity of education. For me, education is always directive, always. The question is to know towards what and with whom is it directive. I don't believe in self-liberation. Liberation is a social act” (Shor & Freire, 1987, p. 109).

And hence our paradox: How can educators both accept the role and responsibility to direct and create conditions for learning situated in the context of people's lives and, at the same time, continue to be co-learners responsive to the group process who also gain new understandings through collective reflection. Freire asks us to be comfortable with the contradiction that human action can contain both itself and its opposite. Problem-posing education is much more than encouraging learner participation as an end in itself. Yet encouraging learner participation is certainly one goal. Problem-posing education means accepting the responsibility to identify common issues in students' lives, to engage students in critical dialogue about these issues, and to provide opportunities and resources for students to develop strategies and potential actions.

Freirian education is indeed learner-centered and participatory, but it is targeted and directed towards thoughtful change. Co-learning is inevitable as teachers learn about students' interpretation of their lives and their own ideas or strategies for making changes. As teachers, we have our own sets of limitations, our own issues, our own unresolved analyses. If we knew the “answers” about how to engage in societal transformation, then we wouldn't need to engage in co-learning. Fortunately or unfortunately, none of us can do it alone, and co-learning remains a central part of the process. However, as educators we have an essential responsibility to frame questions, to provide safe learning opportunities, to bring in resources, to teach language, to be open to difference, yet to push boundaries of thought to move towards change.

We also can't ignore, in the ideology of co-learning, that we as educators do have “power” over our students. In academic settings, we assign grades; in community college or citizenship classes, we can disenroll students for insufficient attendance. In all educational and in many community settings, we represent “knowledge,” “expertise,” and real or perceived “authority.” We may be seen as having gate-keeping power to open or close educational opportunities. Our expertise is often seen as more than the students' or community members', with people perceiving their own knowledge as less than the “teacher's.”

There are potentially two responses to this issue: one is to ignore the difference and insist that our relations with students are equal; the other is to acknowledge the responsibility of the power we have or that our students may turn over to us. We suggest it is more honest to acknowledge the power relationships, and to develop genuine relationships of partnering in the learning process, without having to dismiss our own expertise or our own access to resources. Having access to resources can be a tremendous benefit in a community or classroom setting and will be much appreciated by community members and students. Power issues between educator and community member/student also can provide a safe arena for reflection on authority and expertise, and for practicing behaviors and responses people could adopt to authority outside the classroom.

Even if our power differences don't come directly into the classroom dialogue, they are part of a hidden subtext. There is no easy resolution to this balancing act of being a mutual learner and having power that can be exercised in positive and potentially negative ways. We suggest, however, that our own reflection as educators can help keep us honest. We can work to exercise our power to help create a supportive classroom environment or community process so that people want to participate, to continue to learn new skills, and to continue to engage in the processes of dialogue and self-reflection that motivate them to take actions. We can explicitly make space for students' resistance to what is happening in the classroom; we can acknowledge our own privilege. Our own attempts to build students' beliefs in their individual and collective knowledge is a critical strategy for creating a partnership of learning

FREIRE TALE 2. FREIRIAN EDUCATION EXPECTS US TO BECOME POLITICAL ACTIVISTS.

Clearly it is impossible to be a problem-posing educator without believing in social change and social justice. At the same time, however, we have to be careful not to impose our own beliefs. We have a responsibility as educators to provide support for students to articulate their own values, opinions, and political goals.

The real myth of course is that education can be apolitical. As Freire so clearly has articulated, either education domesticates people or it encourages their liberation. So what does it mean for each of us to be engaged in political education? How can we use educational processes to uncover power bases that restrict choices for our students, yet at the same time not impose our politics?

In Nina's graduate health classes, she uses readings about the role of poverty in health to challenge students to move beyond the popular prejudices that people are individually to blame or solely responsible as individuals to change the behaviors, such as smoking or poor nutrition, that harm their health. These readings provide an open window for critical reflection about the questions: What are the interactions between social context and individual behaviors? What are the pathways by which individual and socio-economic factors, such as lack of access to fruits and vegetables in poorer neighborhoods, influence health? Given the contributing role of poverty and lack of access to services, what are the responses that could be undertaken to improve health? While Nina as educator assumes the responsibility of ensuring that the questions and scientific issues are presented, students have to identify which strategies, based on the research evidence and their own experience, might be appropriate in specific cultural or ethnic minority communities. They need to identify which questions and answers are most relevant for themselves as emerging public health professionals.

In Elsa's teacher education classes, she presents a range of pedagogical paradigms that are informed by different ideologies (with Freirian or participatory approaches as one among several). She asks students to reflect on how each positions adult learners in relation to the social contexts of their lives. Students work through each paradigm in hands-on exercises, trying out what they might look like in practice. She also teaches students to become researchers who investigate the circumstances and issues that immigrants and refugees face in their daily lives. As her students explore the various approaches and their implications for adult learners, as well as the actual contexts of immigrants' lives, they draw their own conclusions. At the same time, Elsa is explicit

about her own ideological biases and her reasons for embracing participatory/Freirian approaches. She always invites students to critique her analyses and creates space for their resistances. Students pose their own problems regarding issues and practice, and together the class works through a problem-posing process in addressing them. It is often the case that students embrace some aspects of participatory education but not others (depending on their own stances, experiences, and contexts of practice).

Both Nina and Elsa have asked students in their teacher trainer/empowerment classes to write journals engaging in an honest reflection of their responses to the readings, class discussion, and class exercises. Journal excerpts can be shared (anonymously) to elicit further dialogue around the collective text.

While, over the years, some Freirian programs, in both local and national contexts, may have used problem-posing to impose a political viewpoint, the nuances of dialogue are much more complex. The question for all of us as consciously political educators is how to ensure the primacy of critical dialogue and political analysis so people can learn and develop the self-confidence to engage in change within themselves and as members of their communities.

Rachel Martin (2001) and others have argued that the Freirian approach is inherently elitist through positioning educators and organizers as more critical and enlightened than students and community members. We argue, on the other hand, that elitism is not inherent to the process of problem-posing. Though many of us as educators and organizers have political views, most of us know that the answers are not simple and we need to combine our knowledge with that of others, be they local community members, students, colleagues, or fellow activists. We appreciate however the concern not to become elitist. We value being conscious of the need, as educators and organizers, to remain humble and to be good listeners rather than assuming that we know what is best for any community.

FREIRE TALE 3. FREIRIAN EDUCATION FOCUSES TOO MUCH ON PROBLEMS.

The third myth takes the focus on politics to the inevitable question: Isn't this approach too pessimistic, dealing always with people's problems? What if students want the classroom to be a space to escape the harsh realities of their lives? In health classes, Nina often gets the question: Why can't we focus on community assets and strengths as motivators for change, rather than problems? In ESL and literacy classes, teachers often get concerned that they will have to become therapists and solve students' problems. For both health and basic adult education teachers, the fear can be quite real: How do we handle discussion of issues that are too personal?

To us, the focus on problem-posing is not on "problems" *per se*, but on the "generative themes" of people's lives, those issues that generate emotional and social connection, that resonate with what people think and care about, that express their concerns about the obstacles they face, and that include people's visions and strengths to build their own futures. It is a focus on people's realities, and what greater motivator than people's own life issues to learn a language, and to learn about the society we live in.

The concern that educators are not therapists or therapeutically trained is real and several safeguards can be considered. Are there social workers or psychologists who could be involved? Often, health promotion/disease prevention programs engage psychological

consultants for just that reason, in case someone is in need. ESL/literacy programs can do the same.

Yet, the key is not to believe that educators can solve all problems for their students or that classes can provide “therapy” for individual problems. Our goal is “problem-posing,” not “problem-solving.” The task of the educator is to build links between people’s personal lives so that they see common threads and analyze their common social concerns. As part of building community within the classroom, laughter is also an important tool within the educational repertoire. We suggest that laughter and analysis of generative themes are not antithetical, and in fact may help create a safe environment to deal with loaded issues.

In addition to educators, class members and fellow community members are a key resource. Support for discussion of issues can help people recognize they can find their own resources outside of class. Educators can create homework assignments to identify, or visit, groups working on an issue. Material from these resources can serve as language or content lessons. If needed, teachers can always speak to students outside of class and refer them to other agencies or sources of personal assistance.

Finally, it is important to realize that we as educators cannot necessarily provide what is needed. Despite all our good intentions, we aren’t “in control” of what may occur as a result of our educational processes. We may support critical thinking and actions, but students and community members may choose their own actions in subsequent years and we may never know the results of our teachings or classroom interactions. We need always to be mindful that people are finding their own directions. Knowing our own limits as educators is helpful for ensuring we focus on building community awareness and problem-posing skills, and on providing opportunities for people to apply these skills themselves.

FREIRE TALE 4. FREIRE IS OUT-DATED, WITH AN ANALYSIS THAT IS OVERLY CLASS-BASED, AND DOES NOT REPRESENT THE CURRENT MORE COMPLEX REALITIES.

Some educators in the last two decades have critiqued Freire for having a simplistic view of the world, saying that he relied too much on an economic and class-based analysis, and that he defined oppression as a single universal shared condition (Martin, 2001; Weiler, 1991). While Freire in his later writings became aware of his male-centered language, it is true that he did not specifically write about structural and perceived discrimination for women; for minorities in the United States, Canada, or Europe; for gay, lesbian, and transgendered people; nor for indigenous and other marginalized groups. Nor did he discuss issues of white privilege, where people from the dominant culture perceive their opportunities as value-free (McIntosh, 1989).

Rather than focus on a critique of Freire’s limitations, however, we suggest that his inspiration remains, and it is up to us as educators to struggle with the more complex realities. We can learn from our colleagues, from the literature, and from our experience with communities and with our students about the challenges and strengths embedded in multiple power relationships and identities. We can learn about people’s resistance and social movements. We can bring our own questions and thoughts to the educational process.

As the majority of educators in ESL, literacy, adult and health education still come

from the dominant culture, we have to learn about our own privileges (e.g., as white, native speakers of English—with access to resources) and how they might impact the learning process. Even those of us who are white and pro-actively anti-racist may not realize how often white privilege unconsciously influences our thoughts. Our white privilege may be reflected in such conditions as an assumed comfort level to participate in professional conferences primarily composed of European-Americans, our lack of questioning when the term “flesh” is used to depict a pinkish beige color, or our unconscious domination of multiracial discussions and meetings. These issues represent an opportunity for co-learning, mutual exploration, and humility.

As Rachel Martin (2001) argues, educators in general (and Freirian educators in particular) rarely explore the role of the psychological and of the unconscious fantasies, fears, and desires that facilitate motivation yet also limit life actions and decisions. She suggests that we as educators face the same dilemmas, and that more doors can be open to political engagement if we explore these dilemmas with our students. We agree that problem-posing should incorporate these questions about what facilitates and what blocks action. For example, what are the ways people talk that indicate they don't believe they can take action? What are their fears? Why is it difficult to engage in action? Alternatively, what do people believe they can do? What are people doing already to improve their lives? All of these questions can only enrich the dialogue.

FREIRE TALE 5. FREIRIAN EDUCATION IS A METHOD.

Finally, a core myth we may have inadvertently promoted ourselves is that Freire's work provides a methodology that is linear, concise, and easy to follow. In its simplest presentation, Freirian problem-posing can unintentionally become relegated to a questioning technique, rather than a comprehensive political educational approach. In these last decades, some adult education programs, attributed to Freirian inspiration, have been implemented devoid of critical analysis and political goals.

Even as we ask you to keep reading in this *Popular Educator's Guide*, there is a danger of promoting a simplistic understanding. Although tools and questioning strategies are helpful to educators (and we will present many in the next chapter), the most important message is that problem-posing dialogue is teaching and learning, reflection and action. Problem-posing supports educators to engage in critical dialogue using multiple methods, multiple questions, and multiple strategies. For all of us, this means continuing to develop our own tools and strategies rather than adhering to a single method or technique.

We do know that problem-posing education is challenging, as we try and link our educational efforts with social change. However, as Tim Wise said in a speech at Washington State University, quoting Desmond Tutu: “You do not do the things you do because other people will necessarily join you in the doing of them or because they will ultimately prove to be successful. You do the things that you do because the things you are doing are right” (Wise, 2002). Wise went on to say, “. . . as soon as I heard that, I let go of the need to be successful, though the goal is still there; and I realized that when it comes to overall justice, I probably won't see it.”

How can we address these challenges in moving toward our vision? An explicit strategy for problematizing our own teacher issues, as we persevere in our goals, is to ask

ourselves to write journals that engage in an honest reflection of our own responses to our educational processes, and to what worked and what didn't in the group dialogues and actions.

A second strategy for teachers and others engaged in these kinds of educational processes is to develop “sharing” groups of colleagues and allies to try out ideas, to discuss failures, and to celebrate successes. Like our students, we as educators need support to develop our educational ideas, to enhance our social identity as problem-posing educators, to believe in our collective abilities, and to maintain commitment to this work.

Now that we've presented the overall background to Freirian problem-posing ideas, the framework of power as a context for our educational processes, the overall approach of praxis (reflection/action, and listening/dialogue/action), and some of our own dilemmas and paradoxes as educators, we move to the next chapter that presents tools and approaches for applying these ideas in classroom and community settings.

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Chapter 2

Teaching Strategies and Tools

Introduction

Being an educator, as we all know, is more than teaching content, whether the focus is English grammar or providing health and safety information. Problem-posing gives people the opportunity to express opinions and feelings, to push against barriers in their lives, and to take actions and risks in unfamiliar situations. Educational sessions also work best if learners have the opportunity to engage in multiple learning modalities: to listen; view slides, videos, and other visuals; ask questions; simulate situations; role play; read; write; practice hands-on activities; make presentations; and discuss critical issues.

An underlying assumption of problem-posing in the ESL classroom is that people develop linguistic competence through listening and directed conversation in addition to more explicit language instruction. Teaching strategies are most effective when they provide the opportunity for people to interact. And what will engage people in talking most readily? Their lives and the issues that affect them. Group strategies such as dialogues, pair work, and conversation circles create a supportive atmosphere where students can overcome reticence and gain language confidence.

Yet, as Freire suggests, "Education should never be looked at in isolation. It is not that methods and techniques are not important. But they must serve the objectives contained in the cultural plan" (Freire, 1978). The teaching strategies and tools presented in this chapter are for multiple educator audiences. While some strategies and tools specifically address language instruction to accompany the student book, *English for Action*, all of the following strategies and tools are intended to provide ideas for fostering socially engaged and critically conscious communities.

In the beginning of any classroom, workshop, or community-building effort it is important to set the stage for an environment of trust and co-learning. In ESL classes, early in the curriculum this might take the form of asking students to share something about themselves so they can be conscious of their own knowledge. You may ask what they do. They may reply, "I'm a student. I'm a mechanic. I'm a housewife." This exercise allows you to promote the perspective that students have knowledge by next asking, "Are you a teacher?" They may say no, but what happens when you ask, "What can you teach? What can you teach me?" If they have trouble answering, you can suggest, "Can you teach Vietnamese? Can you teach me to cook Mexican food?"

For more in-depth discussion, students may pair up and ask each other the question, "What can you teach me?" (For similar exercises, see *English for Action*, units 1 and 2). Student responses can be shared and compiled into a resource or assets inventory. This simple exercise, which pairs students as peer learners and educators, can bolster student confidence and set the classroom atmosphere for students and teachers to approach learning as a mutual exchange. It also may result in a compilation of resources for further use.

In community settings or workshops, educators often ask the group to brainstorm

the group norms they agree to honor during the time they are working together. These group norms may include: listening to each other, not interrupting, not taking what is said personally, being open to conflict and conflict resolution, and respecting differences. Group norm setting, and asking for people's expectations regarding the workshop or class, help set the stage for listening.

Listening in class or in structured settings

As discussed in the previous chapter, a listening stance enables problem-posing educators and organizers to identify student needs, issues, concerns, and hopes—in other words, their generative themes. In problem-posing, unlike other competency-based approaches, listening is not a “needs assessment” completed before the beginning of class or a workshop, nor is listening an effort undertaken by the educator alone. Generative themes are those issues from people's daily lives that they feel strongly about, that have high emotional impact, that motivate people to action. As people articulate their themes, listening becomes an ongoing process over time, involving both educators and students or community members in a mutual effort.

Usually, at the beginning, we as educators, do not know exactly what we are looking for. We can seek therefore to listen for generative themes—through our observations and through direct questions to learners in the class, or to other community members for background information. Many of these issues will be on the surface, yet others will be hidden and will take conscious listening to discover. General categories to listen for include family issues, work conditions and relationships, monetary problems, interaction of family and work life, cultural differences, historical trends, and future hopes for students. Specific questions to consider might include: “What are the problems you are facing in your life now? What angers, frustrates or discourages you the most on a daily basis? What do you most fear in your children's lives? What do you hope will be better for your children in the future? What do you dream of accomplishing before you die? What is your goal for the next three years? What is the best thing about the community you live in? What is the worst thing about it?” (ACBE, 1988). Other questions for ESL classes might include: “What makes it hard for you to come to class? What gets in the way of learning English?”

There are many group exercises that simultaneously build community and can serve to uncover generative themes. One such exercise is the River of Life (Feldblum, Wallerstein, Varela, & Collins, 1994). The educator or workshop leader hands out butcher paper, crayons, and markers, and asks participants to think of their life as a river. Where did they come from? What were their family or cultural influences—the springs and tributaries—that contributed to forming them in their childhood, in their adolescence, and in their early and later adulthood. For immigrants and refugees, in fact for all of us, much of our lives is filled with boulders, dams, churning rapids, waterfalls. Other times in our lives, the river may become a calm pool or a gentle stream. New influences or tributaries come in at different times. Ask students to draw this river, with its tributaries, its dams, its calm pools, its rapids, its waterfalls, considering what they want to share with others, (knowing that everyone has private areas of life that would not be shared). The use of this exercise can vary. If there is time or interest, people can share the river with the entire group. If

this is overwhelming, then two to three people can get together and share their stories. After the small group sharing, the whole group would then identify common themes, common barriers that people have faced, and the common strengths and influences that have sustained them and their families. (*English for Action* has other life journey exercises, as do many of the resources in the Appendix to this *Guide*.)

A problem map also may uncover generative themes. People are asked in pairs or small groups to come up with a critical issue in their community or workplace that they'd like to work on. They are then asked to visually represent this issue on a large piece of butcher paper to present to the larger group (even if they are not “artists”). These visuals can encourage the group to listen to each other and identify areas (or generative themes) they'd like to work on within the class or community setting.

In addition to structured activities where educators can listen, often students voice their concerns in informal conversations during breaks, before or after class. These concerns can be elaborated in class as a lesson. Sometimes, discussion in students' first language (or phrases that require translation) helps students explore the issue initially. With follow-up in English, the use of first language deepens students' critical analysis and may facilitate more sophisticated use of the English language.

Listening outside class

Problem-posing fosters a conscious team effort for out-of-class listening. Student inquiry expands educators' eyes and ears, especially if we do not have access to people's worksites or communities. Have students consider themselves observers and reporters of their own lives. In each *English for Action* unit, exercises in seeking new information suggest specific investigations of work themes. In fact, gathering data is the first set of action steps that can support deepened dialogue about the issues.

Three tools of anthropological research are helpful for educators and students or community members: observation, interviews, and document analysis. Observing suggests a reawakening of wonder and of watching a situation with new eyes. People who have worked in a workplace or lived in a community for a long time may be desensitized to their surroundings. Often, people have never questioned reasons behind the structure or relations at work, or why they are treated well or not in their communities. Invite students or workshop participants to imagine they are entering their workplace or neighborhood for the first time. At work, what do they notice about production speed, people's interactions, length of time people stand or sit in the same position, level of noise, differences between shifts? In their communities, what do they notice about social interaction on the streets, where is it safe to be, at what times, how far away are police, fire, and medical services, are there grocery stores with a range of fresh foods, are there vacant lots, graffiti, etc.? Both in worksites and neighborhoods, people can map their communities with physical and social markers and share these maps. (Risk maps are discussed later.)

If possible, as an educator, take any opportunity to visit worksites or community neighborhoods at different times of day and on different occasions. To observe more closely, use tools to record what you see: photographs, drawings of dynamics between people, written notes of conversations or descriptions of place. What are people talking

about with the strongest feeling, at laundromats, grocery stores, bus stations? With learners engaged as co-participants in the listening process, they can generate their own notes, their own drawings or photos. In the classroom, these can be refined into visual aids, charts, collages, artwork, or role plays for further listening and discussion. Photographs, taken by educators or students, may give a new perspective on the ordinary, such as a juxtaposition of events, previously unnoticed.

Another tool for listening is the familiar or found object that people use daily at home or at work. These may be cultural or family artifacts, photographs, drawings, work tools, chemical labels—anything that facilitates understanding of students' environment. For instance, ask people to bring something from home or work that they are proud of or concerned about. Sharing objects encourages students to get to know each other better and to value each other's cultures, lives, and work.

To keep exploring workplaces, encourage students to observe co-workers' conversations. Do conversations change when supervisors leave the work area? From their listening, what do students begin to wonder about their own workplaces? Systematic notetaking about whom students talk to, how often, in what language, and about what topics can be part of students' own needs assessments.

The second strategy of interviews calls for direct interaction with others. What do students or community members want to ask their fellow immigrants or neighbors, their American co-workers, or supervisors? Peer interviews in class as a constant learning activity throughout the curriculum can also prepare people to feel more comfortable asking others questions outside the classroom. People can ask questions during everyday conversation or through formal interviews. Informally, students may ask for more information or clarification of an issue being discussed. Formal interviews require planning and preparing a guide or list of interview questions. Each student then interviews one or two people and brings back responses for a class discussion.

The third strategy is making lesson plans out of documents brought into class. Documents from work, such as company policies, union contracts, health and safety injury logs, may uncover new issues, provide a historical context, or give supporting evidence for a problem students are discussing. Documents in a community may include newspaper stories, agency newsletters, school or government communications, even grocery store flyers. Educating people about the different kinds of documents, who writes them, how they are written, whether they dictate policy, and whether they can be challenged is a valuable skill that can be applied across educational and organizing settings.

A fourth strategy is using charts to elicit and systematize information that participants contribute from their own lives. Charts can focus on a wide range of content from participants' life histories (e.g., where they are from, why they left their countries, etc.) to language or literacy usage documentation (e.g., where, when, and why they use English) to workplace problems (e.g., jobs held by men vs. women, North Americans vs. immigrants, etc.). These charts serve several functions: they are a visual representation of content provided by learners that allows for comparison and analysis of patterns. In ESL classes, they are also a basis for grammar lessons: students can make sentences using the information on the chart, using basic sentence patterns but incorporating real content from the information on the charts. Finally, the charts can provide documentation that

can be used in taking action on a problem. They provide a structured tool for gathering and utilizing participants' own knowledge.

These participatory research strategies provide a structure for students to be co-investigators in their learning. Through investigation, students develop tools for critical analysis, use their new skills (including English) outside the classroom, and realize their potential for participating in decision making.

Dialogue with codes

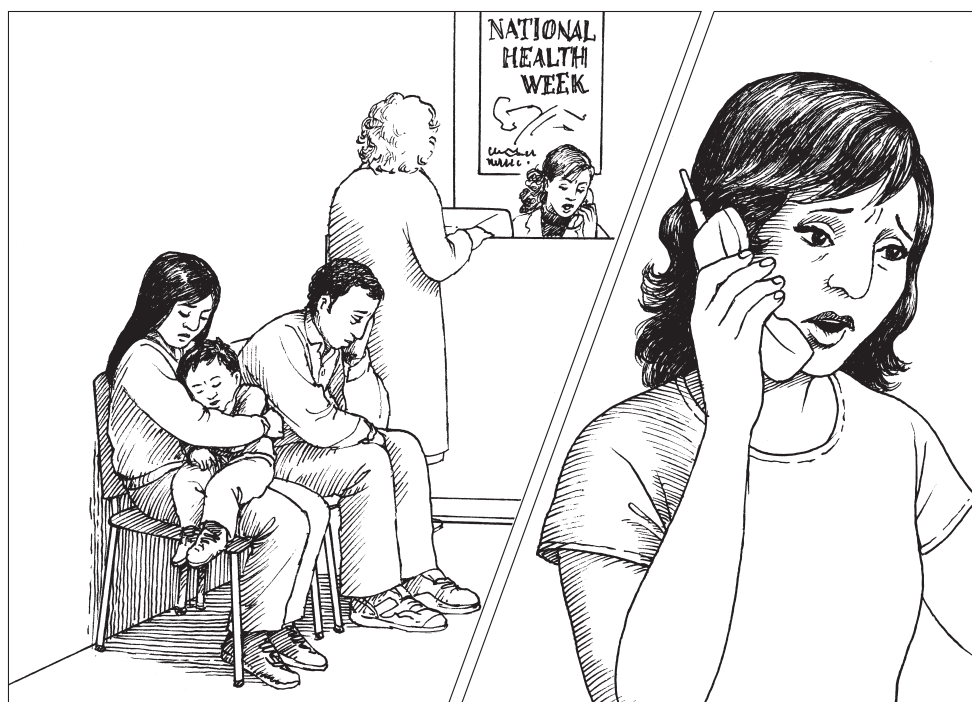
Dialogue leading to actions about issues is the essence of a problem-posing educational strategy. Codes or codifications (from Freire's Portuguese, *codificação*)—sometimes called triggers—introduced in the previous chapter, are one mechanism to trigger or animate dialogue. A code is a concrete physical representation of a particularly critical issue that has come up during the listening phase. Developed by educators initially, or by students and community members as they learn the process, codes can take many forms: a written dialogue, a story, a photograph, a skit, a collage, or a song. No matter what the form, a code re-presents people's reality back to them and allows them to project their emotional and social responses in a focused fashion. An effective code should have the following characteristics:

- It should represent a familiar problem situation immediately recognizable by this group.
- It should be presented as a problem with many sides or contradictions to avoid conveying a specific bias.
- It should focus on one concern at a time, but not in a fragmented way; the historical, cultural, and/or social connections in students' lives should be suggested.
- It should be open-ended and not provide solutions; any resolution or strategies for addressing the problem should emerge from the group discussion.
- The problem should not be overwhelming, but should offer possibilities for group affirmation and small actions toward change.

When writing codes, keep in mind certain guidelines. Focus on a generative theme or problem, but let it unfold through the interaction of characters. It's often easiest if you choose several characters who have different points of view around the issue. Brainstorm and write down statements that the characters might say to express that view. Then craft these statements into a story, role play, or visual portrayal. Leave the problem unresolved so people can come to their own conclusions. Make it emotionally involving to ensure a strong participant reaction. Keep stories relatively brief, i.e., 100-200 words, with appropriate vocabulary, language level, and grammar. Role plays should be kept brief, from three to five minutes. If it is a free-flow role play, clearly identify the character who will provide the ending line and what he or she will say, so that the end remains crisp. You can try open-ended role plays, which sometimes enable more creative endings. Visual codes, such as photographs, drawings, or cartoons, can effectively juxtapose images to identify core issues and generative themes.

The code below, on "Access to Health Care" from *Language and Culture in Conflict*:

Problem-Posing in the ESL Classroom (Wallerstein, 1983), has both a juxtaposition of images in two frames and a brief written dialogue that leaves the issues unresolved, to promote dialogue.



Receptionist: County Clinic. May I help you?

Felicia: My son is very sick. His head hurts. It's hot.

Receptionist: What? Oh, you mean he has a fever. What's his name?

Felicia: His name is Pablo Ramirez. R-A-M-I-R-E-Z.

Receptionist: Has he been here before?

Felicia: Excuse me, can you repeat that please?

Receptionist: That's OK. I'll check his record.

We don't have a record for Pablo Ramirez. He needs to come in to the clinic.

Felicia: Can you speak slower, please?

Receptionist: He needs to come in.

Felicia: Can he see the doctor?

Receptionist: Yes, bring him after one o'clock. The clinic opens at one.

Felicia: When?

Receptionist: (loudly) After one o'clock tomorrow.

Felicia: Oh, one o'clock. Does anyone speak Spanish there?

Receptionist: No, I'm sorry.

Another example below from *Language and Culture in Conflict: Problem-Posing in the ESL Classroom* juxtaposes a mother talking in Spanish with a daughter responding in English. In one image, feelings and concerns about loss of language is captured. See the end of this chapter for more examples of codes from *Language and Culture in Conflict: Problem-posing in the ESL Classroom*.



Questions for dialogue

Although codes present open-ended situations, it is important to facilitate dialogue systematically by moving participants from a discussion of their identification of the issue in their own lives to collective understanding and possibilities of action. Freirian educators and texts provide slight variations in their tools for facilitating dialogue, though all use questioning to engage participants at different analytic levels of thinking.

One version of a Freirian problem-posing process used by Nina is a five-step questioning strategy that moves the discussion from the concrete to the analytic level. People are asked to: 1) describe what they see; 2) define the problem; 3) share similar experiences of their own lives; 4) question why there's a problem, and 5) strategize what they can do about the problem. The acronym, SHOWeD, can be helpful here (Shaffer, 1983).

DESCRIPTION

What do you See in the code? What strikes you about this situation? How would you describe what you see?

PROBLEM DEFINITION

What's really **Happening**? What do you think each of the people in the code is thinking? Feeling? What are your early thoughts on the problem?

PERSONALIZE

How does this relate to **Our lives**? Have any of you experienced these situations in your lives?

ANALYZE SOCIAL CONTEXT

Why does this problem exist? How come we face these problems in our communities or worksites? What makes this a shared problem?

DEVELOP STRATEGIES FOR ACTION

How would we **Evaluate** action alternatives?
What can we **Do** about this problem?

Other problem-posing processes are similar in terms of exploring different levels of thinking and questioning (Vella, 1989, 1995; Zerkel, 1997; Barndt, 1989). The authors from several Canadian Freirian texts, *Educating for a Change* (Arnold et al., 1991), *Educating for Changing Unions* (Burke, Geronimo, Martin, Thomas, & Wall, 2002), and *Counting our Victories, Popular Education and Organizing*, (Nadeau, 1996), among others, have used the spiral illustrated in the previous chapter.

A common tool used by popular educators in Latin America to facilitate dialogue is the problem-posing tree. This is a visual tool (or graphic organizer) that is less linear than the sequenced questions. Participants draw a tree and work in groups to analyze a problem using the parts of the tree to organize their discussion. The trunk represents the problem; students are invited to describe the problem as carefully as possible, naming the aspects of the problem. The roots are the origins, causes, or underlying reasons for the problem; the leaves and branches represent the effects of the problem in people's lives. A watering can represents strategies for addressing the problem. As students discuss the problem, they figure out what aspects of their discussion fit where on the tree. A graphic of this tree is included in the appendixes of *English for Action* (the student book).

Educating for Changing Unions suggests questions within their problem-posing spiral of four dialogue steps: "1) Start with experience and knowledge, i.e., what happened (who, when, where, how, why)? how did you feel about it? what did you do?; 2) Identify patterns and themes: who else had this situation? who reacted differently? how does race, gender, class, age, language, disability, etc., shape your experience? who's missing?; 3) Strategize and plan for action: how can we apply what we've learned? what changes can you influence or a group influence? who are your allies? what would you do differently?; and 4) New information and theory linked to what people know: what does this new information mean in light of your own story? what key concepts and ideas underlie these experiences? how does this analysis shape your understanding?" (Burke et al., 2002, p. 142).

Anne Hope and Sally Timmel in the three-volume set, *Training for Transformation*, present a wealth of analytic tools to support the ongoing cycle of practice and reflection, such as exercises for listening, identifying generative themes, developing codes, community building, and social and political analysis (Hope & Timmel, 1995). They propose a six-step dialogue strategy, similar to SHOWeD: 1) *description*, what do you see, what do you

think people in the code are doing and feeling? 2) *first analysis*, start to ask why people are doing what they're doing, but still keep the focus on the code; 3) *real life*, ask does this happen in real life or in your situation? 4) *related problems*, ask how other problems might be connected, yet use this opportunity to decide which problem to focus on for the deep analysis; 5) *root causes*, as the heart of conscientization, ask why the problem exists, looking at natural, social, and political causes; and finally, 6) *action planning*. They propose four types of action: linking the theme to previous themes discussed; identifying needs for further study and investigation; choosing a self-reliance project to build self-confidence and success; and advocating or lobbying for change.

Ron Labonte, in his story/dialogue method to generate practice-based knowledge, project evaluation, and theory development among health-promotion practitioners, proposes four dialogue steps: 1) *description*, the “what” questions; 2) *explanation*, the “why” questions, which begin the analysis; 3) *synthesis*, the “so what” questions, asking what have we learned here; and 4) *action*, the “now what” questions, where do we go from here, what might we do differently next time? (Labonte, Feather, & Hills, 1999). He starts with practitioners writing their own stories about a community or work-based dilemma, event, or issue, which then they share with others to start the dialogue. Each step generates “insight cards,” or 8 x 11 pieces of paper, on which people name three to four core themes from each step. Those insight cards are then manipulated on the wall and categorized to create new understandings or theories of what happened and what could be done differently.

By starting with the concrete descriptive level based on the code, or on people's experience, dialogical participation is encouraged with the maximum number of people. People who answer the simple identification questions and share experiences first are more likely to be willing and prepared to answer the probing questions later. Jumping too quickly to generalizations or “why” questions inhibits the thinking process. If people themselves jump to an analytic response and you feel there has not been sufficient opportunity to share personal experiences, then you can always return to the personal level. It is important however to get beyond the personal story and have people make the connections to others within the larger social or cultural context.

For example, let's look at a health and safety code from *English for Action* with questions for discussion from the student units.

Roberto: The Health and Safety report is back.

Mary: What does it say?

Roberto: It says there is no problem. The new paint is safe.

Mary: How could that be true? We all got skin rashes when we started using it.

Roberto: The report says it's safe.

Mary: So they think the problems are all in our imagination? We should know. We work here.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

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- What is a Health and Safety report?
- What health problem are the workers having? What do they think is causing it?
- What does the Health and Safety report say?
- What does Mary think about the report?
- What do you think the employer will say to the workers about their skin rashes?
- Do you know anyone who has been bothered by substances or conditions at work?
- What happened?
- Why do you think the report says there is no problem?
- Who knows the most about health and safety at work? Who are the experts?
- Who benefits from this report?
- What do you think these workers should do? Why?

The final questioning stage takes students toward positive action, though solutions may take a long time, trial and error, and different strategies. Therefore, recognizing the need for continuous actions and the complexity of solutions for students in their workplaces, this process is called problem-posing, not problem-solving. Although change may evolve slowly, problem-posing can and should be a nurturing process. It is important to explore not only the problem and its causes but also the visions and ideals people have for their work, communities, families, and themselves.

No matter which specific questioning strategy you choose, the specific questions you've planned or those in the text should be seen as suggestions or guidelines, not rigid prescriptions. Educators and participants should always ask their questions depending on the unfolding of the group dialogue. The beauty of codes is that each new group develops its own open-ended dialogue from the individual realities that form the collective analysis.

Other discussion methods may supplement this questioning sequence to uncover root causes. The "but why?" method, from *Helping Health Workers Learn*, starts with a problem situation and asks what causes it (Werner & Bower, 1982). After each response, the question "but why?" elicits deeper or different reasons. For example, if someone reports he has headaches at work, the educator may ask why. The student may say:

- Because I'm working too hard.
- But why are you working too hard?
- I want a promotion to another department.
- But why do you want a promotion?
- I need more money for my family.
- But why don't you have enough money?
- I only get minimum wage and I also have my brother's family at home.

Root causes have many dimensions: cultural, socioeconomic, political, historical. Sometimes it helps to separate them in chart form and address each problem separately. Students may handle cultural issues by acquiring communication skills. Social problems may require group interventions, such as having all employees in a work group deal with a discriminatory statement. Political reasons behind a problem demand more student confidence and organizational skills, such as challenging the company to alter their pay inequities. Historical dimensions give the long-range perspective; students may gain hope from knowing about past working conditions or gains. *English for Action* uses success stories as language lessons to foster this sense of hope and possibility.

Role of the educator in group dialogue

Many students and community members have few opportunities in their lives to take charge of their learning. They have often been conditioned in school or jobs to respond to orders or to other people's initiatives. Even neighborhood associations, or apparently participatory processes such as parent-teacher organizations, may not sufficiently welcome new parents or develop ways for people who are uncomfortable with English or the formal setting to believe their input will be valued or heard. In classrooms and in other educational situations, people themselves may initially feel uncomfortable with dialogue and peer teaching or learning. Silence (whether self-imposed or because of institutional norms or patterns), as discussed by Audre Lorde, requires effort, and often collective effort, to break through (Lorde, 1984). How can parent-teacher organizations change, for example, so that immigrant parents feel welcome and part of the decision-making process about their own children's education?

In the beginning of a class or workshop, educators should meet student expectations by providing structure and posing questions. As students become comfortable with sharing experiences through codes, the classroom environment will change. They may begin to ask each other questions, give helpful ideas on a problem, and develop their own codes. The physical arrangement of the room, establishing group norms and expectations, placing students in a circle or in small groups, all reinforce people's role as co-learners and co-educators. Group listening, trust exercises, and cooperative language or action activities, and activities that enable people to draw the learning directly from their lives, such as language experience stories or the River of Life exercise, further encourage people to rely on each other for learning and for effecting change. In *English for Action*, lesson 2 invites learners and teachers to dialogue about their expectations of classes, to explicitly consider classroom dynamics, and to establish their own guidelines for working together.

The use of a code allows genuine peer interaction among students; the educator can step back from the discussion as students project their experiences into the code and ask each other for more information. The role of the educator does not disappear, however, but may shift as students or community members assume responsibility. The educator still must offer an overall structure; continue to take responsibility for questions that achieve the different levels of reflection and dialogue and lead to strategies for action; and contribute expertise or resources as needed. For example, in a code on pay issues, students may need information on the local employment market to understand prevailing wages. Educators, however, should not impose their own answers or solutions to the questions.

Strategies emerge from the group as students analyze their reality and come up with information they need or steps they want to pursue.

Other facilitation strategies can be incorporated into problem-posing education or interspersed within the dialogues.

- Using "brainstorming." Brainstorming is simply a listening exercise where the group is asked to generate as many ideas on a given topic as possible. People are asked to provide their ideas, quickly, whatever comes to their mind, without criticizing or worrying about the usefulness of any one idea. After a brainstorm list or diagram is generated on butcher paper or the board, there are many possible next activities: categorizing ideas and continuing the group dialogue; breaking into smaller groups for writing, more specific dialogue, or creating codes; individual learning activities, etc. In ESL classes, brainstorming can provide the dual function of developing vocabulary and extending analysis.
- Using "buzz groups" to spur more in-depth dialogue, especially when participation may be lopsided, with some people dominating the discussion. Buzz groups entail briefly breaking into pairs or small groups to share personal responses or to come up with ideas on a specific issue. Ideas raised in the buzz groups are then brought back to the large group discussion.
- Asking open-ended questions, rather than close-ended questions, to keep discussion going. If participants direct questions to you, you can redirect them to the group. Ask if others have ideas that could address the question.
- Trying to keep everyone involved in the discussion. If necessary, stop the discussion if it is dominated by a few people and invite people who haven't yet had a chance to talk to share their ideas.
- Asking people to come up with a list of questions they want to have answered on a specific topic. If the topic is sensitive, questions can be written down on index cards and turned in anonymously. They can then be compiled as a unified list for further investigation, written work, or discussion. An exercise often used in ESL class is to ask groups to generate twenty questions—specifying a number keeps the discussion going and pushes people to think beyond the obvious questions. Asking people to generate "wh-" questions also ties the exercise back to a language focus.
- If the discussion loses its focus, you can try a couple of ways to return to the desired topic; for instance, by returning to the code, by breaking into buzz groups for a short focused response to a single question, by summarizing the points that have been made on the blackboard, or by switching to a writing exercise or another activity that focuses the dialogue.
- If you sense that the students feel the discussion is a diversion from "real" work, you can incorporate a language experience story in which you write the key elements of the discussion with the students (creating a text which can then be used for further analysis, discussion, and language work).

Dialogue may often provoke controversy and require strategic questioning, support, and ongoing work over many sessions to address the many opinions and issues held by community members. One structured way to handle controversy is to raise the topic in a

repeated cycle of asking questions, brainstorming responses, asking people to seek new information on the issues, coming back later and discussing the new information, asking further questions, brainstorming and writing responses, seeking information for further reflection, etc. It is always important that people feel that their opinions are heard and incorporated into the dialogue.

Example of problem-posing dialogue

The following dialogue is an example of one flow of critical thinking questions. Nina was conducting a workshop for a group of five high school Indochinese and Latino girls from YES! (Youth Empowerment Strategies), a youth prevention program from Richmond, California (Wilson, Minkler, Dasho, Carrillo, Wallerstein, & Garcia, in press). The high school students were being trained as facilitators to work with fifth graders to help them make healthy choices for themselves and their communities. Nina wanted to have the high school students think about their life conditions, the barriers and opportunities they have faced, and their potential role to influence change with the fifth graders.

She showed them a code of a close-up photograph of two faces: a toddler boy looking down through a cyclone fence, like he's about to cry; and a young woman (maybe high school age) holding him, looking blankly out through the same fence. This dialogue shows Nina's questions and the many responses by the high school girls as the dialogue evolved. While each question does not necessarily use the exact SHOWeD question, it fits in with the thinking level represented by each letter.

Nina: What strikes you about this picture? (What do you See here?)

Students: Oh, he's sad, he's looking down, he wants to get out.
She's sad also.

Nina: What's their relationship?

Students: Mother, son...maybe...sister and brother.
There's a gate, they're inside bars...they're trapped.

Nina: How are they trapped? (Moving toward, What's actually **H**appening?)

Students: Oh, She's looking back at the gate, looking to where they could be, where they want to be.

Nina: What could trap her?

Students: Having no job, a bad relationship, no relationship. Having nowhere to go, needing money. There's lots of reasons. They can't reach for happiness, for a future.

Nina: What do you think they're thinking about?

Students: Look at it. They're not thinking about anything, they're blank...

Nina: Oh...so, they're not thinking about anything, but they're feeling sad.

Students: Yes,

Nina: Have you or people you know ever felt like this? (**Our lives**)

Students: All the time, (one girl says), all the time. Everyone has to feel this way.

Nina: (I'm taken aback...I note that I'll need to talk with her after the group, but now I think to myself, I need to bring this back to more general high school issues. So, I move to asking): What's common stuff that makes people feel sad?

Students: Losing a job, getting there late. You want to be where you can't be. Not able to have ambition because of your environment.

Nina: Let's talk about your high school. What makes people feel sad there?

Students: Poor administration, not qualified teachers. We've been with a substitute all year; school conditions. Like, there are no stalls in the bathroom; they're locked up. Only one bathroom is working.

Nina: What else makes people feel sad in high school? (Begin to move towards **Why**)

Students: Students not feeling they're heard. Students don't care, they feel it's not going to change for a long time.

Nina: Why don't students care? That's important. (Another **Why** question)

Students: The administrators don't care. The environment has been the same for so long. You can come or go. Teachers don't care. Students don't realize why they should take the first step; they don't think they're ever going to make a difference. Students don't have goals. They internalize stereotypes.

Nina: Let's talk about the fifth graders: What do they feel, do you think? (Beginning to move towards **Do**, related to the high school role of working with younger kids.)

Students: The fifth graders are exposed to less, not yet personally independent. They still care what their friends think...less confidence, just fit in.

Nina: What else may be going on with fifth graders ?

Students: Friendship cliques. They start to get crushes. Get their period. Things at home play a big role. Family issues, household structure, parents, immediate family.

Nina: Do fifth graders feel like things can't be changed?

Students: Fifth graders don't know how much power they can have. You have to explain that they can get involved. Their parents don't have to control everything. As you get older, you realize it is OK to be different and think outside the box.

Nina: What made it possible for you guys to change and feel like you can make a difference? What has changed you? (A **Do** Question)

Students: You have to experience things for yourself. I've been close to teachers. I always have been. They've helped. Support.

Nina: So you say it's helpful to have adults who help you.

Students: Yes. For me, it's been the Youth Power leadership group experience to know I have power. I started in eighth grade. Didn't think I had a voice. Being educated. We've done so many campaigns...(Another girl says): I'm in Youth Power too. (She shows her t-shirt). I just started in tenth grade. (She turns to the other girl): You started in eighth. You're lucky.

Nina: What kind of campaigns have you done?

Students: Oh, so many. Worked on exit interviews, cleaning up bathrooms...Against the Patriot Act. People can now go to the office and sign a statement that they don't want their names given to the army. Oh, so many.

Nina: So it helps to have a group and support. You said supportive adults, but also support of your peers?

Students: I started in a tutoring program for kids. I didn't realize but they looked up to me as an example. I'm a leader. Setting personal goals and meeting them makes you feel you can do more and more bigger things.

Nina: Think about it, what are you going to do to support the fifth graders, so they see you as an example?

Students: Know we believe in them. Encourage us to be a role model for the fifth graders. They need people they can relate to.

After the discussion stopped, Nina talked about the process she used of asking questions. Nina asked the high school youth what they thought of the dialogue and whether they felt they could lead the fifth graders in a similar dialogue. They said it went smoothly, the questions were clear, they realized the questions started with themselves and then went to the fifth graders, and that they ended with actions they could take. If this had just been a dialogue for the youth only, Nina would have focused on the issues raised about their school and their fellow students, and their own potential actions on those issues, including their potential for addressing lack of student caring.

Some tips that Nina shared with the high school youth so they could think about their role as educators with the fifth graders were to:

- Have a purpose before starting; i.e., know the dialogue should address the role of the high school youth to work with the fifth graders ;
- Ensure that all levels of the analytic questions are asked;
- Move from the personal to the collective;
- Restate what participants say so they feel confirmed and honored in their thinking before moving to another question. Restating thoughts can also help the educator check that he/she has understood correctly and know what the next question will be.
- Build on participant strengths, when talking about potential actions.

Action

Action for students means learning to see themselves as social beings, with rights to just and fair treatment within institutions, their workplaces, the educational and health care systems—and with access to governmental processes. Actions, however, are not only political but can involve small steps in the learning cycle, investigating new information, teaching another person or group, or even individual steps in a person's life. Elsa, in *Making Meaning, Making Change*, talks about one student who joined a softball league, making a step for the first time to choose a priority in her own life, especially difficult for someone used to always taking care of others first.

Plans for action evolve from people understanding the immediate and root causes of problems; developing skills, i.e., planning, negotiating, thinking critically, writing, presenting to groups, developing campaigns; and having visions for better conditions. Individual or group actions from a class, therefore, depend on many factors:

- **Group dynamics:** the length of time people have been together in class, in a community setting or organizing group; whether they come from one or many worksites, or one or many communities; whether they are from the same or different linguistic and cultural backgrounds; their level of trust and participation in positive dialogue; and their success at working together;
- **External societal factors:** people's understanding of the barriers to change; the possibility of actions through worksites, legal status, i.e., union vs. non-union settings, through the law or social action;
- **Individual factors:** the level of self-confidence created through the educational process, through other life settings, through other group processes, and through prior roles and experiences in their own culture; and
- **Other support mechanisms:** people's families, communities, and work environments that provide support and hope for change; connections to organizations.

As mentioned, potential actions vary considerably. In ESL classes, students have a safe environment to experiment with English, test out ideas, and communicate successfully. Actions in class revolve around building a community of support through dialogue. Students can write life stories, conduct peer interviews, investigate resources needed, develop individual or group codes, and plan classroom projects. Group visual codes can be constructed, such as students drawing images of their lives on newsprint: their factories, their schools, their transportation to work, their breaks at work—anything to stimulate critical discussion. Group projects over time foster collaborative learning and can make the bridge between class and the outside world: letters to the editor, radio public service spots, videotapes, oral histories of workers, or articles for a union newspaper, materials or guidebooks for other workers or students.

Students can practice taking action at work through in-class role plays and literacy/language activities such as reporting a problem, filing a complaint, reading contract language. These are tools for students to take out of the classroom into their daily work lives. The language practice becomes a means to action, not only to learn English.

Actions outside of class can also vary: from interviewing a co-worker, to linking with an organization about rights, to actually taking action to rectify a problem—by themselves, with coworkers, with the union, through the law, or through lobbying and community organizing. Actions may involve fighting for funding to continue the English class, or becoming involved with an outside issue, such as toxic emissions in a neighboring factory.

Regardless of the level of action taken, students learn, through the experience of action itself, that people can effectively interact to transform their reality. If actions are unsuccessful, students will gain new knowledge and perspectives to try other strategies. Historically, immigrant workers have participated in and led many successful movements in the workplace. Unions have lobbied for and won changes in the law, such as the Occupational Health and Safety Act. Learning about historical and current events is an important way for people to gain a larger vision than the one that may be immediately possible in their daily lives.

One method to determine smaller possibilities of action within a larger vision is to conduct a brainstorming session on the problem the class is studying. Make four columns on the board with the following headings: problem(s), barriers to change, larger vision, and immediate plans. The lists under these columns will shift as students explore the problems and try out some of their small steps. The key is to reinforce the possibilities for vision in a new land and to build on strengths the students have already demonstrated by coming to the U.S.

Visioning

Visioning is a core strategy for team-building and for fostering hope and future direction in work or community settings. There are many variants of visioning processes but all can incorporate visuals, written materials, and discussion. In one activity, the educator hands out butcher paper, markers, and crayons and asks people to come together in small groups and to imagine a future that they'd like to see in 10-15 years. A focus question could be: "Imagine that you're in a hot air balloon or cloud floating over the neighborhood or village. What would you like to see changed in 15 years? How would it look differently than it looks now?"

People can be asked to draw the geographic boundaries of their neighborhoods, communities, or towns, and then put in some characteristics, i.e., physical features, stores, schools, recreation centers, churches, rivers, parks; and then social features if they choose, such as where people congregate at different times, where they need to use English. They are then asked individually to list on paper five attributes they value, and five things they'd like to see changed within the next 10-15 years. The small group is asked to share their ideas and then draw on their visioning map a future they'd like to see that might incorporate what they value and their future hopes. Individuals are then asked to write what they could do to contribute to making this vision happen. The small groups then share their visioning maps with the larger group for problem-posing dialogue. This activity can also be done with a work focus, with a focus on children, or individually, as people think about their own lives, in visual or written form.

Written dialogues, role plays, or case studies

Textbook dialogues or dialogues written by educators (with many parts for people to act out) can be used as codes to encourage full participation and problem-posing discussion. In language classes, they introduce the vocabulary and structures that will be used for the freer, role play stage, where people may develop characters and make up their own language. To begin the activity in language classes, the educator can read the written dialogue out loud or encourage more advanced students to take parts. Students can repeat after the teacher for intonation and pronunciation. In the first reading, vocabulary can be clarified. Different class members (even beginners) can alternate reading the parts in front of the class. As they begin to get comfortable, students can act out the dialogue without their papers. Acting out parts generally leads to improvisations and unexpected, humorous twists to the role plays. Props can also enliven the role play interactions. Written dialogues and role plays are excellent tools for raising the class's energy level, developing listening skills, and broadening students' ability to converse in unfamiliar situations in and outside of class. The dialogues can also be simplified to individual, pair, or group exercises for reinforcement of vocabulary and grammar.

In workshops and community settings, elaborated case studies and role plays are useful for presenting alternative perspectives that uncover generative themes or dilemmas. The entire group may be given a one-page summary of the situation. Then, people are divided into small groups. Each small group receives their own private instructions about who they are, what their motivation is, and how they should act. The groups are allowed to plan for 10-15 minutes, then they act out the situation together for 15-30 minutes. The entire case study becomes a trigger or code for people to discuss. After the problem-posing discussion, a transformative method from Augusto Boal's *Theater of the Oppressed* (1979), or Popular Forum Theater, is to re-enact the role play with people stepping in to change the dynamics, to demand new outcomes, and to seek solutions (Delp, Outman-Kramer, Schurman, & Wong, 2002). Participants have the opportunity therefore to practice change strategies within a structured and safe setting.

Case studies may be role plays or they may be written as elaborated stories. Case studies may be based on a real story and the documentation surrounding this story, such as newspaper articles that describe the events. The case study may also include additional information or narratives written by the educator to provide a more complete picture. The case studies would then be read and used as a code to engage participants in critical problem-posing dialogue. If the case study represents a current issue, using newspaper articles may lead students to decide they should respond to the media through a letter to the editor, a petition, or an op-ed piece. Historical case studies that show successful actions can give people hope that change is possible.

Life stories

Life stories are powerful tools for situating learning in the context of people's lives. These can take many forms, such as drawings, community maps, dictated and written stories, or student-generated narrative in combination with visuals. Community maps, similar to the visioning exercise discussed previously, can be used to elaborate on a person's individual or family life. People could draw themselves in the middle of the page,

and then draw all the places they might visit during a day or a week, noting where they need English or where they need support to get their voices heard.

Like the River of Life discussed earlier in this chapter, there are other life or work journey time lines that elicit group dialogue. People can be asked to draw a time line of their work history and then generate a list of questions that they might want to ask each other. They could then write their story or the story of the person they interviewed. In beginning language classes, educators can take notes and rewrite these stories for subsequent lessons (using the language experience approach). For advanced language classes, people can discuss when they might be questioned about their personal lives, when is it appropriate and when is it not; when they would be comfortable sharing and when then would rather not answer questions.

The workers' stories in the *English for Action* student lessons can be used both as reading texts (codes) and as models for students to write their own stories. Any time there is an important discussion or a possibility to build more in-depth dialogue, the educator can act as a scribe and use the material later for language instruction or further problem-posing. By transcribing these discussions or writing down students' stories, educators are demonstrating the importance of students' thoughts and the fact that everybody is a teacher. If the subject is too personal or the teacher wants to address a more general problem, the stories can be fictionalized. (Teachers should always ask permission to use students' names and stories, thereby preventing any embarrassment.)

More advanced students can write down their own stories for the class to use the next day. If they have trouble with writing, teachers can ask concrete questions that help students tell their stories. Students who do not have writing skills comparable to their speaking abilities can dictate their stories to the teacher or to more advanced students. Students can read the stories out loud, discuss the issues, write answers to comprehension questions, and write about their own experiences in similar situations. The result is a class that continually develops its own curriculum.

Realia and outside texts

In addition to creating text, educators have access to many other published texts or life texts (realia), which surround learners and community members on a daily basis. Realia include newspaper articles, school bulletins, community leaflets, signs, phone books, welfare or food stamp forms, advertisements, letters from their children's teachers, union contracts, petitions, or any other reading material that students bring in. Students can be asked to bring in materials directly related to the topic at hand as part of the investigative action step in problem-posing, i.e., chemical labels at the workplace, their pay stubs, written rules from work, etc.

In *Making Meaning, Making Change*, Elsa provides a set of guidelines for choosing and using reading texts. These include choosing passages that directly relate to learners' experiences and concerns, selecting relatively short excerpts, and pulling out these excerpts on separate pieces of paper with graphic support, including pictures and blank space on the page for students to write. She proposes a range of pre-reading activities, such as eliciting prior knowledge about the topic based on people's experience; identifying the key concepts and asking students to create word clusters or webs of other words they associate with the concept, e.g., what does this picture or word make you think of?;

previewing the text, asking people to look at titles, pictures, first sentences of paragraphs; having students write down their questions from this preview and try and answer them even if it involves guesswork; having students read through passages and underline, skip, or cross out words they don't know as they continue to read; and using multiple reading strategies such as the educator reading the material out loud, students taking turns reading different paragraphs, or working in small groups, pairs, or individually. Predicting is an important strategy to teach. With the title, subheadings, or pictures as the starting points, students can brainstorm what they think the text is about. As they read they can stop and change their predictions or underline sections that confirm their predictions.

After reading the text, the key is to link the text back to student experience and initiate problem-posing activities, such as reaction exercises, i.e., what did they most like or dislike; group discussion of how the story or text relates to their own experience; or new questions they might have for each other. Students can then write their own experiences or stories as a response to these texts. This continues the participatory strategy of learners developing their own curriculum.

Pictures (photographs, drawings, collages, slides, puppets)

Teaching with visual images as codes provides endless possibilities for engaging in problem-posing dialogue, learning vocabulary, creating stories, or writing exercises. Learners and community members can respond to pictures with their own feelings and opinions, or create pictures and picture-stories to express their experiences. Like stories, photographs can be brought into the educational setting both by educators and by students. Educators may have one generative theme or issue in mind when drawing up the code, yet people may identify other core themes; visuals are excellent for allowing people to project their own issues and life experience.

Photographs are easy to find. Many thrift stores sell old magazines such as *National Geographic*, which contain pictures of peoples all over the world. Other magazines provide photographs of objects and everyday life in the United States. To open discussion, educators can also take pictures of the people in class, and can ask students to bring in family pictures. Photographs of neighborhoods and neighborhood people may be easier to take than pictures of workplaces, yet both are valuable.

Drawings can pull together the many aspects of a problem into one code, and can be used for multiple purposes, i.e., to represent an issue that has been under discussion, to map out a neighborhood, to draw a family tree, to identify hazards at the workplace. Adding captions to the drawings generates further discussion and writing exercises.

Collages allow students to use magazine photographs and other materials in creative ways. Teachers can bring in examples of collages on a theme such as work conditions, families, faces. Tasks with collages can start out simply: find pictures of things you like/hate, that you have/don't have. People can make a collage about themselves, about their family, about their home country, about their work. Each collage can, of course, generate problem-posing discussions and further learning activities.

Learning pictures can be used when we want to continue to challenge people to think about their own role in education. The educator brings in pictures or photographs specifically about educational situations (i.e., a teacher standing in front of a class, a

group sitting in a dialogue circle, a parent teaching a child, small groups engaged in an activity) (Nash, Cason, Rhum, McGrail, & Gomez-Sanford, 1992). People choose the picture that speaks to them, either through a negative or positive experience they had in their lives, and engage in written, oral, or group activity work around these themes. Pictures about organizing, i.e., strikes, protests, community meetings, can also be used in a similar fashion. People can talk about their own experiences and what has or has not worked for them. These extended exercises support the continual development of the curriculum based on the learning issues of each classroom or community.

Puppets, in the broadest sense, are any moveable object that students can make speak or come alive: a hand, a spoon, a shoe, a picture can become a puppet. Photographs of people stuck on the ends of pencils can talk to each other in written-out dialogues or free-flow conversation. Puppet people can become marionettes or "flexiflans"—figures placed on a flannel board and moved around as they tell a story. Story props can also be cut out of cardboard and placed on the flannel board.

Puppets can act out problem-posing codes. Educators or students can re-enact folk tales, stories from students' cultures, or dialogues that may be too threatening for face-to-face talk. They also provide security for people who may be too shy or embarrassed to speak when others focus on their faces.

Photovoice

Photovoice, which brings together photodocumentary techniques and Freirian problem-posing, is an elaborated approach for community members and students to identify and capture issues from their own lives with the goal of community transformation (Wang, 2003). People are given cameras, provided training in photographic techniques and skills for analyzing images, and offered opportunities to engage in dialogue, write, and create photostories about the images that document their daily lives. The goal is for people to develop critical awareness of what they want to see changed and to develop next steps for social action. These steps can include pulling together photographic essays, posters, presentations, other educational efforts, or lobbying, using their own images for the broader community or for policy makers.

To develop photovoice skills, initial activities of "reading" and analyzing other photographs are helpful. Educators can bring in a wide array of photographs and ask individuals to choose a photograph that speaks to them, either one they identify with, one that represents their hopes, or one that they may dislike. They are then asked to engage in a directed writing or dialogue exercise, in pairs, small groups, or as individuals, i.e., writing their immediate emotional response, answering questions on what they like or dislike, or talking and writing about their own experience that the photograph elicited.

A specific exercise used in the Youth Empowerment Strategies (YES!) project in Richmond, California, asks fifth graders to write down what they think happened before the photograph, what they think is going to happen after the photograph, and what they would like to see happen. Responses to these questions are then crafted into individual stories, ideas for photo shoots, or a book of photo stories (Wilson et al (in press); Dasho & Wilson, 2002). From a photovoice integral literacy program in Peru, educators focused initially on the language of photography. People were told they were going to be asked

questions in Spanish, but the answers couldn't be in the Spanish language, the answers needed to be spoken in photography, which is also a language (Boal, 1979).

Photo-stories or photo-novellas are another possible community or class project. Originally from Latin America, photo-novellas are comic book stories that have been used to carry educational or health messages. Examples include photo-novellas produced by the New Mexico Adolescent Social Action Program youth on gang issues, teenage pregnancy, and relationships (Velarde, Starling, & Wallerstein, 2002). Community members or students learn skills of crafting story boards, taking photographs to represent the story, writing dialogue, and producing the printed photonovella.

Risk maps or charts

Risk maps or charts are visual representations of workplace hazards or problems (UCLA-LOSH, 1996). With a map, people draw out the production process at their workplace. They may be able to draw the whole production process or the rooms in which they work. In a jeans sewing factory, for example, first, bolts of cloth are brought in and cut in large swaths, then they are moved to different groups of workers to cut more precise parts, to others who sew the legs, the pockets, the zippers, to others who use the glues, etc. After drawing this process, people then identify groups of hazards at each stop in the production line or within each work group, and identify the levels of risk. In sewing factories, risks are often ergonomic, yet include noise, stress levels (with piecework), and chemicals from glues. After identifying the level of risk, workers place circles of different sizes on top of the hazards to reflect the seriousness or intensity of the problem. Small circles mean less danger or adequate protection (such as noise protection, or job rotation to provide ergonomic and stress relief); larger circles reflect danger. Another variation is to have different colored stickers: red dots mean problems, green dots indicate the issue is adequately addressed.

Risk charts can be more focused on a particular issue, such as protective equipment. A chart is drawn with different columns representing different aspects of protective equipment use, for example, respirator use. The column headings could be: right respirator for chemicals being used, training in respirator use, medical testing of respirator use, appropriate replacement of respirator cartridges, storage in clean environment, appropriate inspection, and adequate medical coverage. The workers then fill in each square with small to large or different colored circles representing how well the issue is addressed in the workplace.

More social analysis and action planning methods

To move to action, several analytic methodologies can be helpful for identifying appropriate strategies. A *force-field analysis* can be used to analyze the forces that are promoting or inhibiting change. Put the goal or vision in the center of a large piece of butcher paper with three columns; label the column on the left, "facilitators," with arrows going towards and promoting the vision; and the column on the right, "barriers," with arrows pushing against the vision. Brainstorm the columns, then discuss strategies to strengthen the left column and weaken the right column.

A *social analysis* can strengthen student, community, and organizational collaboration in the development of an action strategy. The process is: 1) draw a circle in the center of the butcher paper with concentric circles around your small circle; 2) place the name of your group or organization you are working with in the center circle; 3) consider which other groups, people, organizations you are currently working with, and place these names of your current allies in circles along the first concentric circle close to the center of the page; 4) think who are potential allies and place these names in circles a little farther out from your group in the next concentric circle; 5) think about the groups who will oppose your goal and place them on the outside rings of your paper; and 6) consider and develop different strategies for reaching each group.

Action planning can benefit from previous visioning, force-field analysis, and social analysis. Although there are many ways to structure this exercise, the processes are similar: 1) identify the goal and objectives (within a time frame, such as a year) for the overall issue or campaign that could emerge as a result of the visioning exercise or that could be decided through dialogue; 2) brainstorm the group's criteria for choosing action steps, i.e., will each step be feasible and specific? will it raise awareness or draw in more people to participate in the project? 3) using these criteria, brainstorm activities and resources needed; and 4) put the strategies on a time line and assign responsibilities. Of course, actions may not follow step-by-step plans, as the next step often depends on what happened earlier, and where reflections on the previous actions lead the participants.

Participatory research

Participatory research is the overarching strategy in which the members of the community, whether they are students in a classroom, participants in a neighborhood association, or workers in a union, are collaboratively involved in a research project about an issue of importance to their community in order to combine knowledge and action for social change (Minkler & Wallerstein, 2003). The issues that groups of students or community members investigate can become ongoing participatory research projects.

For example, people could look into family issues at work. They could start by exploring the topic from their own experience: are their workplaces family friendly? are their supervisors understanding if there is a family emergency? what is a family-supportive work environment? They could then investigate the policies from their own workplaces: are there family leave policies, such as maternity leave, family leave for dependents, or even sick leave for themselves? They could examine state and federal law, and union language or policies from other workplaces. They could visit legal resources or agencies that work with immigrants.

Participatory research involves many continuous action steps. Ultimately, what individuals or groups decide to do with the information will depend on their opportunities and the barriers that are present. Further actions could include development of a resource guide on family issues at work, development of a model family leave policy, or work with an immigrants' rights group. (For a description of a successful participatory research project with union hotel service workers, see chapter 4, *Connecting Local and Global Action*, p 71.)

Extended participatory research provides a laboratory for many learning activities, including dialogue, writing synthesis statements, research skills, interviewing resources,

and making presentations. As Budd Hall, director of the International Council on Adult Education, has said, "Participatory research is fundamentally about who has the right to speak, to analyze and to act" (Hall, 1992).

Immigrant participatory arts: (contributed by Pia Moriarty, 2004)

In immigrant communities, participatory arts events - - in which everyday people share in the process of making and remaking their traditional art forms - - already provide a public forum where people are exercising their right to speak, analyze, and act. Hours and hours of volunteer time and communal decision-making go into seasonal ethnic festivals, religious rituals, and intergenerational lessons in the homeland's performing arts. Participatory arts are ideal sites for popular education because they are necessarily community-based; they are more about production than consumption, and so require many "hands-on." They intentionally blur the lines between audience and present or future performers, just as problem-posing blurs the distinctions between students and teachers. These arts provide a social context where the same adult students who are stumbling through Book One of a seemingly endless ESL curriculum can demonstrate that they are already virtuosos and respected as teachers themselves.

Communal art forms like dance and song and theater are intensified by recent experiences of cultural dislocation and loss. No matter whether their dislocations were a career choice or one forced by tragedies of poverty and war, immigrants and refugees share a common challenge. Especially for the sake of their children, they must reclaim and continue to shape their cultural traditions, and at the same time find ways to connect to mainstream civic and cultural institutions. Art-making is one of their strongest tools for achieving these outcomes and claiming a place for themselves and their families.

When immigrant groups create their art, they are proud to share it. Indeed, new immigrants glory in the opportunity to be fully themselves through their arts. This is why participatory arts in immigrant and refugee communities are almost always publicly advertised and open to visitors. For popular educators, they offer an active promise of hospitality and reciprocal learning. Energy from the arts opens doors to many language-mediated exchanges, and sharing in art-making can cut across powerful social cleavages like race, class, gender, language limitations, religion, and national origin.

Hands-on activities and physical activity

Learning, as we know, is facilitated by hands-on activities that encourage movement and new energy. Many workshop training and education texts include ice-breakers that enable learners to get up, stretch, laugh, and play. In general, these exercises break up a time of sitting, get circulation moving, and raise people's energy, especially after a day's work. For language instruction, using physical activity is based on the premise that body movements, gestures, and rhythms help students relax. The learning by doing places the new language more easily in students' long-term memory.

In addition to physical activities traditionally used in language education (e.g., total physical response, jazz chants), active techniques can also be integrated into problem-posing. Raoul Arnove suggests music circles: students stand in two concentric circles and walk in opposite directions while the music plays; when the music stops, each person

in the outside circle faces the person in the inside circle and they talk about a question (e.g., what is one thing that worries you?). Many times the technique itself acts as a code for students to discuss. Role plays are both active and very effective for generating discussions. Drawing pictures or manipulating photographs allows for both creative thinking and movement. Other times, active techniques start with vocabulary and lead into a code. Taking videos of the actions or role plays allows for more problem-posing. Students can reflect on the feelings behind the dialogues and analyze the non-verbal body language to see whether it communicates different attitudes than they wanted. Long-term projects (writing plays or radio scripts) can also include problem-posing dialogue.

Activities such as a human bingo are useful for encouraging people to get to know each other. For neighborhood association gatherings or in a class, for example, create a five by five bingo chart with phrases in each box. People have to mingle and find someone who fits the description of the box and write that person's name inside the box. The first person to get the entire bingo card filled out wins. Phrases can range from: find someone who has lived in the neighborhood for over five years; someone who does volunteer work; someone who has children in the local school; to: find someone who loves to eat cookie dough; or someone who has done their laundry in the past week.

Worker health and safety educational sessions often use hands-on activities to demonstrate personal protective equipment care or ergonomic lifting. The Labor Occupational Health Program at University of California Berkeley has created a game out of a felt, full-length human body and body organs that hold to to the felt body. The purpose of this game is to demonstrate how chemicals can enter the body, through skin, mouth, and breathing; and which body systems may be affected, such as liver, kidneys, or lungs. This not only teaches vocabulary for body parts, routes of entry of chemicals, and damage to different parts of the body, but it gives people a chance to move around as they place the pieces of felt. It also opens up many possibilities for problem-posing discussion on these concerns. The band-aid activity (developed by Pam Tau Lee) in *English for Action*, lesson 18, is one such physical exercise that combines vocabulary development with action research.

Additional language instruction issues

BEGINNERS

Problem-posing is difficult for beginning English language learners, but critical thinking is no less important for them than for those who are more proficient. People who don't speak English are often the most isolated from the dominant society. As much as anyone, they require a curriculum reflecting how they live and what they need to survive. Although a beginning-level class may not be able to go through all the problem-posing steps in English, they can answer questions in the first three steps of SHOWeD: "What do you see; what's the problem, what's really happening here; and how does this apply to you?" If the educator can kindle a group interest in each other's lives and cultures, this will later translate into dialogue as students learn more English.

NATIVE LANGUAGE IN THE CLASSROOM

Whether students should be allowed to speak their native language in the classroom is the subject of much controversy. In multicultural classrooms, where students speak languages unknown to their teachers, it is more difficult to use students' native languages (sometimes more advanced students can facilitate this process).

In many situations, the native language supports students' learning of English. The question becomes when and how to incorporate its usage. Inviting students to translate and explain meanings to each other can create a supportive, non-stressful atmosphere. Through their native language, students can help each other catch up after absences. Native languages can add humor to the class as students joke or comment to one another and then attempt to translate what they've said into English. Most importantly, students can begin to learn about each other's cultures as they hear the different languages.

When educators work predominantly with a single language group, especially in a community where English is not the primary language, educators obviously communicate more effectively if they know the students' language. Bilingual teaching then becomes an option, and the students' language can be used for explanations or for important discussions they still can't manage totally in English. To promote English learning during these discussions, teachers can jot down phrases on the board and translate them into English as the discussion proceeds. Follow-up lessons focusing on related English vocabulary will have special meaning from a discussion like this. Teachers with bilingual abilities also affirm the validity of bicultural/bilingual communities in the United States.

Regardless of the exact circumstances, what is key is that the question of language use itself can become an opportunity for problem-posing. Rather than the teacher “allowing” or “forbidding” native language use, the question can become the focus of dialogue and critical analysis. Students can determine when native language use is helpful and when it is counterproductive; they can set their own guidelines for language use in the classroom. Lesson 8 of *English for Action* includes an activity to facilitate this process.

GRAMMAR

Grammar exercises are embedded within problem-posing dialogues and activities in *English for Action*, though educators may choose to use additional exercises from other texts. Our perspective is similar to what one of Elsa's graduate students, Merle Silver, said: “Years ago, my mother would give our dog aspirin rolled up in peanut butter. That's precisely how you teach grammar. Disguise it.” However, students often appreciate and expect explicit grammar instruction even though they struggle with it. Grammar exercises in which the teacher provides the structure but the students provide the content are a productive compromise: as we said earlier, information drawn from students' lives can be elicited and organized into charts, which then can become the basis for sentence work. The most important point is that the grammar work be contextualized so that it is meaningful. The extent to which classes focus on grammar is something that needs to be negotiated with students on an ongoing basis. We hope educators will continue to creatively address student needs for grammar, yet integrate the practice and rules into activities that are meaningful and motivate students to learn.

PEER TEACHING

One way of sharing power with students is to invite more proficient students to participate in the teaching. The class can be divided into groups of three or four people at mixed levels or at the same level. In the mixed level groups, the more advanced students can teach beginners if the educator provides carefully structured guidelines. Alternatively, groups of similar proficiency levels enable teachers to devote extra attention to beginners while the intermediates pursue structured activities independently. Structured pair practice is also good for grammar review and for encouraging students to work independently.

Evaluation

Evaluation of students' progress with a problem-posing curriculum demands an approach different from other teaching strategies. Because the learning constantly evolves from student issues, educators would have some difficulty measuring fulfillment of predetermined objectives or test outcomes. Problem-posing evaluation focuses on students' abilities to articulate their issues in English, generate their own learning materials, redefine their views of the world, use English in important arenas of their lives outside class, and take the risks to act in their daily lives. Because students' abilities change over time, problem-posing requires a process evaluation of both the expected and unexpected changes.

To start the evaluation process, look at the effects of codes on people's learning and on promoting discussion and action. Did the code tap a familiar generative theme? Did the group come to life with people's emotions, laughter, and stories? Did it foster understanding of root causes of the problem? What kinds of action were taken? What did people learn about themselves or about their collective work as a group? What was the result of the action and how would they do it differently next time? Finally, what new problems did it uncover to pursue in the curriculum?

In recent years, there has been much interest in the development of empowerment evaluation strategies (Fetterman, Kaftarian, & Wandersman, 1996). This has meant that community members themselves are involved in the evaluation process to determine what to them would be success as learners, as co-learners, and as actors in their lives. What new skills would they call success? These could include individual skills and self-confidence in language, writing, and other performance skills; group process skills, such as decision making, talking together in a group, or working on a group project; group connectedness or social identity; and new action skills, such as research, investigating new information, writing letters or petitions, making presentations, or planning a meeting.

People can reflect about their own learning and can reflect as a group about the actions they have taken in the community as well as individually. The student units in *English for Action* integrate the concepts of self- and group-evaluation in the reflection activity at the end of each chapter. Ultimately, evaluation about actions reinforces the purpose of education as personal and social change so that people can become actors in their own worlds.

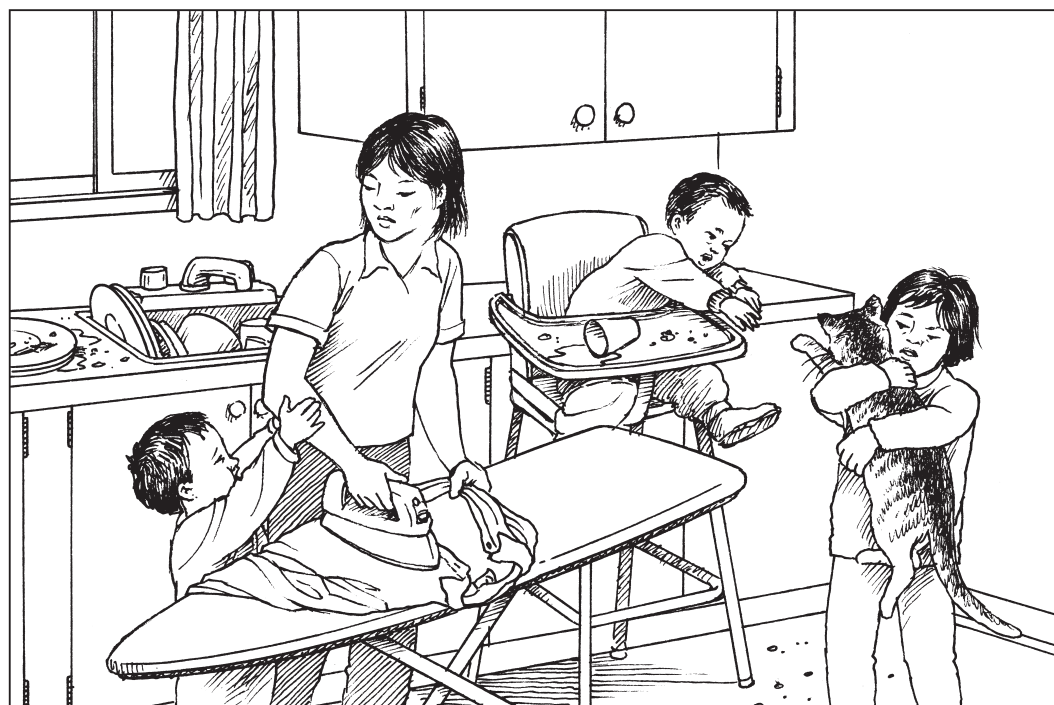
Language and Culture in Conflict triggers

Each of these triggers from *Language and Culture in Conflict* (Wallerstein, 1983) represent generative themes that can be used in ESL classrooms, youth leadership, women's equity or health programs.

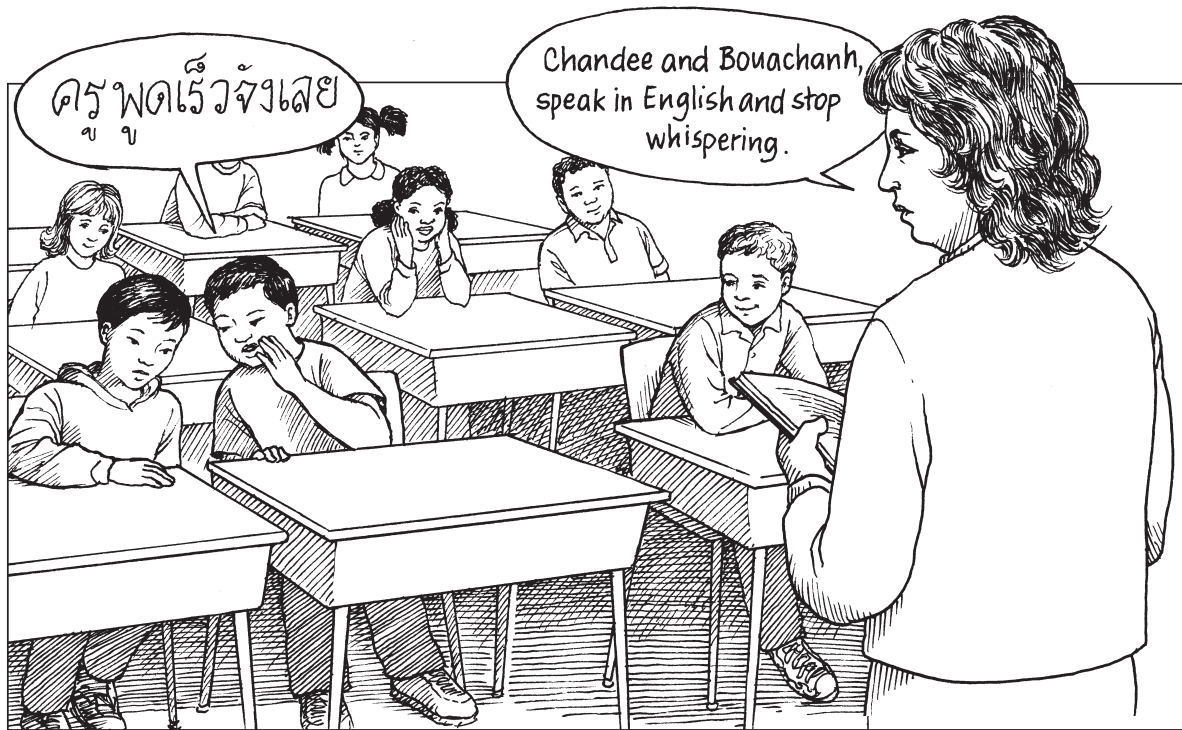
Teenagers



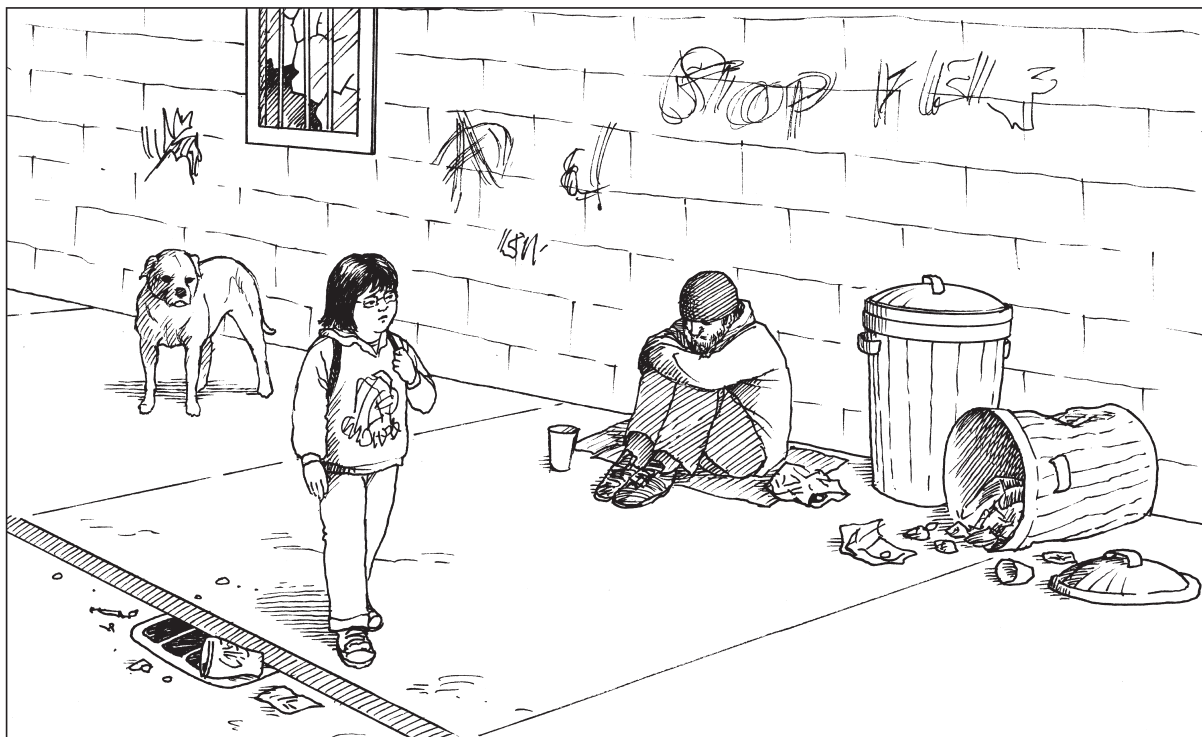
Womens' Work



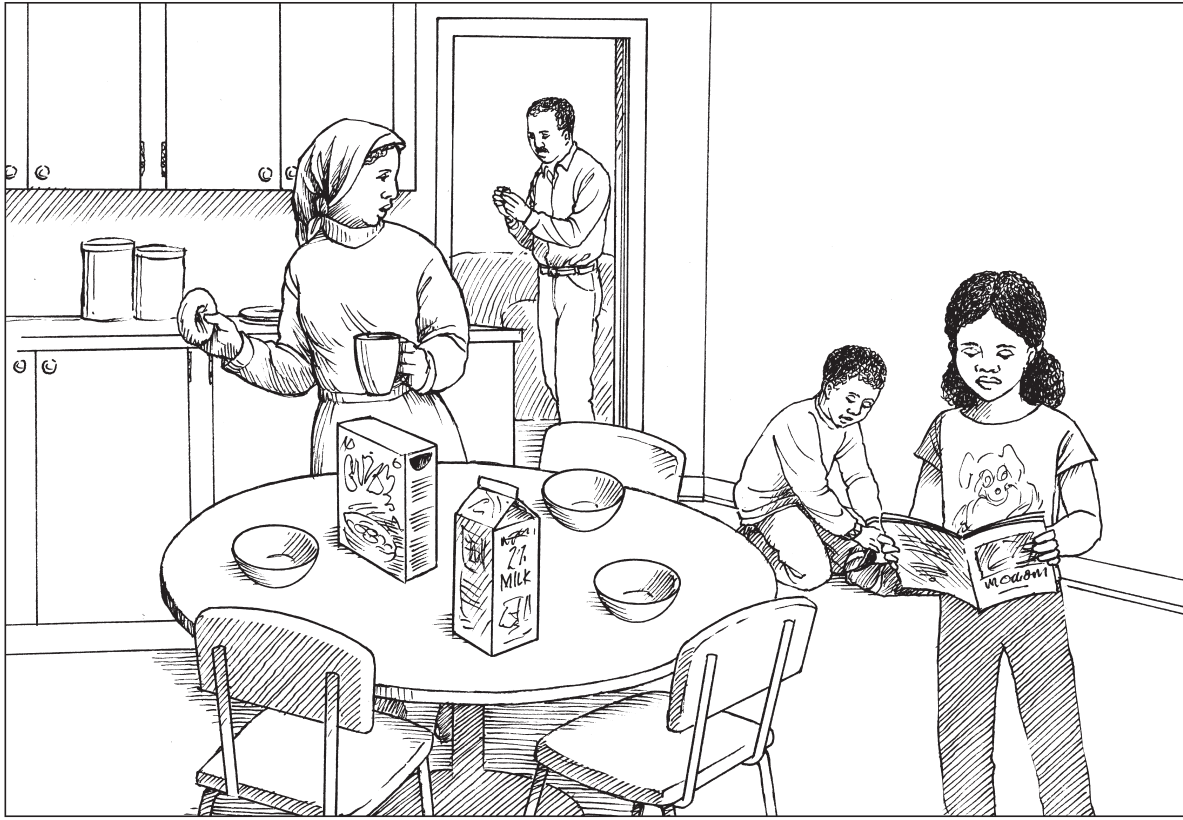
Discrimination: Language in a Classroom



Neighborhood Health



My Health



(Wallerstein, 1983)

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Chapter 3

An Example of a Problem-Posing Workplace ESL Cycle

by Jenny Lee Utech¹, Massachusetts Worker Education Roundtable

Editors' note

We were pleased to invite an experienced educator, Jenny Utech, to provide us with a classroom example of how problem-posing can work in an actual year-long setting. Here, she presents the importance of workplace context; examples of language activities that fostered critical thinking and dialogue; and the challenges she (and all of us as educators) face in creating safety, maintaining confidentiality, and moving towards action.

Introduction

I first heard about Paulo Freire and the problem-posing approach in the late 1980s, when I was teaching at a center for Central American refugees. Someone came and did a workshop for us about a new book, *ESL for Action: Problem-Posing at Work*. We were thrilled to learn about a pedagogy that had “conscientization” and social change at its roots.

Several years later, I began teaching in a worker education program based at a union. The program offered ESOL and adult basic education classes to unionized workers at their worksites. Labor-management committees at each worksite oversaw the classes. Curriculum focused on work-related skills and issues.

Teachers in the program believed that providing basic skills classes for workers could build the union and help workers understand their rights, not only by giving workers concrete skills, but by providing a forum for them to critically examine problems and their root causes, develop strategies, and take action as union members to address the problems. Some teachers had experimented with the problem-posing approach in other programs, using Elsa Auerbach and Nina Wallerstein’s work on Freirian-based, or *participatory*, language and literacy teaching. At the union, this approach became a cornerstone for our curriculum development.

Since our classes were based at worksites, where power dynamics and labor-management tensions sometimes created complex and delicate situations, we did not always make our approach explicit to managers. But in our classes, where we agreed to keep classroom conversations confidential, we had some freedom to explore workers’ issues and develop lessons around them.

This chapter describes a fall to spring cycle in one of my workplace ESOL classes, where together we explored work, the union, and taking action.

The students

This was a workplace ESOL class for workers at a large urban hospital. The class had eight students: three women and five men. Four worked in the hospital’s housekeeping department, two in the kitchen, and two in Transport (moving supplies, equipment, and patients around the hospital). Two students were native speakers of English (from

¹Adapted and reprinted with permission of the publisher, from J.L. Utech. (2004). *Workplace educator training: A guide to creating worker-centered education programs* (pp. 352-357). Boston: Massachusetts.

Trinidad and Barbados). The other students—two Puerto Ricans, one Cape Verdean, and three Haitians—were non-native speakers who all spoke a fair amount of English. All students had been in the United States for a long time. All had worked at the hospital for several years, except one who had started in Housekeeping about three months before the class began. These workers had low-level literacy skills and they wanted to improve reading and writing skills most of all. Classes met twice a week and workers received 50% paid release time for each two-hour class.

All of the workers in this class were union members. Two unions represented service workers on each of the hospital's two campuses. Four students were members of one union, and four were members of the other union. The two unions bargained one "unified" contract. The hospital's current structure had resulted from a merger of two hospitals. The merger was quite controversial and affected workers in all departments with lay offs, increases in work loads, and stingier benefits and policies.

Hospital and union goals

A workplace education program at this hospital had existed for four years and consisted of two ESOL classes and one ABE class. The two unions supported the program because it gave workers free classes and a chance to improve their skills. The hospital had a general interest in having people learn communication skills and job-related vocabulary. The labor-management committee overseeing the classes left the details of curriculum topics and lessons up to the teachers. Committee members wanted to see large numbers of workers attending classes and moving on to higher-level classes in or outside the hospital. The unions and hospital had agreed that union-related topics—for example, basic union contract information—could form part of the curriculum. A strong union presence in the program made this possible.

Teacher goals

I wanted to have an engaging, dynamic class that kept workers coming back and kept attendance high. But most importantly, I wanted to create worker-centered, participatory lessons that would bring out students' work issues and concerns and help us examine them together. I wanted us to explore students' experiences and knowledge of their union, and develop lessons on union issues. I hoped class work might lead students to take action to address issues raised in class. Finally, I wanted to give workers lots of reading and writing practice that would help them gain confidence and skills.

Reading, writing, and talking about work

We spent the fall cycle reading and writing about work. Since this class wanted to focus on reading and writing skills, I used short readings as catalyst activities to see what issues and interests students might have. We started the cycle with a piece from *Working Writers II*, (SEIU, 1997), "Housekeeping Job" by Isabel Rosario, in which the author describes her work as a hospital housekeeper. Students talked and wrote about their work and how they felt about it. We also read and discussed two short pieces from *Collaborations: English in Our Lives* (Weinstein-Shr, 1996) where workers talk about

pressures and difficulties at work. I had used these *Collaborations* pieces in other classes and they had generated lots of discussion. In this class, workers discussed how their jobs had gotten more difficult since the merger. Workloads had increased and supervisors were tougher. But no major issues surfaced. People felt they were dealing with their work well under the circumstances. They felt competent and on top of the changes.

After these readings, I asked students to describe and write their “job steps.” I got the idea for this activity from *English at Work: A Tool Kit for Teachers* (Barndt, Belfiore, & Handscombe, 1991). Students wrote their jobs steps on flipchart paper, and then posted and presented them to each other. We made a list of questions that workers wanted to know about each other’s jobs and students interviewed each other using these questions. Four students worked on one campus and four on the other campus. For the interviews, I paired workers from one campus with workers from the other. Students had not met workers from the other campus. People had a lot of questions for their classmates from “the other side” of the hospital about what working “over there” was like. These interviews generated lots of conversation and comparisons.

We finished the cycle with two more pieces from *Working Writers II*. One piece, called “My Work History” by Aster Brantly, led us to write our own work histories. The other, “Speak Up For Your Rights” by Joan Canty, sparked the work described below.

Class rituals, routines, and language work activities

During the fall cycle I worked to get students comfortable with reading and writing, help them build skills and confidence, and establish routines and rituals that would give the class rhythm and continuity. We were one small class meeting in a huge hospital (as opposed to one of many classes in a community-based center), so I felt it was important to create our own “school,” which students would see as legitimate and want to come back to. I also knew that students might not feel as comfortable with participatory discussion as they would with traditional “school work.” So I introduced various reading, writing, and grammar activities which, if they worked well, got repeated throughout the cycle.

After reading a story, for example, students and I would list key vocabulary on the board. Students practiced the vocabulary by filling in missing words from the story or using the words to write new sentences. I prepared simple yes/no sheets, a type of true/false activity with sentences about the story we had read, which I designed to help people check reading comprehension. In addition to sentences about the story, the sheets had sentences about workers’ experiences. I also made sentences with story information and vocabulary, cut them in half and asked students to work in pairs to match sentence halves. Students loved this activity. Even the lowest-level readers could do it and really enjoyed it. I prepared simple work sheets to practice verb tenses. Students also practiced writing questions about a story and then writing answers.

Sometimes during class discussions, I would write up students’ main points on flipchart paper as the discussion moved along. I developed this habit to keep discussions focused and on track. It also helped to get everyone talking (everyone wanted to see their comments up on the paper) and to democratize discussions that might otherwise be dominated by the more talkative students. This also allowed us to use discussion as language work. I would type up people’s comments afterward and we would read

them during the next class. Workers appreciated seeing their words in print, and even the lowest-level readers could read and understand their own comments. Reading back discussion content also helped us recall, re-spark, or continue discussions from previous classes.

Speak up for your rights

Two weeks before the fall cycle ended, we read “Speak Up For Your Rights” by Joan Canty from *Working Writers II*. In this piece, the author describes her first job (in 1959) when she worked as a Nurse's Aide at a large hospital. She recalls the bad treatment she received that led her to quit six months after she started. Canty writes, “I liked my job at first, but as the months went by, some of the nurses were doing underhanded things to make me get fired.” At the end of the piece, she concludes, “I learned after my first job experience about communicating with my supervisors, asking questions about my evaluation, and many other things I needed to know about my job. I learned to be aggressive and speak up for my rights.” I hoped that discussing this story would bring up workers' questions about union members' rights.

“Speak Up For Your Rights” sparked a lot of dialogue. We started by talking about what had happened in the story, and what questions students had about it. To focus the discussion and do some language work, I asked students to write down these questions. They shared the questions they had written and I listed these on flipchart paper. While many questions focused on clarifying story content (“Why did she leave her job? “What kind of patients did Joan work with?”), workers also had questions about why the situation had happened and what one might do in such a situation, for example, “Why did the nurses do underhanded things to Joan?” and “What would you do in a situation like hers?”

After I had written up everyone's questions, one student asked, “Was there a union involved?” We added this question to the list. He commented that there probably was no union where Joan had worked, but if there had been the situation might have turned out differently. We discussed how that hospital was not unionized then. Students all had opinions about Joan's story and were eager to share them.

Students were pleased to pick up the story again the next cycle. I had prepared discussion questions: Why do you think the nurses treated Joan this way? What should Joan have done? What could you do in this situation? What are your rights at work? Students' ideas for dealing with a similar situation included, “Talk to the person. If it doesn't change, then go to the supervisor. If it doesn't change, go to the union.” “Call the manager and say, ‘If you don't stop, I'm going to call the union.’” When students named rights at work, in addition to items like paid sick days, vacation and holidays, overtime and health insurance, their list included, “Speak up and explain,” “No abuse,” and “If you get fired, you fight back.”

Although one worker mentioned racism as a possible cause of Joan's predicament, workers mostly focused on how to deal with supervisors with union help. These workers seemed quite familiar with basic union procedures and members' rights. (This is not always the case, even for long-time members.) Students all had experience with supervisor problems and shared strategies for dealing with them.

Workers' rights in Massachusetts

Hoping to expand our discussion of workers' rights and the union, I posted a big version (on flipchart paper) of a "Workers' Rights in Massachusetts Quiz" I had created. We read it together. The quiz followed a yes/no format we had routinely used for reading comprehension practice in the fall cycle. First, I asked students to complete the quiz thinking about rights guaranteed all workers in Massachusetts, even those in non-union jobs. People circled yes or no for each item on their quiz sheets. When everyone was done, they called out answers. Once we decided the correct answer for each item, I put a "Yes" or "No" Post-It next to the item on the flipchart-sized quiz.

These workers, many of whom had worked in union jobs for years, were surprised to learn that state and federal laws guarantee workers very few rights. I asked students to do the quiz again, this time answering it about their own rights as unionized workers at the hospital. I used Post-Its of a different color for our union yes/no answers, and we compared rights guaranteed under the union contract and under state and federal law. People laughed and debated as we went over the answers together.

We reviewed the quiz in the next class. Then I posed more discussion questions: Why do you have these rights? How did you get these rights? How do you find out about your rights? What is a union contract? How do you find out what is in the contract? How do you read the contract?

Workers eagerly shared opinions, experiences, and advice. It became clear that these workers were familiar with general union contract information and basic union protections. Several students said that they attended union meetings regularly. Questions that surfaced during this discussion included, "Should the union representative tell the employee about their rights after a meeting with the supervisor?" and "Should the union representative tell you if you did something wrong?" I asked students to write about a time they had spoken up for their rights. I asked workers if they wanted to talk more about the contract, which they did. I asked them to bring their union contracts to the next class.

Looking at the union contract

For the next class, I prepared a worksheet for exploring the contract. To complete the first part of the worksheet, students had to use the contract table of contents. For the second part, they had to look up contract articles and search for specific pieces of information, for example, how many days' notice supervisors must provide if they plan to change a worker's schedule. I hoped this search would reinforce what people knew, provide some practice with written text, and perhaps bring out more questions.

Most students were familiar with basic contract content, but they enjoyed looking through the contract and locating things. More questions did surface as people completed the worksheet, mostly questions about Earned Time (ET). In the following class, I posted vocabulary words from the contract worksheet and we practiced them. Then I recalled the questions about Earned Time from the previous class. I asked everyone how they thought ET worked and we had a lengthy conversation about it.

Union steward roles

For the rest of the class, we discussed the roles and responsibilities of union stewards. I had prepared discussion questions and a brief reading about steward roles to try to address students' previous questions about union stewards informing members of their rights, and telling workers if they've done something wrong. Before we read, I asked workers to name what they thought union stewards should do. I wrote people's ideas on flipchart paper. Workers felt strongly that stewards should explain things to members if there is a problem, and not just meet with management alone. Stewards should make sure that members understand union procedures.

After this discussion, we read a Duty of Fair Representation paragraph I had excerpted from the union's Steward Handbook. The excerpt contained words that many students understood but could not sight read ("regardless," "disability," "oppose," "discord"), and we did extensive vocabulary work that absorbed us until the end of class. The DFR information helped workers clarify what stewards are supposed to do. We agreed that a union representative should come to class and answer people's questions.

We spent the next four classes reading, doing grammar work, and completing review activities. We practiced have to/has to statements based on the readings. These were calm, relaxed classes, a break from our intense discussions. Students were very absorbed in reading and writing work.

Visit from a union representative

We finally invited a union representative to visit our class about two months after the idea had originally come up. During the class before his visit, we made a list of questions to ask him. During the visit, students got answers to some of their questions. They also talked about the evening Housekeeping shift. This shift had no stewards and workers didn't stand up for themselves.

Successes

With the exception of one worker, everyone in this class had worked at the hospital for years and had lots of experience, opinions, and advice for each other. For the most part, they understood how the union worked and were eager to talk about it. They revealed a level of expertise and knowledge about workplace problems, union structures, and basic contract information. Workers often clarified information and answered questions for each other.

Our discussions gave workers the opportunity to explain their experiences, share lessons they had learned, and suggest what other workers could do. Structuring our discussions around a few questions, which I prepared ahead of time, and writing people's comments on flipchart paper, helped us focus and move forward. I always tried to pose questions that elicited workers' experience and opinions. I often felt the students had a better critical understanding of the issues than I did. My role was to facilitate and structure the dialogue.

Students loved reading the *Working Writers* pieces. They connected with these stories written by other workers and related them easily to their own experiences and opinions. I

think that starting with these personal stories and discussing their own experiences helped people connect more to our reading of “official” texts like the union contract and Steward Handbook excerpts. Workers appreciated the chance to read these texts too. I think they felt proud that they could make sense of such texts. But starting with texts like these might have put people off or put them to sleep.

Even though the union visit happened two months after we first talked about inviting a union representative to class, we did address union and member responsibilities during the visit and clear up some concerns workers had. I think this was a successful action.

Challenges

Students knew that when the labor-management committee overseeing the classes met, teachers would report general topics we had covered in class. However, students and teachers had agreed to keep the content and details of classroom discussions confidential, so students would feel safe talking about delicate work- or union-related issues. While the hospital and union had agreed that classes could cover information from the union contract, actually doing so proved delicate. I only included brief, general items from our union lessons in my reports to the committee, but I felt that hospital management was uncomfortable with union themes being discussed in class. Had managers and supervisors known the details of our discussions, they might have turned against the program.

Also, as I posed questions to explore topics further during our class discussions, we often ended up with even more questions. Sometimes it was hard to know what to do when new questions surfaced. It worked best when I asked workers how they wanted to handle these questions. When I didn’t ask students what we could do about these questions, sometimes we didn’t get back to addressing them.

Workplaces are complex environments where power dynamics, labor-management tensions, or difficult working conditions may affect workers and impact the education program as well. When we are teaching at the worksite, discussing workers’ issues in class, and perhaps creating lessons from these issues, we need to ask ourselves some important questions (Utech, 2004): How can we make sure that class work and discussions remain confidential? When sensitive work-related issues surface in class, how should we deal with them? Can we come up with strategies or create lessons from the issues? Should students involve the union or coworkers?

If students decide to take action on an issue, what risks or consequences might this bring? What is the context in which workers work and how might that limit what workers can actually change? Does management support curriculum on workers’ rights, the union contract, or workplace problems? Or might creating such curriculum get students and the teacher into trouble (if others find out about it)? At the worksite, who makes the decisions and what is our relationship to those decision makers? Who can we go to about problems? How can the union help? In non-union worksites, this type of curriculum would be much more difficult, though the challenge remains of how to benefit from reading, writing, and thinking about work issues so that learners can broaden their understanding of their rights and possible strategies to gain these rights.

These questions were ones that I continued to ask myself throughout this class cycle. If one of our purposes as educators is to advocate for and with our students, self-reflection on how we are doing with these questions becomes an essential role for us.

Taking action

In the ideal participatory classroom, students and teacher discuss and analyze problems, talk about how they might address them, and take action together to create change. In this class, we did examine some issues critically, for example, union steward roles and supervisor abuses. We did take the action of inviting the union representative to class.

Even though most of our discussion and class work did not lead to action, I believe that students valued these discussions. The class gave them a forum to talk about issues and share strategies with each other. Everyone had the chance to voice concerns and be heard. I've been struck by how few opportunities workers have to do this. Sometimes workplace classes are the only forum workers have to talk about troubling work issues with other workers. Even if we never get past sharing and discussing issues, writing, and doing language work, I think that these actions in themselves are valuable.

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Chapter 4

Connecting Local and Global Action:

The Role of Pedagogy in Social Change

by Elsa Auerbauch¹ and Nina Wallerstein

Having educational skills, such as literacy, language, and knowledge, has been equated with empowerment and with the capacity to negotiate one's life and engage in the political system. It is what we as educators believe in: the opportunities for people to use their education to improve their lives and the lives of their communities.

Yet, while more education is associated with better community health and economic well-being, we propose here that education alone is neither sufficient nor the motor force for social change. Whatever transformative power education may have comes from how it is contextualized and placed in service of broader issues and struggles. In considering the role of education in schools, families, worksites, and communities, it is important to guard against a remystification of these skills. This means being quite explicit about what education can do and what it can't do, about how we contextualize our work, and how we position ourselves as educators, practitioners, and activists.

The line of argument that subordinates education to ongoing socio-political struggles is entirely common sense for people who are not teachers or other education professionals—for social change activists and community organizers. For example, in the opening speech at a literacy conference in Cape Town, Kadar Asmal (2001), a long-time anti-apartheid activist and then Minister of Education in South Africa, debated the claim that literacy yields empowerment. He argued that, on the contrary, literacy is often used as an instrument of separation, alienation, and oppression. To the extent that literacy is elevated above morality and the knowledge of ordinary people, it can become disempowering. It's only when knowledge is not limited to the knowledge constructed through text that people will gain more control over their lives. Asmal's point is that we have to be careful not to privilege literacy as the key to liberation. To posit that literacy is the source of knowledge and that knowledge leads to power is not only misleading, but, in fact, can become justification for a new apartheid, one in which *literacy* rather than *race* is the fault line for segregation.

Like Asmal, Michael James, a radical educator and activist in the San Francisco bay area who works with youth on health, employment, drug prevention, and other social issues, argues that the notion that literacy is empowering is naïve and counterproductive. In an article entitled "Demystifying Literacy" (1990), he says:

Many literacy educators and programs today would hope their programs were indeed transformative. The new interest [in literacy for transformation] has also generated an inclination to mystify literacy, to ascribe to it catalytic properties far beyond its actual utility. It has captured the imaginations of many activists and educators for whom it represents a panacea for social and political inequities. (p. 15)

He goes on to say that "Literacy alone rarely guarantees privilege, access, or political leverage. When practitioners naïvely accept this idea, they sabotage their credibility with

¹Adapted from: E. Auerbach. (2005). Connecting the local and the global: A pedagogy of not-literacy. In J. Anderson, M. Kendrick, T. Rogers, & S. Smythe (Eds.), *Portraits of literacy across families, communities, and schools: Intersections and tensions*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

their students, who, in many cases, have an ability to recognize such idealism and know when to reject it” (p. 15).

The problem with ascribing such power to literacy or education, according to James, is that it “undermines the importance of the context itself” (p. 18).

Within literacy studies and education, context has, of course, come to take on enormous significance. The New Literacy Studies paradigm replaces the focus on individual mental processes of the cognitive tradition with a focus on socio-cultural contextual factors, i.e., how people practice and value literacy in multiple settings (Street 1984). As a result, literacy research has shifted beyond schools to include domains such as homes, communities, workplaces, and religious institutions. A central tenet of this paradigm is the view that recognizing, valuing, and including local ways of knowing, literacy practices, languages, and cultural knowledge shifts the balance of power promoted by traditional schooling.

Within public health and health literacy as well, the role of context has become well recognized. Risk factors, even such apparently straightforward behaviors as tobacco smoking, are seen as multi-causal. All problems are placed within a socio-ecologic multi-level framework in which policies and politics interact with community and organizational cultures, which interact with families, which interact with individual choices. Youth may engage in smoking, for example, because of their own enticement, parental smoking, peer expectations, school settings, the ease of cigarette availability in the community, media targeting, and the strength of the tobacco lobby.

In James' analysis and in the analysis of community change advocates across the disciplines, the antidote to inequities is organizing through concerted political action on multiple levels (local, state, national) and in multiple arenas, rather than solely within educational settings. This is the lesson of the civil rights movement; it is the lesson of the struggle in South Africa; it is the lesson of the labor movement; it is the lesson of the struggles of indigenous peoples. In each of these movements, education has played a role—as a vehicle or context for analysis—but rarely as the structural framework out of which the struggles emanated. What James is calling for is not educational activity with “relevant” content, but, as he says, political processes with an educational character (p. 18). It is the context in which education takes place and the struggles in which it is embedded that are the forces for change—not education itself.

Accordingly, this chapter explores how ESL, literacy, empowerment, and problem-posing education may contribute most powerfully to social change if they are situated in places/spaces where struggles for social justice are happening. We have also embedded these contextual issues throughout the revised *English for Action*, as it is important to engage learners and community members in active discussion on these issues. In this view, “critical” educators and students need to define “context” not just as situational domains or settings, but also in broad geo-political terms.

Forces of globalization

In these times, the forces of globalization that shape families, communities, schools, and worksites must be considered in any analysis of education. The primary reality which contextualizes our work is, on the one hand, globalization—or as many have called it,

global economic apartheid—and on the other hand, resistance to globalization. These two contradictory forces have been called, respectively, “globalization from above” and “globalization from below” (Brecher, Costello, & Smith, 2000). The former consists of transnational forces, which are consolidating power and wealth in the hands of the few while increasing the impoverishment of the many. The latter refers to the widespread emergence of local organizations challenging the forces of transnationalism and neo-liberalism.

While there has been considerable discussion about globalization within education and literacy circles, most of it focuses on how our educational processes need to accommodate new understandings of globalization. There seem to be two tendencies within this discussion. On the one hand, there are those who focus on the study of the ways in which globalization threatens local identities, discourses, and cultures through dominance of multi-national and neo-liberal politics which undermine local and national autonomy. On the other, are those who focus on the ways in which new technologies have profoundly changed communication within and between regions, requiring new attention to multimodalities, multimedia, critical media literacy, the discourses of power, and the new opportunities that come from this exchange.

Often the local and the global are framed as contradictory: some argue the need to protect the local and others argue the need to provide access to the global. This debate is particularly sharp within TESOL education circles, where it plays itself out around the question of English as a global language. Warshauer, in an article entitled “The Changing Global Economy and the Future of English Teaching” (2000), says that the overriding contradiction posed by globalization is the contradiction between the power of global forces and the struggle for local identities.

This same struggle takes place in the public health and union education arena. Local health education efforts are threatened with increasingly limited budgets, state and national restrictions (i.e., diversion of funds from core public health needs to bioterrorism), and attacks on local workers through plant closures or outsourcing of public workforces. Community-based education and participatory research in health have been seen as core strategies to protect local identity, local interpretations, and local policies. Yet, others argue that the main frontier for change has to be within regional, national, and international political debates that connect international trade policies to health, labor rights, and community impacts.

This debate can miss the mark on two counts. First, it focuses too much on the changing nature of local education and culture at the expense of understanding the changing nature of the *economic* and *political* context of learners’ lives. Second, it constructs a false contradiction between the global and the local.

What we need to do is turn the question of how globalization shapes education on its head and ask instead, *How can education contribute to shaping and resisting the dominant forces of globalization?* We need to align our work with the multitude of local organizations and movements around the world that are challenging globalization from above, and in this way are linking the local with the global. This argument necessitates first, an understanding of geopolitical economic forces that contextualize educational practice in families, communities, worksites, and schools; and second, an understanding of the global movement to resist them.

GLOBALIZATION FROM ABOVE

While it is impossible to adequately describe here the mechanisms of globalization from above, a brief overview can give a sense of the scope and power of this new world order. According to Brecher et al. (2000), 51 of the 100 largest economies in the world are corporations not countries; \$1.5 trillion flows **daily** across international borders. Other features of globalization from above include:

- global assembly line linking the North and South: sweatshops, child labor, and the maquiladora system
- changing structure of work: re-commodification of labor; flexible workforce
- global markets for buying/selling of goods, labor, and services
- transnational finance, financial institutions—IMF, WTO, World Bank—which supersede national governments
- corporate restructuring: centralization of control, transnational mergers
- new technologies
- privatization, deregulation
- trade: tariff agreements, open markets, NAFTA
- neo-imperialism: economic control taken out of control of poor countries; structural adjustment, etc.
- accelerating migration
- militarization
- dismantling of welfare

Brecher et al. characterize the impact of this system as follows:

- increased impoverishment and inequality: concentration of wealth, growth of poverty
- global ecological and environmental damage
- economic volatility
- permeability of borders/migration cycles
- decimation of human rights

In *Dying for Growth*, the effects of globalization on poverty and people's health are graphically described (Kim, Millen, Irwin, & Gershman, 2000). Three billion people live on less than \$2 per day, and 1.3 billion of these people survive on less than \$1 per day—the absolute poverty line established by the World Bank. In 2000, women accounted for 70% of those living below the absolute poverty line. More than 1 billion people do not have access to clean water and three-fifths of the 4.4 billion people in these nations lack access to basic sanitation.

The gap between rich and poor had been dramatically increasing. Between 1960 and 2000 the percentage of the global economy received by the poorest 20% of the population fell from 2.3 to an even lower 1.1%. The income ratio of the richest 20% to the poorest 20% in 1960 had increased from 30 to 1 to a ratio of 82 to 1 in 1995. Twenty percent of the world's people who live in developed nations account for 86% of private consumption

of resources. Yet, poverty is not unique to the developing world. In 2003, the United States census reported 12.5 % of the population, or 36 million people, living below the U.S.-established poverty line of \$14,680 per year for a family of three, with foreign-born non-citizens at 21.7% in poverty. The effect of absolute and relative poverty can not be over-estimated in people's daily struggle to feed their families, provide shelter, and have access to basic services such as health and education.

GLOBALIZATION FROM BELOW

In recent years, organizations have begun emerging all over the world in social locations that are marginal to dominant power centers in order to challenge the negative impacts of globalization from above. While engaging in local struggles, they are at the same time forming global alliances that constitute a new transnational resistance movement, a movement that has come to be called the "globalization from below movement" (Brecher et al., 2000). This movement recognizes the inevitability (and potential benefits) of a globalized world, but aims to shape globalization in the interests of the poor. It recognizes, too, that the combined force of the local movements is greater than the sum of individual forces, invoking what has come to be called the Lilliput Strategy because, just as the tiny Lilliputians captured the giant Gulliver by tying him up with hundreds of threads, there are hundreds of local struggles banding together to take on the globalization from above movement.

The local struggles are seen to be different facets of a broader movement based on solidarity that crosses boundaries of nations, identities, narrow interests. These networks of local movements with diverse interests and geographically diverse starting points have come together under the slogan "Another world is possible." They have formed the World Social Forum with global meetings in Porto Alegre, Brazil in 2003 and India in 2004, and have also organized demonstrations in opposition to IMF, G-8, and the World Bank, such as those in Seattle, Davos, and Calgary (for example, <<http://www.portoalegre2003.org/publique/index021.htm>>). Thus, this movement is characterized by struggles in different domains against the same forces:

- organizing against runaway plants
- organizing against child labor
- union organizing
- protection of indigenous peoples/cultures and languages
- resistance to engineered food
- environmentalist movements
- debt cancellation campaigns
- anti global sweatshop campaigns (Nike, Gap)
- human rights campaigns
- health, medication costs, HIV/AIDS campaigns
- struggles for women's rights, reproductive rights, against welfare 'reform'

The strength of this movement became evident through its focus on opposing war in Iraq in 2003. In an article entitled "Grassroots Globalization Gets Real," Kevin Danaher and Jason Mark (2003) say:

The huge worldwide peace marches in mid-February 2003 were of historic importance. For years progressive activists have trumpeted the promise of "grassroots globalization"—an alternative to the current corporate-led globalization. The planetary peace rallies showed the force of such a people's globalization. They proved that grassroots globalization is getting real.

They go on to say, “The currents of discontent are rising into a wave of citizen activism with the potential to re-order international relations and re-invigorate efforts for human rights and democracy. As the New York Times put it: ‘There may still be two superpowers on the planet: the United States and world public opinion.’” With the U.S. war in Iraq, the contradictions between the two forms of globalization are becoming increasingly evident. The international dialogue about what kind of a world we want is happening in homes, communities, worksites, and schools across the globe.

Implications for education

What does all this mean for education: English as a Second Language, adult literacy, public health, health promotion, labor education, empowerment and problem-posing education? At this moment, the single question underlying our work is whether or not we want a world that is controlled by the forces of greed or a world that protects democracy. It seems abundantly clear that major global forces, not individual competencies or skills alone, shape life possibilities. To promote new multimodal educational approaches as the key to participation in the globalized world, risks falling prey to a new version of the “pull yourself up by your bootstraps” myth. Our analysis challenges the view that preserving local cultures, competencies, practices, and literacies will provide sufficient protection, access, or power in the face of the onslaught of global apartheid.

Rather than positioning education as the key to social change, as so many critical educators (ourselves included) have done, this analysis suggests that change is possible—not when individuals improve their skills or expand their repertoire of practices only, but when they join with others in challenging specific conditions and forces that are undermining their communities.

We believe that an understanding of global forces necessitates re-contextualizing the work of critical problem-posing educators in service of the grassroots globalization movement. This means framing local and globalized educational efforts as part of political projects that challenge oppression. As James (1990) reminds us, it means not positioning our educational activities as having “relevant” content, but linking to political processes with an educational character. The focus shifts from individual skill acquisition to education in service of furthering struggles informed by the “think globally, act locally” ideology. Accordingly, its content is determined by local conditions, and its structural/institutional setting may not be educational at all. It entails collaboration with community organizations and participants, where they have a key role in shaping the pedagogy.

This argument is really old news in many parts of the world—just not in the countries in the “North”. In “The politics of really useful literacy,” Martin and Rahman (2001) write about the lessons that we in the North can learn from literacy work in Bangladesh,

saying, “Learning is a process of political struggle, and education is an instrument to be used in this struggle...” (p. 125). They argue in favor of what they call “really useful” education, which entails, among other things:

- “acquiring practical knowledge to help people act on their world”
- “harnessing learning to a social purpose”
- “splicing the people into sustainable development ”
- “enabling people to take power”
- “ensuring democratic control over the curriculum and the development of materials”
- “addressing gender inequities”
- “respecting but also trusting the people” (pp.122-125).

They conclude by saying:

One of the political lessons of globalisation is that the local and specific struggles of ordinary people all over the world can become part of the wider, international struggle for democracy, social justice and equality. As we all, in our different ways, live out the meaning of ‘globalisation from above’, the question is: how can we make our work part of an alternative and deeply subversive ‘globalisation from below...?’ (p. 130)

Diversifying contexts for education

What this analysis of geopolitical forces suggests is a vision in which sites of struggle become sites of learning. This entails making linkages with existing grassroots organizations—with women’s centers and union halls, with those struggling for tenants rights, access to health care, or against environmental pollution and domestic violence. It entails molding instruction in service of analysis, skills, practices, and discourses that enable people to participate in organizing for change as part of a global network. In addition to existing grassroots organizations, other structural locations are potential sites for integrating literacy education with local struggles. For example, community and union education programs can become spaces where people identify and investigate issues, and then learn skills that will help them address the issues, as well as connecting with other advocacy efforts. Collaborations or partnerships between organizations (for example, educational institutions and community groups) can also become spaces for this kind of work. And finally, of course, the traditional literacy, ESL, health education, and other adult education classrooms can become contexts in which to explore local issues as a means to connect to broader community/global struggles.

The seeds of this model have already been planted. Popular education and participatory action research approaches have been integrated into labor organizing drives and women’s organizations (e.g., Louie & Burnham, 2000; Barndt, 1999; Lee, Krause & Goetchius, 2003; Delp et al., 2003); public health and community organizing efforts (Minkler & Wallerstein, 2003; Minkler, 2004); community education centers that have taken up local issues (e.g., Kirkwood & Kirkwood, 1989) and taught skills for democratic

participation; collaborations and partnerships between literacy providers and community groups who have shifted their focus from literacy to community action (e.g., Auerbach, 2002); and adult education classes that have led to community organizing initiatives (e.g., Nash, 1999). While few of these endeavours situate education squarely within grassroots struggles, they provide evidence of the potential of that direction. The remainder of this chapter focuses on examples of projects that have planted the seeds for a model based on the ideology that “another world is possible.”

Social change organizations or movements

THE RIGHT QUESTION PROJECT

One organization that integrates education as a tool in service of social change is the Right Question Project (RQP) in Boston <<http://www.rightquestion.org/>>. RQP teaches community members to research power dynamics so that they can ask “the right questions” in advocating for their children, dealing with institutions, and challenging inequitable policies.

THE RQP EDUCATIONAL STRATEGY

- a) To teach people the skill of formulating their own questions, and
- b) To help them focus effectively on key decisions made by public institutions that affect them.

Begin at the beginning: self-advocacy.

Ordinary citizens learn to advocate for themselves in their many encounters with the various public institutions, agencies, and programs.

See a larger system.

People move beyond advocacy in one setting to begin to navigate their way through complex bureaucratic systems.

Focus on key decisions.

Individuals acting on their own, and groups of people working together, identify and act on key decisions that affect them.

Effect change in institutions and systems.

Individuals acting on their own, as well as groups of people acting in common interest, effect significant changes in the way institutions and systems operate.

Our strategy is so powerful because it directly helps ordinary citizens in their encounters with the various outposts of government. We believe this is the level at which people can best begin to help themselves, and in the process create new “pockets of democracy” or what we call “microdemocracy.” This can then help all of us by building a stronger, more inclusive and connected democracy. <<http://www.rightquestion.org/>>

The RQP educational strategy has been used in access to health and mental health care, economic development, citizen participation, and public education, as well as adult education and parent involvement.

COMMUNITY EDUCATION CENTERS

The Adult Learning Project in the Gorgie/Dalry community of Edinburgh, Scotland exemplifies a community center whose goal is to connect local struggles with educational projects (Kirkwood & Kirkwood, 1989). The Freire-inspired model, which has been in existence since the early '70s, entails intensive investigation of community issues (sometimes taking up to two years), codifying community issues through graphic representations, discussion of codifications with community participants, development of curricula around themes identified, learning programs, and action outcomes.

One issue that emerged in recent years was community opposition to construction of a superstore/car parking lot on community land. Community residents investigated land use regulations, including regulations regarding endangered plants as there was a rare species of moss on the land. The local Community Council used arguments of open space and biodiversity at the public hearings and was successful at creating a community park rather than a superstore/parking lot (Saville, 2002). Based on recent investigations, ALP is developing programs to address racism and “fear of the other,” with attention to how globalization is impacting the Gorgie/Dalry community.

Another example of community education in service of social change comes from a community center in Milwaukee, Wisconsin (Baez & Mack, 1996). Here, issues have included parents studying education law as they work for community control in schools; neighbors learning research methods to document pollution caused by the waste products of a closed factory; community members learning video production to share and redefine their community to a wider audience; and teenage street theatre.

ALTERNATIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

In addition to community-based integrated programs, non-profits and employee owned cooperatives have been emerging to provide alternative job opportunities for immigrants at a local level. Many of these alternative job programs integrate into their mission the goals of family support, education, and health. One example is the Southwest Creations Collaborative <scs@swcp.com>, which is a sewing manufacturing facility established in 1994 to provide jobs for low-income Hispanic women. Employing an average of 25 women, SCC provides on-site childcare (at 25 cents per hour); support for parents to participate in their children’s education; English as a Second Language and literacy classes; health clinics and health education services, in partnership with the Department of Health and University of New Mexico; and financial, literacy, and other family skills classes, all of which are aimed to increase dignity and stability in the lives of their employees. The success of viable employee-owned businesses that integrate educational opportunities can inspire other economic development and community actions.

COLLABORATIONS AND PARTNERSHIPS

Additional data supporting education in service of community action comes from a collection of case studies of community educational partnerships from all over the English-speaking world (Auerbach, 2002). Projects reflected diversity in geography, age (elder, youth, and early childhood), gender (women only/men and women), languages (single language/mixed language), and national origin, and diversity of home, community, or school-based settings. In addition to presenting the educational focus, which was mostly ESL and literacy, an analysis of partnership characteristics revealed several important strategies. 1) Keeping participants engaged by subsuming the literacy and ESL instruction within community enterprises, such as community investigations, economic development, building recreation and other social services, gardens, etc.; 2) understanding the importance of political, socio-cultural, and economic context in designing the partnerships; and 3) participant ownership to create a positive force for change.

In one community in South Africa, global economic shifts, including the shift towards high technology and the de-skilling of much of the workforce, resulted in unemployment and social dislocation, as community members were unprepared to meet changing labor market demands (Schofield, 2002). The understanding that educational problems originated outside the education system led to an integrated strategy of school and community reconstruction as economic development. Parents and community members decided to set up a vegetable cooperative, a day-care business, computer-training facilities, a training program for ceramics, bricklaying, and metalwork, and a community park. As one parent said, "The vegetable garden impacts on learning because a hungry child cannot think. . . . So our garden helps learning" (Schofield, 2002, p. 166). A day-care center was set up by community women which addressed school attendance problems and at the same time shifted traditional gendered economic roles within the community.

Participant "ownership" of collaborations meant that partnerships began to flourish when there was a shift from outsider to insider control. Several interrelated factors promoted "ownership": 1) involving community members in planning or projects and curriculum; 2) ensuring non-hierarchical relations between partners; 3) staffing the project with people from the learners' linguistic and cultural backgrounds; 4) inviting use of learners' first languages even in ESL projects (in Nunavut, for example, indigenous languages had been officially excluded until recently, so promoting community choice in language/literacy use was a stance supporting local control); and 5) promoting leadership of community members. Partnerships that were initiated by dominant institutions (universities or service agencies) based on their "expert" perception of community needs often met community resistance (usually in the form of non-participation). Simply put, nobody came. Projects that originated in the communities themselves however or that involved communities in planning from the beginning encountered fewer difficulties.

Another key factor in many of the projects was letting go of the plan, or being willing to deviate from the original proposal. Most of the partnerships attributed their success, at least in part, to allowing the unexpected, unplanned, and unpredictable to emerge from the community. In London, for example, the project was initially designed as a series of courses for Somali women, but when the women didn't participate, it became evident

that the adults could only be reached through working with children (Elmi, Folarin, Moalin, & Rees, 2002). The Somali staff then set up a football club for the youth, among other projects that eventually involved the adults, one of which was a “men’s project” motivated by high unemployment among men and their resulting sense of dislocation. As a corollary to this, many of the authors agreed that partnerships should build on or link with pre-existing community organizations rather than create new organizations that would compete with those already in place.

Taken together, these studies reinforce a pedagogical model that positions community members as sources of knowledge, with understanding and wisdom in their own right. They demonstrate that when participants take the lead, they focus on key issues arising from their social contexts; acquisition of skills, therefore, whether literacy, language, or other skills, becomes embedded within the community actions.

COMMUNITY-BASED PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH (CBPR)

Community-based participatory research strategies continue the tradition of collaboratives and partnerships by involving community members in research to identify their issues and consider how to transform their environments (Minkler & Wallerstein, 2003). CBPR principles provide guidelines for how universities and other agencies can truly work in partnership with communities (Israel, Schulz, Parker, Becker, Allen, & Guzman, 2003), and, increasingly, can support policy and political change (Themba & Minkler, 2003; Farquhar & Wing, 2003).

One example of a community-based participatory research project which led to improvements in workplace conditions and policies for the room cleaners in Las Vegas hotels and casinos was facilitated by the Labor Occupational Health Program (LOHP), University of California, Berkeley (Lee & Baker, 2002). While LOHP staff had been using participatory education strategies to improve health and safety conditions since the late 1970s, they have recently adopted CBPR strategies to strengthen the potential for change. The Las Vegas local of the Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees union had approached LOHP to study room cleaners because they suspected that workloads had increased and that people were getting hurt without reporting their injuries. Union staff also wanted to involve workers in the research to increase participation within the union. The room cleaners (or guest room attendants) were a diverse group of women of color, mostly immigrant, non-English Spanish speakers, but also from Serbo-Croatia and other Southeast Asian and Asian countries.

LOHP started by facilitating small group meetings and focus groups over several months to identify job duties and to document increased workloads and stressors (using drawings of hotel rooms and sticky dots to locate sources of stress and overload, and using simulated room cleaning to show where room cleaners got hurt). People shared stories, role played “rush” room requirements, learned about accident reports, and critically analyzed their situations using problem-posing questions.

Information from these group sessions was used to develop a survey instrument which, despite a break of several months of hotel industry layoffs due to September 11, 2001, was administered in five hotels. Room-cleaner survey captains in these hotels held meetings to explain the purpose of the survey and to recruit high participation, with ultimately an excellent 74% of the target population completing the survey. Information

from the surveys, documenting workload increase in 15 areas and a high percentage of workplace pain and pain medication use, was immediately useful in that year's union contract negotiation. 18,654 union members turned out to vote "yes" to strike if hotels didn't agree to preserve health and welfare benefits and address workload issues, versus 877 who voted "no". Although management threatened workers, the survey information and the involvement of the membership in the research process succeeded as advocacy strategies to force the companies into a five-year new contract with substantial work reductions.

Some of the learnings out of this CBPR process were: the importance of having a larger policy and political agenda that provided genuine reasons for worker involvement; the strength of coupling participatory problem-posing educational strategies within the participatory research agenda; and the value of an overarching problem-posing approach. This problem-posing approach, by doing more than simply using participatory exercises, enabled facilitators to maintain a focus on several questions, i.e., how they were going to start from the experience of the workers; how they would include a critical analysis of the causes of the problems; and how they could support participants to engage in actions that would promote new leadership, strengthen the union, and make the workplace safer.

CLASSROOMS

Finally, of course, since the early 1980s there has been a rich tradition of Freirian pedagogical approaches, which promote critical analysis and action, emanating from the classroom. Practitioners have developed strategies for identifying social/community issues with participants that then become curriculum content and lead toward initiatives outside the classroom. One of the most refined models for integrating this kind of analysis into literacy/ESL education was developed in South Africa at the end of the apartheid regime in order to promote skills for participatory democracy (Kerfoot, 1993). In that model, educators elicit learners' experience through the presentation of photos, readings, objects, skits, videos, etc. They then compare and analyze their experiences through structured dialogue, and identify common community themes or issues. They research the themes and get new input through readings, published materials, invited speakers, and numeracy (graphs/charts), and develop language/literacy skills in the process. They go on to develop skills for participatory democracy: speaking, chairing meetings, handling conflict, writing letters, petitions and reports, and conducting debates, etc., and they use these skills to participate in the transition to a democratic government.

A recent volume that includes accounts of many such initiatives in North America is entitled *Civic Participation and Community Action Sourcebook* (Nash, 1999). It includes pieces about GED students taking action when their food stamps are held up, students challenging local police about their approach to controlling drug traffic, women organizing against family violence, formerly homeless women studying the history of welfare policy and then teaching others about the issue, and students researching and organizing for public transportation in their rural community. Another book, *Participatory Practices in Adult Education*, likewise documents projects and practices that promote participant activism (Campbell & Burnaby, 2001).

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have put forward a vision for “thinking globally and acting locally” in relation to family, community, union, workplace, and school-based education programs. To the extent that any single project focuses on local actions or the acquisition of education skills as ends in themselves, they are a step away from the model that we propose.

We propose a model that explores possibilities for connecting local initiatives to the wider global forces that contextualize them (in terms of analysis, research, and critique) as well as forging linkages with grassroots organizations or movements that are challenging the forces of globalization from above. Our guess is that there are hundreds of grassroots globalization organizations or projects that embed literacy and other education work, but they may be “invisible” to educators because they do not define themselves as educational. We hope to represent a broader vision, however, that links these different worlds so that we can strengthen our collective practice. This vision, and many of the examples presented here, are guided by some common underlying principles.

- A problem-posing pedagogy starts with participants’ concerns, preoccupations, interests, and wisdom (rather than with “needs assessment” related to skill acquisition). It rests on the assumption that participants come to learning with enormous strengths, life experiences, and struggles. Uncovering and building on these is key.
- Because problem-posing is issue-based, rather than skills-driven, it allows for different kinds of participation. It encourages participants to contribute according to their strengths, drawing on local knowledge and experiences, but connecting them to new and “transportable” analytical processes.
- Critical analysis, which connects the individual and the local with the broader socio-economic forces, is central. Through structured dialogue, students can see the commonalities and patterns of their individual experiences; they can come to see that the challenges they face are not due to their individual inadequacies or deficiencies. This entails challenging the notion that their problems will be solved with better skills, language, or literacy skills.
- Research is also integral. This entails investigating historical information and information about rights, looking at economic factors, and looking at how similar struggles play themselves out in other places (and in the process acquiring research skills). This kind of analysis also leads to the understanding that collective action, rather than individual action is often most effective.
- Skills are taught in service of analysis and action. Overt instruction focusing on specific skills, competencies, structures and conventions is integrated as needed to address issues.

We want to end with a paradox. It is only by debunking the myth that education alone is empowering that we can position ourselves to contribute to shifting the balance of power. By acknowledging the limitations of our work as education practitioners, we can support a broader vision of democratization which challenges the forces of top-down globalization. In other words, humility about what we can and can’t do will guide us towards the larger goals.

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Chapter 5

Guide to Activities in Problem-Posing at Work: English for Action (revised edition)

English for Action is designed to facilitate the problem-posing cycle both through the organization of the book as a whole and within each lesson in the book. The problem-posing cycle starts with participants' experiences, draws out themes or problems for deeper exploration through dialogue, digs deeper to look at root causes, introduces new information and skills, explores strategies for action, moves toward action, and invites reflection on the whole cycle in order to move toward a new cycle.

The book as a whole

Lessons in the first two units of the book are designed to elicit students' experiences and introduce the notion of problem-posing. They ease students into a participatory approach and help them identify critical issues that can become the content of their learning. The units in the middle part of the book (units III, IV, V, VI, and VII) each focus on a major theme in workplace life: getting along with others at work, money-related issues, pressures at work (worrying about legal status and stress), health and safety, discrimination, and unions.

The last unit moves back to the big picture, situating the many issues confronting workers in the context of what is happening internationally: why jobs are so volatile and what people around the world are doing in the face of the global economic forces. In this way, it looks forward to a vision of a better world. Thus, the book as a whole moves from eliciting students' concerns, exploring them systematically through dialogue, skill-building, and strategizing for action, to ending with broader analysis and consideration of long-term possibilities for change. The following overview gives a sense of this progression:

Unit I: Learning English invites students to share their backgrounds, their ideas about language learning, the contexts of their lives, and their migration journeys.

- Lesson 1: Introductions introduces the notions of power and identity by teaching students how **not** to answer questions they're uncomfortable with and by looking at the ways their identities change depending on context.
- Lesson 2: Inside the class invites students to explore their own conceptions of learning, their expectations for class, and their hopes for classroom dynamics. It introduces the approach of the book, differentiating it from traditional grammar-focused English classes, and invites dialogue about how the class should be conducted.
- Lesson 3: Outside the class invites students to explore how the contexts of their lives outside class shapes their learning; it asks students to reflect on what could make it hard for them to learn and how they can develop strategies and enlist allies to support their learning.

- Lesson 4: Coming to North America focuses on migration journeys, inviting students to situate their personal experiences within the broader dynamics of economic and political forces. In this way, it introduces a broad underlying theme of the book—that immigrant workers' lives are shaped by globalization.

Unit II: Working in a New Country begins to narrow the focus on work-related issues, aiming to draw out those issues that are most critical for class participants and to explore some of the dynamics of North American workplaces.

- Lesson 5: Jobs at home, jobs in this country asks students to compare their work experiences in their home countries and their new countries. It acknowledges that immigrants and refugees are often forced to take jobs far below their skill levels, and invites dialogue about what is important in a job. It focuses on participants' strengths in terms of past experience, education, skills.
- Lesson 6: Exploring work introduces a number of different activities to draw out participants' work-related experiences (both positive and negative) in order to determine which issues are most pressing. It is intended as a sort of "triage" lesson that will help the group decide which issues to focus on in class.
- Lesson 7: Finding jobs invites students to explore social obstacles that may impede their efforts to attain their goals. It relates individual struggles to dynamics such as racism and discrimination against women. It also introduces legal information and invites discussion of when and how legal information can be useful (as well as its limitations). Again, it situates the job search within broader economic forces. It explicitly names the problem-posing cycle as a tool for analyzing and addressing obstacles in order to enable students to apply it to any issue, whether or not the issue is addressed in the book.

After the class has finished Unit II, the students and teacher together can decide which of the subsequent lessons or units are priorities. They may, from that point forward, choose a non-linear approach in selecting lessons, tailoring the curriculum to the specific concerns of the group. We hope, though, that the class includes the last two lessons of the book because they address such important aspects of the problem-posing process—the analysis of the global situation and the possibilities for long-term change.

Unit III: Power at Work explores workplace organization, hierarchies, decision making, and power relations, as well as responsibilities both of workers and of employers.

- Lesson 8: Talking with co-workers invites students to begin to explore the culture of the workplace and interactions between workers. It introduces the notions of tensions between workers (and how they may be flamed by employers), finding allies at work, language use at work, and communication between different ethnic groups.

- Lesson 9: Talking with supervisors invites students to map structural relations and hierarchies within their workplaces. It teaches language for addressing workplace communication problems and introduces the notion of how language is used to reinforce or challenge power relations.
- Lesson 10: Rules, responsibilities, and rights examines both employees' and employers' responsibilities, stressing that both have obligations and rights. It introduces the process of filing grievances in unionized workplaces.

Unit IV: Making Money focuses on a range of issues related to pay.

- Lesson 11: Pay explores basic information about pay stubs, keeping track of hours, and wage laws. It includes scenarios related to problems with getting paid and introduces legal information about protections for workers who take concerted action about a workplace problem.
- Lesson 12: Minimum wage, living wage explores various pay systems (hourly wage, piece work) and problems related to low wages, and introduces language for asking for raises. It broadens the discussion to the movements for a living wage.
- Lesson 13: Overtime addresses workers' rights related to overtime, holiday pay, refusing overtime and keeping track of overtime hours. It introduces the process of contacting outside resources and keeping a personal directory of contacts through Appendix 12.

Unit V: Getting Through the Day explores some of the challenges that immigrant workers face day in and day out.

- Lesson 14: Work and family life explores ways that work affects family life including the roles of men and women at home. It explores the “double shift” that women sometimes face regarding housework, as well as ways of balancing work and family responsibilities. This lesson addresses family violence, alcoholism, and other issues that families face, incorporating strategies for getting support.
- Lesson 15: The deportation scare discusses the ways in which both documented and undocumented workers are affected by fears of deportation. It explores the rights of those without legal status and what any foreign-born worker can do if approached by government authorities. It presents information about ways that organizations are advocating for the rights of undocumented workers in the U.S. and Canada.
- Lesson 16: Stress explores symptoms of stress, causes of stress, and strategies for addressing stress. It aims to give participants tools for identifying stressors and for developing ways to either reduce or manage stress. Since breaks are among the strategies for addressing stress, the lesson presents information about rights

regarding breaks. It begins an exploration of stressors outside of work and helpful/unhelpful ways of responding to stress. This lesson serves as a transition into the next unit on health and safety issues.

Unit VI: Health and Safety explores a range of issues related to health and safety at work.

- Lesson 17: A safe workplace introduces concepts related to workplace health and safety, focusing particularly on employers' responsibilities. It examines workers' rights to a safe workplace and what workers can do if there is a problem in this regard.
- Lesson 18: Identifying hazards at work focuses on substances and conditions that are hazardous to workers, presenting legal information about workers' right to know about substances they are exposed to. It presents five research tools that workers can use to identify hazards.
- Lesson 19: Acting for health and safety explores strategies for responding to dangerous conditions in order to prevent harm. It presents legal information about protesting unsafe conditions and refusing to work under specific circumstances.
- Lesson 20: After an injury or illness focuses on what workers can do if they have health problems caused by work, including reporting injuries, getting workers' compensation, pre-selecting doctors, and filling out accident forms.
- Lesson 21: Pregnancy on the job explores the issues that pregnant workers face and also presents rights regarding light duty, leaves, and pay.

Unit VII: Moving Toward Equality explores a range of issues related to discrimination including kinds of discrimination, racism, and gender dynamics both at work and at home. It examines workplace pressures in family life.

- Lesson 22: Identifying discrimination introduces the range of types of discrimination as well as legal protections against discrimination. It situates issues of racism and discrimination within a broader economic context, exploring who benefits from them and how.
- Lesson 23: Men's work, women's work focuses on gender-based discrimination and issues faced by women workers, and presents legal information regarding pay equity.
- Lesson 24: Harassment focuses primarily on sexual harassment at work—how to identify it and how to respond. Other types of harassment are also considered.

Unit VIII: Unions addresses both benefits and challenges related to union membership. It explores reasons that workers may and may not want to participate in unions, including strategies for participating and dealing with problems with unions.

- Lesson 25: Belonging to a union introduces basic concepts about unionized workplaces, including reasons for unions, protections offered by unions, and union contracts. It explores the language of contracts and ways of navigating contracts.
- Lesson 26: Getting involved in the union considers barriers to becoming involved in unions as well as reasons and strategies for participating in union activities.
- Lesson 27: Organizing for change focuses on collective actions to address workplace problems including strikes, job actions, and organizing union drives. It develops strategies for thinking critically about workplace actions and evaluating them.

Unit IX: The Big Picture situates in a global context the issues that workers deal with on a day to day basis, ending the book with both the challenges and possibilities of acting for a better world. It stresses the notion of joining with others in common struggles so that small actions for change contribute to and are supported by broader movements.

- Lesson 28: Losing work deals with the realities of unemployment, exploring both the reasons that people may be laid off or fired and strategies for addressing unemployment (collecting compensation, dealing with bureaucracies, challenging firings).
- Lesson 29: The global workplace examines what is happening on a global level with plant closings, the migration of jobs, and the effects of the new economic realities for workers. It looks specifically at the effects of NAFTA for workers in Mexico, the U.S., and Canada. It explores issues that confront displaced workers and the organizing that is taking place across North America in the face of plant closings.
- Lesson 30: Visions for the future invites participants to envision their hopes and goals for a better future, and to think about who their allies are in moving toward change. It looks at how groups can join with each other to increase their power. It situates local struggles in the broader context of what is happening around the world, examining how globalization from above is being challenged by globalization from below. The book ends with the notion that “A better world is possible” as networks of groups and movements link together to challenge injustices and inequities.

Within each lesson of English for Action (revised edition)

Each lesson in the book is designed to go through a problem-posing cycle about a particular issue or theme. The cycle includes activities to address the levels of analysis described in chapter 2 of this *Popular Educator's Guide* and in Appendix 1 of *English for Action* (revised edition). These levels of analysis are: **Description** (What strikes you about this situation? How would you describe what you see?); **Problem definition** (What's really happening? What do you think each of the people in the code is thinking? Feeling? What are your early thoughts on the problem?); **Personalize** (How does this relate to your lives? Have any of you experienced these situations in your lives?); **Analyze social context** (Why does this problem exist? How come we face these problems in our communities or worksites? What makes this a shared problem?) **Develop strategies for action:** (How would we evaluate action alternatives? What can we do about this problem?).

While the first edition of *ESL for Action* incorporated each level of analysis in the dialogue questions following the opening code, in the revised edition the levels of analysis are extended throughout the whole lesson. They are introduced in the discussion questions following the opening code, but each subsequent activity is designed to deepen the analysis. The levels of analysis roughly correspond to the activity types included in the lessons, as follows:

Level of analysis	Activity type/s
Description and problem definition: What is the going on? What is the problem?	Getting started
Personalizing: How does it relate to your experience?	Exploring your experience
Analyzing the social context: Why is this a shared problem? Why does this problem exist?	Exploring others' experiences Digging deeper
What are the alternatives for action? What can we do to make things better?	Reading about rights Discussing strategies Seeking new information Practicing for action

Rather than maintaining a rigid sequence of activity types (or levels of analysis), the activities are organized within each chapter so that the content flow makes sense. Language work is integrated throughout, although often it is implicit rather than explicit. This means that teachers may want to extend the language focus or make it more explicit within given activities. The following notes explain how this might be done.

Getting started. The first activity in each lesson of *English for Action* is designed to introduce an issue and catalyze discussion around it. Each lesson starts with an open-ended code—a dialogue, drawing, or picture—that represents a conflict or dilemma that is familiar to participants. Codes often serve as mirrors, in that students project their

own situations onto the photo, drawing, or dialogue: they “read” the codes in light of what is important in their own lives. The codes thus elicit the perspectives, concerns, and experiences of participants and guide the teacher in knowing how to focus the lesson.

- In using codes, it is important to spend a little time unpacking the language and imagery of codes. In the case of written dialogues, the teacher can read the code aloud to students or invite students to role play the code, taking different parts.
- It is important that the teachers not lead students to a particular interpretation of the code, but rather listen carefully to learn what is important to students. The purpose of codes is to *pose* problems, not to *impose* solutions.
- Codes can bomb. This means that students can be entirely unresponsive to the codes and the discussion can go nowhere. This is not unusual. Whether or not a code “works” depends on each group and the concerns/realities confronting them. If a code falls flat, the educator has several options: s/he can invite students to rewrite the dialogue in a more “realistic” way, move on to subsequent activities, ask students to tell their own stories about the issue, or move on to a different lesson if the issue is not pressing for the group.
- The questions for discussion following each code should be seen as guidelines, not scripts. In facilitating discussion, it is important both to keep a purpose in mind and to remain open/flexible in order to be responsive to what comes up. The purposes are to invite students to bring their own experiences to the code, and to find commonalities or patterns, or underlying themes that can be explored through the lesson. Stopping at the level of storytelling or random reactions can undermine the purpose of the codes; at the same time, it may not be possible to address all of the guiding questions, and the discussion may take a fruitful direction not anticipated in the questions.
- It is sometimes the case that students feel that discussion isn’t “real” language learning, or that students feel that dialogue doesn’t count as the “real” work of the class. In this case, it can be helpful to write key sentences, vocabulary, phrases, and/or the actual “text” of the discussion as a language experience story. The words, phrases, or texts can then become the focus of subsequent instruction.

Exploring your experience. Activities under this heading are designed to link the theme to the experiences of students. The actual activities vary from making charts, to comparing home countries with new countries, to grammar exercises that provide a structure into which students can incorporate content from their lives. Charts serve the purpose of drawing together the experiences of the group into a visual whole. They also can easily be used for grammar work (students can make present or past tense sentences about each other using the information in the charts; teachers can adapt the grammar work to the needs and level of the group). Many of these activities invite students to see their individual experiences in light of other students’ experiences so that they can identify

commonalities or recurring themes. This is an important step in the analytical process: understanding that personal experiences are part of a larger pattern.

Exploring others' experiences. The real stories of immigrants and refugees are included throughout the book, often with photos. These stories serve several functions: on the level of language work, they are authentic texts that invite meaningful engagement with reading and can be used to teach reading strategies, vocabulary, and critical language awareness; on the analytical level, they show how others have dealt with the issues facing participants; they can serve to elicit and contextualize participants' own experiences, triggering reactions and reflections; on the generative level, they can serve as a model for students to write their own stories (this is always an option, whether or not the text explicitly invites it) which, in turn, can be used with others outside the class as a form of organizing/action.

Digging deeper. The activities under this heading are designed to deepen analysis of the issues addressed in the lesson. Many of them focus on exploring the root causes of the problems: Why do these issues exist? What are the broader socio-economic forces that cause them? The activities often are more challenging linguistically and are geared toward more advanced students. Teachers may want to do pre-reading and vocabulary exercises as well as adapting the materials to suit the language level of the class. Another strategy is to invite more proficient students to become class "experts" on the topics and have them report (either in the first or second language) to the class. Since analysis of the underlying causes of problems is so central to a problem-posing approach, these activities are a place in the curriculum where use of the first language may be appropriate.

Seeking new information. Central to the problem-posing process is the notion that learners can become researchers in their own right. The underlying point of these activities is that learners can develop skills for independently finding the information they need to address problems, rather than relying on teachers. The activities, repeated throughout the text, invite students to develop some core research skills: interviewing peers to learn about their experiences and knowledge; charting language and literacy uses in the workplace; identifying organizations and individuals with expertise or who can provide support (through word of mouth, telephone directory, and web searches); developing questions to elicit information; documenting conditions or incidents in the workplace; and inviting guests to class to give presentations and answer questions. The appendixes provide guidelines and templates that participants can adapt in a range of situations: interviewing guidelines, language/literacy logs to help identify needs and problem areas, grids for documenting hazards or incidents, and, most importantly, a resource list that participants add to as they go through the lessons of the book.

Reading about rights. These activities provide general background information about labor and immigration laws in the U.S. and Canada. Lesson 7 includes an important note explaining that the laws are very complicated and that people should not rely on the book for legal advice. The point of these sections is to give participants a broad sense of their rights and, more importantly, of what questions to ask to find out about protections

in their specific situations or contexts. It also stresses that even when there are laws to protect workers, they aren't always enforced and can't be relied on. Because the Canadian legal system is more decentralized (with provinces making their own laws), sections on Canadian law usually direct participants to outside sources of information (such as the Canadian Labour Congress website: <<http://clc-ctc.ca/web/menu/>>).

Most of the information in the sections on rights is presented as reading texts that can be broken into parts. Accessing this information can be facilitated by: 1) pre-reading activities (including inviting students to describe relevant situations or generate questions), 2) assigning different sections of the texts to different groups so that each becomes an expert on a small chunk, and 3) asking students to report back to the whole group so that there is information sharing. Again, because of the challenging nature of the material and the need for accurate understanding, use of the first language may be appropriate in these activities.

Discussing strategies. These activities invite critical analysis of possible courses of action about workplace problems. They often begin by inviting participants to respond to scenarios involving a problem. Participants are invited to brainstorm as many strategies as they can think of and then to consider pros and cons of the various possibilities. A key part of this process is considering what might make it hard to take action, what the obstacles to action might be, and what the potential consequences of the action might be. In this way it models a decision-making process rather than advocating particular actions or pushing people toward action (which of course can only be their own decision). The appendixes offer a few generic tools for planning and evaluating strategies for action.

Practicing for action. Most of the activities in these sections focus on language for action in the workplace: they are competencies for asking for a raise, responding to a reprimand, getting clarification, reporting a problem, etc. They often entail analyzing the structure of an interaction (getting someone's attention, stating a problem, making a suggestion) and then role playing the situation.

Reflecting on your work. A goal in participatory education is to involve students in all stages of curriculum development; a goal in problem-posing is to develop the capacity to reflect critically on one's action/analysis. Praxis entails critical reflection. For this reason, every lesson in the book ends with invitations to reflect on what students have learned and how they can use what they learned. Some of these invitations focus on students' assessment of the activities in the lesson; others focus on ways students can extend the lesson outside the class. Students are invited to read the text critically—to consider what was and wasn't useful and what was missing in the lesson; they are also invited to share or use what they learned beyond the lesson, for example by creating materials for other learners, by inviting guests, or by connecting with other organizations and movements. The appendixes also include generic activities for reflecting on learning. From these reflection activities, new themes for exploration or new activities may emerge that additional problem-posing cycles.

A final word on “hot topics”

It is inevitable that “hot topics” will arise through dialogue. When participants are invited to explore their lived experiences, difficult realities may be more the norm than the exception. Even simple questions like “How many children do you have?” or “Where do you work?” can be loaded: if someone has lost children or been separated from them, if someone is working without documentation or “under the table,” these seemingly neutral questions may be threatening or upsetting. In addition, of course, other topics are loaded for more obvious reasons: issues such as legal status (whether participants have documentation), family violence, sexual orientation, and even migration journeys (for people who may have had violent experiences or traumatic border crossings). Hot topics often arise when least expected.

A key in making it safe to address loaded issues is to make sure that participants feel that they have choice about how to respond. This is why the phrase “I’d rather not say” (and other polite ways to refuse to respond) is introduced in the first lesson of the book. In addition, participants are invited to develop guidelines for ensuring that the class is comfortable for all in Lesson 2. It is natural or normal for a teacher to feel overwhelmed when such a topic arises and be unable to think on his/her feet. Teachers can ask students how they want to proceed, tell students that they need time to think about how to address the issue, or simply postpone the discussion to another day to give themselves time to figure out a teaching strategy.

Often students themselves will have ideas about how to address an issue and some of the pressure can be taken off teachers by asking for their input/help (e.g., asking whether they would like to continue the discussion, write about it, postpone it to another day, do a role play, find readings or speakers to help address it, or something else). Other strategies for addressing hot topics include: 1) avoiding direct questions (e.g., “Have you ever experienced X?”) and instead discussing the issue in the third person: “Do you know anyone who experienced X?”); 2) writing language experience stories as a way to convert a heated discussion into a language/literacy activity, that can later be followed by critical questions; 3) inviting students to write their thoughts in a journal to be shared (or not) later. One danger, however, is to cut off or avoid difficult topics because they evoke heated discussion. In a problem-posing approach, a key is to make it safe to address issues that are centrally important in participants’ lives, and these topics, inevitably are charged.

Appendix

Selected resources

There are countless useful resources and websites related to the issues addressed in *Problem-Posing at Work: Popular Educator's Guide and English for Action*. The following list is only a sample of what is available. We apologize for the omission of any key resources: we see this list as a starting point rather than a comprehensive directory.

Resources on labor education and participatory labor education

Burke, B., Geronimo, J., Martin, D., Thomas, B., & Wall, C. (2002). *Education for changing unions*. Toronto, Canada: Between the Lines Press.

Connon-Unda, J. (2001). *Seeds for change: A curriculum guide for worker-centred literacy*. Ottawa, Canada: Canadian Labour Congress.

Delp, L., Outman-Kramer, M., Schurman, S., & Wong, K. (Eds.). (2002). *Teaching for change: Popular education and the labor movement*. Los Angeles: University of California Los Angeles, Center for Labor Research and Education.

Dyck, S.V., Battell, E., Isserlis, J., & Nonesuch, K. (1997). Women and Work. In K. Nonesuch (Ed.), *Making connections: Literacy and EAL curriculum from a feminist perspective*. Toronto, Canada: Canadian Congress for Learning Opportunities for Women. <http://www.nald.ca/province/que/litcent/publication_products/mconnec2.htm>

Health and Safety Training. (1995). Special section: *New Solutions: A Journal of Environmental and Occupational Health Policy*, 5 (2), 4-50.

<<http://www.aecf.org/jobandrace>> has a new web site on race, ethnicity, cultural competence, and workforce development of the Jobs Initiative of the Annie E. Casey Foundation. The web site includes tools, resources, a reading room, and more.

Levine, T. (2002). Learning in solidarity: A union approach to worker-centred literacy. *Just Labour: A Canadian Journal of Work & Society*, 1, 86-93.

Mar, W., & Webber, A. (2003). *Winning at work: English for workers' rights*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Berkeley, Center for Labor Research and Education.

National Immigration Law Center. (1996). *Workers' rights curriculum resource manual* (2nd ed.). Los Angeles: National Immigration Law Center.

Szudy, E., & Arroyo, M. (1994). *The right to understand: Linking literacy to health and safety training*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Berkeley, Labor Occupational Health Program.

University of Massachusetts Labor Extension Program. (2003). *Workers' rights pilot curriculum*. Boston: University of Massachusetts Labor Extension Program.

UCLA-LOSH. (1966). *Risk mapping: A group method for improving workplace health and safety*. Los Angeles: University of California Los Angeles, Labor Occupational Safety and Health Program.

Utech, J. (2004). *Workplace educator training: A guide to creating worker-centered education programs*. Boston: Massachusetts Worker Education Roundtable.

Wallerstein, N., & Rubenstein, H. (1993). *Teaching about job hazards: A guide for workers and their health providers*. Washington, DC: American Public Health Association Press.

Resources on workplace issues

Economic Policy Institute: <<http://www.epinet.org/>> Information on living wage, minimum wage, poverty and family budgets, retirement security, unemployment insurance, and welfare.

Living wage: <http://www.epinet.org/content.cfm/issueguides_livingwage_livingwage>

Minimum wage: <http://www.epinet.org/content.cfm/issueguides_minwage_winwage>

Paystubs:

<<http://www.nmsu.edu/~payroll/index.htm?http&&&www.nmsu.edu/~payroll/paystub.htm>>

<<http://www.springfieldapwu.freesevers.com/photo2.html>>

<<http://www.ksu.edu/hr/payroll/paystub.html>>

WHMIS (Workplace Hazardous Materials Information Systems) is designed to provide training and support specifically to ESL and literacy learners about safe handling of chemicals and hazardous substances. All Canadian employers are required by law to ensure that employees who work in contact with hazardous materials have proper WHMIS training. The on-line course is available at: <<http://alphaplus.ca/purchaseonlinetrain.html>>

North American Alliance for Fair Employment: <<http://www.fairjobs.org>> Information on contingent labor, outsourcing, day laborers, etc.

United for a Fair Economy: Urban Institute: <<http://www.urban.org/>> Reports and books on social policy, immigrants, welfare, homeless, housing.

Resources on globalization

Aguilar, J. V., & Diez, M. C. (2003). Free trade: Free rein for transnational corporations. In S. Anderson & J. Cavanagh (Eds.), *Field guide to the global economy*. New York: The New Press.

Barndt, D. (1999). *Women working the NAFTA food chain*. Toronto, Canada: Second Story Press.

Bigelow, B., & Peterson, B. (2002). *Rethinking globalization: Teaching for justice in an unjust world*. Milwaukee, WI: Rethinking Schools.

Brecher, J., Costello, T., & Smith, B. (2000). *Globalization from below: The power of solidarity*. Cambridge, MA: South End Press.

Cho, E.H., Arguelles, P., Ching Yoon Louie, M., & Shokha, S. (2004). *BRIDGE: Building a race and immigration dialogue for the global economy: A popular education resource for immigrant and refugee community organizers*. Oakland, CA: National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights. With a video: *Uprooted: Refugees of the global economy*. Oakland, CA: National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights. <<http://www.nnirr.org/>>

Dicken, P. (1998). *Global shift: Transforming the world economy*. New York and London: The Guilford Press.

Desfor, G., Barndt, D., & Rahder, B. (Eds.). (2002). *Just doing it: Popular collective action in the Americas*. Montreal, Canada: Black Rose Press.

<Equidad@listerv.paho.org> A ListServe on poverty, equity, human rights, and health.

Garrett, L. (2000). *Betrayal of trust: The collapse of global public health*. New York: Hyperion Press.

Kim, J.Y., Millen J., Irwin, A., & Gershman, J. (Eds.). (2000). *Dying for growth: Global inequality and the health of the poor*. Monroe, ME: Common Courage Press.

Louie, M.C. (2002). *Sweatshop warriors: Immigrant women workers take on the global factory*. Boston: South End Press.

Louie, M.C., & Burnham, L. (2000). *Women's education in the global economy (WEdGE): A workbook*. Berkeley, CA: Women of Color Resource Center.

Rowbotham, S., & Linkogle, S. (Eds.). (2001). *Women resist globalization: Mobilizing for livelihood and rights*. New York and London: Zed Books.

Southwest Links News. ListServ of Southwest Global. Local links: <<http://southwest.irc-online.org/>> Project of the Interhemispheric Resource Center (IRC).

Resources on popular and participatory education

ACBE (Association for Community-Based Education). (1988). *Literacy for empowerment: A resource handbook for community-based educators* (p. 23). Washington, DC: ACBE.

Adams, F. (1975). *Unearthing seeds of fire: The idea of Highlander*. Winston Salem, NC: Blair (available from the Highlander Research and Education Center).

Alforja. (1984). *Técnicas participativas para la educación popular*. San Jose, Costa Rica: Centro de Estudios y Publicaciones, ALFORJA.

Arnold, R., Burke, B., James, C., Martin, D., & Thomas, B. (1991). *Educating for a change*. Toronto, Canada: Doris Marshall Institute for Education and Action and Between the Lines.

Auerbach, E., & Wallerstein, N., (1987), *ESL for action: Problem-posing at work*, Reading, Massachusetts, Addison-Wesley (student and teacher's guide).

Auerbach, E. (1992). *Making meaning, making change: Participatory curriculum development for adult ESL literacy*. McHenry, IL: Delta Systems. Washington, DC: Center for Applied Linguistics.

Auerbach, E., Barahona, B., Midy, J., Vaquerano, F., Zambrano, A., & Arnaud, J. (1996). *From the community to the community: A guidebook for participatory literacy training*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Baez, T., & Mack, E. (1996). Reclaiming and Transforming Community through Adult Education. In C. Walsh (Ed.), *Education reform and social change: Multicultural voices, struggles, and visions*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Barndt, D. (1989). *Naming the moment: Political analysis for action*. A manual for community groups. Toronto, Canada: Jesuit Centre for Social Faith and Justice. Available from <<http://www.catalystcentre.ca>>

Campbell, P., & Burnaby, B. (Eds.). (2001). *Participatory practices in adult education*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

- Community Development Programme (CDP) is a program in the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (UNCHS) aimed at strengthening community capacity for sustainable human development. <<http://www.scn.org/ip/cds/cmp/uganda/sumpb.htm>>
- Doerge, S., & Burke, B. (2000). *Starting with women's lives, changing today's economy: A facilitator's guide to a visual workshop methodology*. Ottawa, Canada: Canadian Labour Congress, Women's and Human Rights Department. <WomensMarch@clc.ctc.ca>, <wicc@wicc.org>
- Environmental and Economic Justice Project (EEJP). (2004). *Power tools: A manual for organizations fighting for justice*. Los Angeles: EEJP, 1715 W. Florence Ave., 90047.
- Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York: Seabury Press.
- Freire, P. (1971). To the coordinator of a cultural circle. *Convergence*, 4 (1), 61-62.
- Freire, P. (1973). *Education for critical consciousness*. New York: Seabury Press.
- Freire, P. (1985). *Politics of education*. South Hadley, MA: Bergin and Garvey.
- Freire, P. (1996). *A pedagogy of hope: Reliving pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York: Continuum Press.
- GATT-Fly. (1982). *Ah-hah! A new approach to popular education*. Toronto, Canada: Between the Lines Press.
- Hope, A., & Timmel, S. (1995). *Training for transformation. Vols. 1-3*. Gweru, Zimbabwe: Mambo Press. Available from Grailville Bookstore, Loveland, Ohio.
- Horton, M. (1990). *The long haul: An autobiography*. New York: Doubleday
- Horton, M., & Freire, P. (1990). *We make the road by walking: Conversations on education and social change*. B. Bell, J. Gaventa, & J. Peters (Eds.). Philadelphia: Temple University.
- Kazemek, F., & Rigg, P. (1995). *Enriching our lives: Poetry lessons for adult literacy teachers and tutors*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.
- Kerfoot, C. (1993). Participatory education in a South African context: Contradictions and challenges. *TESOL Quarterly*, 27 (3).
- Kirkwood, G., & Kirkwood, C. (1989). *Living adult education: Freire in Scotland*. Milton Keynes, UK: Open University Press.

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- Nadeau, D. (1996). *Counting our victories: Popular education and organizing. A training guide on popular education and organizing*. New Westminster, British Columbia: Repeal the Deal Productions.
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- Zerkel, M. (1997). *Coyuntural analysis: Critical thinking for meaningful action. A manual for facilitators*. Chicago: American Friends Service Committee.

Newsletters and journals

Focus on Basics
The Change Agent
Health Education and Literacy: BCC Publications
 World Education
 44 Farnsworth St.
 Boston, MA 02210

The RaPAL (Research and Practice in Adult Literacy) Bulletin
 c/o Margaret Herrington
 The Old School
 Main St.
 Tilton on the Hill
 Leicester, LE7 9LF
 UK

Problem-posing at work: Popular educator's guide

Teaching Tolerance
400 Washington Ave.
Montgomery, AL 36104

Rethinking Schools
1001 East Keefe Ave.
Milwaukee, WI 53212
<rethink@execpc.com>

<<http://www.ourtimes.ca/about/about.html>>

Our Times is an independent, pro-union Canadian magazine dedicated to promoting workers' rights and social justice, read by over 8,000 trade unionists, community activists, and union supporters across the country.

Organizational addresses

Canadian Congress for Learning Opportunities for Women (CCLOW)
47 Main St.
Toronto, ONT M4E 2V6
<cclow@web.net>

Canadian Labour Congress
2841 Riverside Dr.
Ottawa, ONT K1V 8X7

Center for International Education (CIE)
School of Education
University of Massachusetts/Amherst
285 Hills House South
Amherst, MA 01003
<cie@educ.umass.edu>

Center for Literacy Studies
University of Tennessee
600 Henley St., Suite 312
Knoxville, TN 37996-4125

Centre for Adult and Continuing Education (CACE)
University of the Western Cape
Private Bag x17, Belleville
7535 South Africa

Critical Pedagogy Websites: <http://www.21stcenturyschools.com/critical_pedagogy_web_sites.htm>

Domestic Violence:

Immigrant and Refugee Women's Rights Project/ Family Violence Prevention Fund
<<http://endabuse.org/programs/immigrant/>>

Tapestri: Domestic Violence in Immigrant and Refugee Women's Communities
<http://www.brown.edu/Departments/Swearer_Center/Literacy_Resources/screen.html>

Educational Planning and Design Associates

Harrish Press

18 Leslie St.

St. John's, NF

Canada A1E2V6

<edplan@firstcity.net>

Engaged Pedagogy Association, <<http://engagedpedagogy.org>>

Highlander Research and Education Center

1959 Highlander Way

New Market, TN 37820

<hrec@igc.apc.org>

Jobs with Justice Coalitions and Organizing Committees: addresses and contact information for local organizations: <<http://www.jwj.org/OrgTools/WRD/2003-coalitions.htm>>

Labor Occupational Health Program

Center for Occupational and Environmental Health

School of Public Health

University of California Berkeley

2223 Fulton St.

Berkeley, CA 94720

510-642-5507

<<http://www.lohp.org>>

Literacy Assistance Center

84 Williams St

New York, NY 10038

National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights

310 8th Street, Suite 303

Oakland, CA 94607

<<http://www.nnirr.org>>

510-465-1984

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