Chapter **12**

The Teaching Approach of Paulo Freire

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EDITORS' INTRODUCTION

The "problem-posing" approach is similar to values clarification. It is based on the socialist philosophy of Paulo Freire which forms the basis for the present chapter contributed by Wallerstein. Freire argues that a main task of "adult education" should be to "invite people to believe in themselves" and in the fact that they "have knowledge." In the same vein, Wallerstein, following Taba (1965), recommends "teaching students to think" (p. 197). Listening, dialogue, and action are the three main stages. The teacher is supposed to listen in order to discover who the students are both culturally and individually and to find out what their problems are. Dialogue then leads to action. Emotionally charged situations are presented in a codified form—a picture, a story, a written dialogue. The point is for the thinking of students to assume an activist thrust. According to Wallerstein, Freire's "central theme" is that "education should compel people to analyze and challenge those forces in society which keep them passive" (p. 191). Compulsory activism begins with getting students to challenge existing power structures by stating small demands first and bigger ones later on. They are supposed to progress from minor risks to more challenging ones. However, Wallerstein warns that "teachers must be careful not to impose their world view" (p. 198) but should encourage students to question not only societal values but also the teacher's views as well. As in the Curran approach to some extent, Wallerstein observes that "students and teachers communicate as co-learners" (p. 194). Also, as in Curran's counseling-learning, "students exercise control within the classroom by choosing which issues are crucial" (p. 194). Wallerstein concludes, however, by pointing out some perceived differences between Freire's approach and a number of others including counseling-learning, values clarification, and the notional/functional approach.

"Adult education should have as one of its main tasks to invite people to believe in themselves. It should invite people to believe that they have knowledge" (Freire, 1973a).

The problem-posing approach comes from the work of Brazilian educator Paulo Freire, author of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Born in Brazil's impoverished northeast to a lower middle-class family, Freire eventually completed his college and legal degrees. He gave up his law practice in the late forties to set up literacy classes in factories. As a professor of education at the University of

Recife, the largest city in the northeast, he coordinated a church-sponsored adult education program and developed his "dialogue" approach with slum dwellers and peasants. In 1963, he became coordinator of the National Literacy Program, bringing basic education to tens of thousands throughout Brazil.

Freire encouraged people to view themselves as active creators of culture, not passive recipients of history. He believed people create and recreate their culture as they earn a living, pass on values, and interact in social groups. By encouraging students to reflect on their role as creators, Freire challenged his students to believe in themselves as agents of change. "Once (the students) perceive that their music has as much culture as the music of Beethoven, they can begin to break down their dimensions of inferiority. It is this inferiority which prevents them from participating in the true creation of their society" (Freire 1973a). This process, described in *Education for Critical Consciousness*, enabled his adult students to read and write after only 6 weeks of study, thus making them active members of society by gaining the right to vote (Freire 1973b).

Exiled from Brazil in 1964 after the military takeover, Freire went to Chile until 1968, then taught for a year as a visiting professor at Harvard. From 1970 to 1979 he worked as director of the Office of Education for the World Council of Churches in Geneva. In 1979, Freire returned to Brazil. His ideas have been the catalyst for many adult education and community development programs both in the third world and in industrialized nations.

Paulo Freire's phonetic literacy method is not directly applicable to the United States. His students were a homogeneous group; ESL students come from diverse backgrounds. Freire himself recognizes that "experiments cannot be transplanted, they must be reinvented" (Freire 1978). Yet with creative reinventions, Freire's central theme does apply to our classrooms. Education should compel people to analyze and challenge those forces in society which keep them passive. This theme is based on the premise that education is not neutral and does not take place in a vacuum outside society. It prepares people either to accept or to challenge their life situations.

The Freire concepts and methods that reinforce this philosophy are divided into three stages: *listening*, which begins before teaching; *dialogue*, which takes place in class; and *action*, which extends to consequences outside the classroom. *Dialogue* leads to *action* as teachers and students explore *education as a two-way process, critical thinking, problem posing*, and *codes*.

LISTENING

To develop a problem-posing curriculum, we need to know about our students, their cultural traditions, their strengths in starting a new life, and their daily concerns. But how do we learn about (and from) our students if we don't speak their languages? We can begin this process by listening.

Listening simply means employing our observational skills with a systematic approach similar to anthropological fieldwork. "Problem-posing" listening also assumes that everyone—students and teachers—can participate on an ongoing basis. Teachers do not have to work alone to discover their students' issues. Cross-cultural understandings actually emerge more easily out of an interaction of students and teachers. People can recognize each other's cultural biases and learn to avoid misinterpreting each other.

As teachers, we carefully listen to our students' conversations and interactions. To create a curriculum tailored to our students and their daily concerns, we need to listen systematically. Effective listening takes time, as does getting to know people. But the time is well spent, and the process can begin at any time by using our basic sense of watching, listening, and intuiting.

How Can We Listen/Observe Effectively?

Look for verbal and nonverbal clues, and for individual and environmental factors.

Observation is a valuable skill, especially when teachers don't speak the students' languages. Consider what a careful observer can discover about the learning styles of Cantonese students (ethnic Chinese from Vietnam) versus those of Laotian (including Mien) students.

Cantonese students tend to sit upright, focus on the teacher, and repeat individually or as a group after the teacher. Laotian students are strikingly different. They tend to lean toward each other, talk under their breath as they point out the lessons to their neighbors and laugh at (and with) each other's attempts to speak English. Observing the two classrooms demonstrates the importance of teachers having sensitivity to their students' cultural styles. With these sensitivities, teachers may be able to create a comfortable atmosphere congruent with their students' expectations.

In the classroom:

Watch students' interaction—how they greet each other, say goodbye, show respect, touch each other, express pleasure, dismay, or other feelings.

Observe body language in learning—whether they work together or alone, sit rigidly or lean toward each other, praise each other or compete.

Observe students' actions—what they reveal about priorities or problems. For instance, many Indochinese students frequently miss class due to illness. Health care could then be a major discussion issue in a class of refugees.

Ask students to share objects from their culture (kitchen implements, handicrafts, handmade household tools, clothes, anything they have made).

Listen for informal conversations held during the break or before and after class. These talks can often be the richest source of information.

Create curriculum about everyday activities—students' home and family life (where do family members live? where do students feel at home?), their

neighborhood life (who do they know in the community? do they interact with other cultural/ethnic groups?), and their work life (what do they like and not like? how is work different in their home country?).

In the community:

Walk through students' neighborhoods, school, and work environs and *take photographs* to bring back to class. Be systematic—observe at the same time for a few days, or at the same place at different times, and record impressions.

Walk with students through their neighborhoods or around the school. Through field trips and walks, students' use of English in the community will increase. If possible, have students take photographs.

Draw maps of houses and services in the neighborhoods. This can be a class exercise: have students draw stores, parks, bus stops, or social places important in their lives.

Ask people on the street as well as community workers about issues in the community. Have *students conduct interviews*, and bring results and their own observations to class.

In students' homes:

Observe students' lives outside of class—their living conditions, their material expressions of culture, their manner of treating the teacher as an honored guest. Access to students' homes is a privilege and provides great opportunities to learn more about their lives.

What Are the Cultural Attributes to Observe?

Look for cultural differences and expressions of group identity.

Times of cultural transmission:

Observe social rites including rituals of becoming an adult, weddings, or baby showers. Invitations to these experiences are again a privilege.

Observe child-raising practices and parents' expectations for children's behavior. Students can discuss the differences between child rearing in their culture and in the United States. They can also tell childhood stories.

Times of cultural preservation:

Attend (or have schools sponsor) *celebrations* from students' culture and history. Learn about the foods, dress, rituals, and values.

Ask students about their home country—what they used to do, whether they want to return, what values they want to retain for themselves and for their children.

Times of cultural disruption:

> *Ask students about their immigration*—how they felt when they left, why and how they came, what they expected, how they feel now about their lives.
> *Have students compare their lives* in the two countries in different areas: health, work, family, education, etc.

How Can We Verify What We Hear?

This is ultimately the most important step. Cross-cultural understanding comes in what we as teachers observe, transform into curriculum, and then receive in feedback from our students. A Freire process entails constant listening for students' responses to ensure our own learning and the relevance of the curriculum for each class.

A dialogue about problems in obtaining immigration papers, for example, may reflect the concerns of a Latin American student but not apply to the problems of Indochinese refugees. Students' responses to the curriculum will help us as teachers adapt or improve the lessons. The responses may also add information that we did not or could not understand when first observing. A map of a neighborhood drawn by a teacher, for example, could not possibly include information on who has just moved in or *why* a neighbor built a fence.

In sum, listening helps select the key concerns of students to shape into culturally sensitive lessons.

DIALOGUE

To Freire, dialogue means much more than conversation; it is an exchange between everyone in a class, student to student and teacher to student. The term involves *action*—students initiate discussions, lessons, and activities to fulfill their educational needs.

Dialogue differs from the traditional lecture and seminar methods where the teacher determines the scope of discussion and students remain passive objects of learning. A Freire approach to dialogue assumes students equally determine classroom interaction. As adults, they bring their concerns and personal agendas to class. These concerns determine what's important to discuss.

In an ABE/ESL class, this dialogue assumes many forms. In curriculum content, students introduce their personal backgrounds, their needs for education, their cultural differences with each other and with Anglo-America, and the problems they confront daily. In classroom dynamics, students participate in discussion circles, divide into small groups or pairs for structured peer teaching, or learn directly from the teacher. In attitudes, students and teachers communicate as co-learners.

Teaching creatively with the dialogue approach makes ESL more than just learning a new language. As students exercise control within the classroom by choosing which issues are crucial, they will gain confidence to use English and to make changes in their lives outside of school.

EDUCATION AS A TWO-WAY PROCESS

The use of dialogue challenges the traditional role of a teacher. Rather than presenting ourselves as omniscient, we participate in a two-way process, learning alongside our students about each others' lives and cultures. For adult students, the tensions involved in learning ease as teachers become known as real people. Teachers can also relax their lecturing or performance role. As teachers and students get to know each other, they will be freer to exchange criticisms or appreciative remarks. Students will discuss their dissatisfactions more openly as well as give needed encouragement to others. Teachers will also be more personal as they emphasize their students' progress to lessen the normal frustrations in learning a new language.

As students talk about their lives, the classroom becomes a place of learning and excitement for teachers. Many ESL teachers have not had the opportunity to travel in students' home countries or interact with students in their cultural communities within the United States. Many teachers are not fluent in the students' language, and lack in-depth knowledge about their culture. Using dialogue and a multicultural curriculum established in partnership can stimulate learning and mutual understanding.

CRITICAL THINKING AND ACTION

The goal of the dialogue approach is to encourage critical thinking about the world. By discussing their personal experiences students can uncover the social pressures which affect them as members of an ethnic group. A critical view does *not* imply negative thinking. Critical thinking builds on the hopes that students have for a better life. Students have already experienced change in their lives by immigrating, and are searching for other changes in the United States. Analyzing U.S. society enables students to adopt a positive stance toward the change they want, in their personal lives or with their community. Communication with immigrants, ethnic groups, and Anglo-Americans can increase as people share their culture and move beyond stereotypes that separate groups in America.

Critical thinking in the classroom does not take place randomly; a teacher promotes inquiry by posing questions and providing information to lead the discussion into a larger social context. Students evaluate the forces that exert control on their lives. Layoffs, racism on the job, cultural discrimination, inflation, education, family—these forces limit their choices of how they live. Critical thinking begins when people make the connections between their individual lives and social conditions. It ends one step beyond perception— toward the *action* people take to regain control over social structures detrimental to their lives.

Action and change do not come easily. Many adult English students are unused to criticizing institutions or demanding reforms. They might be unhappy that their children's school system has no bilingual program, for example, but feel they do not have the privilege or right to demand such programs.

Action *can* begin in the classroom. The first step toward action is to have students reflect on their common experience. Sometimes their only shared experience is what happens in the classroom. Why are they studying? What do they learn in the classroom? What can they learn from their fellow students? What do they learn *outside* of the classroom? These discussions can elicit criticisms or suggestions for better teaching. If the atmosphere allows students to say what they think, they will have made a step toward control in one aspect of their lives.

Curriculum can also reflect students' common experiences outside of the classroom, their stories and life problems. As students identify shared issues, they may gain insight into actions to better their situations. To encourage these insights, the lesson materials themselves must include a language of action. Many ESL texts teach a language of survival or of expressing an opinion or purpose. Few, however, teach language that goes beyond identifying or accepting a situation—language that leads toward empowerment. A Freire approach considers language of action central to learning English. Lessons on neighborhood issues such as barking dogs, inadequate city services, or no heating, for example, could expand to include language about block organizing or tenants' rights. Learning language can initiate small steps toward change. Students need to be successful taking a small risk in order to gain confidence for larger ones.

Sometimes, the school setting will provide enough of a community for group student actions or programs. Students in closed-entry semester or year-long courses develop a sense of community where they may follow through on issues raised in the classroom. Or if the school creates a community providing services or a social center (like many Indochinese centers), students can get involved in self-help or collective programs. Some school centers have created farmers' food markets, selling cooperatives (i.e., the Hmong Pan Dau sales), women's groups, or parent-assisted child-care centers. When students are ready, other actions can take place within language-learning—writing letters to congressional representatives, or writing and circulating petitions, organizing neighborhood cleanups—whatever actions are important to the students.

PROBLEM POSING

Problem posing is the tool for developing critical thinking. It is an inductive questioning process that structures dialogue in the classroom. Teachers formulate questions to encourage students to make their own conclusions about

society's values and pressures. The problem-posing method draws out students' shared experiences of society.

Problem posing begins by listening for students' issues. Based on the listening, teachers then select and present the familiar situations back to the students in a codified form: a photograph, a written dialogue, a story, or a drawing (see Codes). Each situation contains personal and social conflicts which are emotionally charged for students. Teachers ask a series of inductive questions which move the discussion of the situation from the concrete to a more analytic level. The problem-posing process directs students to name the problem, understand how it applies to them, determine the causes of the problem, generalize to others, and finally, suggest alternatives or solutions to the problem.

For example, a teacher questions students about a picture of unemployment lines, a situation familiar to many class members. After talking about the elements of the picture and naming the problem, students talk about their own experiences. The teacher then asks, "Why do you think it is difficult to find work?" After students state their opinions, the teacher directs the discussion beyond the students' individual experiences. Do they know other people out of work who can't get jobs? Finally, the teacher encourages discussion on alternatives. How can the students get more training and/or education? What collective actions can they take? Do they understand what affirmative action is?

The inductive questioning strategy of problem posing stresses that teaching people to think is important and applicable at all language levels. Learning to think is a step-by-step process that requires students to learn by doing. Teachers can't just communicate information; we must assume the role of asking questions of students and of expecting students to ask questions of us.

To develop thinking skills, we start at a simple descriptive level, asking students to describe people or places or events. At the descriptive level, students learn vocabulary and language structures and become interested in the discussion content.

We then move to a projective or analytic level, asking students to say what they think, to make inferences, to generalize or to evaluate. Taba pioneered a theoretical construct of a cognitive task hierarchy for teaching students to think (Taba 1965). Her cognitive steps in many ways parallel Freire's problem-posing process. Students are asked first for a literal description (Freire's naming the problem); second, an affective response (Freire's questions, how do people feel about the problem); third, inferences (Freire's why questions, asking for causes); fourth, generalization (Freire's social context); and finally, application and evaluation for other situations (Freire's step, what should be done). The major difference between the two thinkers is in the final step. Taba asks for summations and applications of a new perspective to other situations. Freire asks for *action* on alternatives to problems based on the new perspective.

To teach thinking skills, we must develop our own listening and questioning skills, and know how to focus and direct discussions to higher levels of thought.

For example, one classroom dialogue about neighborhood problems started on a descriptive level:

What's on your street?	There are houses on one side and there's a farm on the other side.
What do you like about your street?	I like the school and the Mexicans. I can talk to them.
What don't you like?	I don't like the smelly farm. I don't like the noise. There are too many dogs.

When the teacher asked the question "why," the students were forced to think on a higher level:

Why are there so many dogs?	Because there are a lot of robberies.
Why are there so many robberies?	People don't have money. They need money to eat, for clothes.
Why don't people have money?	There's too little work.

As we see, the question "why" is critical for teaching thinking skills. "Why" questions allow people to project out of their personal experiences into a broader understanding or debate of opinions.

Projective questions, however, can be too difficult for starting discussion in ESL classes, especially for people who are not used to freely expressing opinions or who are restricted by language. Problem posing therefore begins concretely in an English class, with teachers starting at the descriptive level to reinforce language. In the first days of class, students can learn the question words: who, what, where, why, when, and how, and exchange information from the very start. Some may need encouragement, as many normally expect the teacher to do the asking. An equal exchange between teachers and students is not possible with beginners, since students still need instruction in vocabulary and grammar. Yet the questioning strategy encourages students to draw from their own experience, curiosity, and language competence to communicate in English.

When problem posing, the role of the teacher is not only to ask questions but to provide any necessary information that will move the dialogue to a higher level of thinking. Teachers must be careful not to impose their world view but to encourage students in their own critical thinking. Likewise, teachers should be cautious about assuming leadership on solutions to local problems. People from the community become their own leaders; students from ESL classes could become these leaders or join others as they realize community issues can be tackled.

CODES

After teachers listen to the concerns of their students and select a theme or a series of problems, they draw up lessons in the form of codes to stimulate

problem posing. Codes (or "codifications" in Freire's terms) are concrete physical expressions that combine all the elements of the theme into one representation. They can take many forms: photographs, drawings, collages, stories, written dialogues, movies, songs. Codes are more than visual aids for teaching. They are at the heart of the educational process because they initiate critical thinking.

No matter what the form, a code is a projective device that is emotionally laden and identifiable to students. Discussion of the problem will liberate energy that can stimulate creativity and raise motivation for using English. A good code should have these basic characteristics:

1. It must represent a daily problem situation that is immediately recognizable to students. (They already deeply know what is being talked about.)
2. That situation, chosen because it contains personal and social affect, is presented as a problem with inherent contradictions. The code (picture, story, etc.) should illustrate as many sides of the contradiction as possible, yet be simple enough for students to project their own experience.
3. The code should focus on one problem at a time, but not in a fragmentary way. It should suggest connections to other themes in people's lives.
4. The code should not provide solutions to the problem but should allow students to develop their own solutions from their experience.
5. The problem presented should not be overwhelming to students. There should be room for small actions that address the problem even if they don't solve it. Local community issues usually provide opportunities for students to have an impact with small-scale actions.

In essence, a code sums up or "codifies" into one statement a problem (or contradiction) that people recognize in their lives: need for English vs. loss of native culture, stress at work vs. need for work, disappointment vs. hope from expectations in the United States. Each problem is complex without narrowly defined good and bad sides. Students can project their own feelings and opinions in an attempt to negotiate solutions.

For example, students often have difficulty not being understood and not understanding English speakers. This problem can be codified into many situations; one possibility is a dialogue of a non-English speaker attempting to order food from a waitress who is pressured on her job. Teachers can ask students to identify the feelings of impatience and nervousness on both sides, the negative attitudes English speakers often have, and the defensiveness that causes students often to relinquish their equality. Solutions emerge when students realize the discomfort of both parties, and the necessity for them of taking risks to get respect.

After codifying the problem, teachers present the code and use the inductive questioning process to "decode" the problem in a five-step procedure.

These are the tools for dialogue.

Tools for Dialogue

1. Have students describe or name the content and feelings in the code: "*What* do you see?"
2. Ask students to define the problem concretely: "What is the problem here?" Address as many sides of the issue as possible.

3. Elicit similar problem situations in students' lives: "Do you also experience this? How is it the same? How is it different? How do you *feel* about it?" (Also ask if anyone has coped successfully with this issue before. Draw on their successes as well as their difficulties.)
4. Direct students to fit their individual experiences into a larger historical, social, or cultural perspective. Ask them to project opinions: "*Why* is there a problem? Why do you think?"
5. Encourage students to discuss alternatives and solutions: "What can you *do?*" Have students attempt small actions that will provide a new perspective on this problem or in some way ameliorate it. Again, ask for success stories.

Consider the following example of a classroom dialogue based on these questions. The teacher presented a picture of a Chinese home scene with the mother making wonton. The mother was speaking Chinese to her daughter; her daughter was answering, "No, I don't want to. I want to go play." The teacher showed this picture to explore the many aspects of the problem: why are children losing their parents' culture; what social pressures encourage them to "forget" the foreign language; how do parents feel; how do children feel; etc.

One class pursued the following discussion from this picture code as the teacher asked them questions in the five-step process.

First, the teacher asked students to describe what was happening in the picture.

TEACHER:	MANY STUDENTS:
1. *What do you see?*	
What's in the room?	It's a kitchen. A chair. A table.
What country are the objects from?	From the United States. That's from China.
What is the mother saying?	I don't know. It's Chinese.
What language is she speaking?	Chinese.
What is the daughter saying?	I don't want to. I want to go play.
What language is she speaking?	English.

The second step addressed the conflict between mother and daughter, with parents understanding that their children need English, though wanting their children to speak Chinese.

2. *What's the problem here?*	
What is the mother doing?	She's making wonton.
Does the daughter know how?	I don't know. Maybe. Maybe not.
Why not?	You can buy wonton in the store.
	—Maybe she not help her mother.
Does the daughter speak Chinese?	Maybe, a little.
Where is the daughter from?	Not China. She's American.
	—No, she's Chinese-American.
Does the mother speak English?	I don't think so.
Does the mother want her daughter to speak Chinese?	Oh yes.
	—But she needs English too.

Step 3 included questions applying the problem to students' lives and their feelings about the issue.

3. *Is this your problem?*	
Do your children speak your language?	Mine speak Spanish. They live with my father.
	—My son only speaks English.

Do their friends speak your language?	They only speak Spanish at home.
	—Only one. He gets embarrassed with others.
When will your children speak your language? At home?	My daughter likes to teach the baby.
	—Oh, Jessie loves Spanish TV.
How do you feel about it?	Oh, I want him to speak Chinese.
	—I like them to talk Spanish.
Do your children know about your country?	Yes, a little. Some things.
Do you want them to?	Oh yes.
Do they know how to cook your food?	I don't cook too much.
	—Yes, they know. They help.

Step 4, asking "why," is primary to the decoding process. Often teachers only have to ask, "But why?" to move students' thinking to a higher level. The question "Why not?" solicits students' opinions equally well.

4. *Why is there a problem?*	
How do they learn about your countries?	At home.
What about school?	Sometimes.
	—I don't know. Kim never says anything.
	—Sometimes, they teach about holidays.
	—I don't think they teach a lot.
Why not? Why don't schools teach about your countries?	I don't know.
	—They don't think it's important.
	—This is the United States.
	—But children can't speak Chinese at school.
Why not?	Teachers want to teach English.
Do teachers speak their language?	Maybe. The teacher of my children speaks Spanish a little.
	—My son's teacher don't speak Chinese.
Why not?	It's too hard.
When don't your children speak your language?	With friends. At school.
Are they embarrassed?	I don't know. But my son don't speak Chinese.
	—Jessie too. She gets mad and doesn't talk to my father.
Why are they embarrassed?	Their friends only talk English.
	—Sometimes at school other kids call my daughter bad names.
What do they say?	Oh, I don't know. You Mexican! But she's American.

Finally, the teacher asked what students could do about the problem.

5. *What can you do?*	
Can schools teach your language?	Yes, they teach Spanish one time a day.
	—But why not more times a day?
	—Why don't they teach my language?
Are there schools with bilingual programs?	I think so.
	—That school is far. I want my son close to home.
What do you think about bilingual programs?	I like them.
	—I want my children to speak English.
	—But I want them to speak Chinese too.

Does your state have a bilingual education law? What does it say?	There are more than ten in my son's class. —Why don't we have bilingual classes? —I don't know. They learn at home. —My children get embarrassed. I want them to learn Spanish at school. —Send them to Mexico. —I can't. They need respect here.
What classes do you want schools to have?	Classes in language. —Yes, classes on different countries also.
What about your culture? Can you teach the teachers about your country? Your culture?	

In this dialogue, students perceived that the problem of maintaining culture and language extended beyond their personal experiences. With this understanding, they may stop blaming themselves for inadequate parenting, or they may gain the self-confidence to take action.

The decoding process creates an exciting classroom interaction. Every discussion inspired by a code will be different, depending on what issues are central to that group of students. Teachers can't and shouldn't know the answers to their questions. The inductive questions solicit students' opinions which lead to new ideas for teachers as well as for students.

In summary, the problem-posing approach has three major components:

1. *Listening:* Teachers start listening and observing before class begins and continue during and outside classroom interactions. Through their observations, teachers define and codify students' concerns for use in structured language learning and dialogue.
2. *Dialogue:* Using codes in the classroom, the dialogue approach employs decoding questions toward the goals of critical thinking and action. Teachers and students become co-learners. The dialogue approach mitigates language-learning conflict as students share their lives and culture with each other and the teacher.
3. *Action:* Dialogue is not a neutral process; it attempts to move learning from the level of information and skills to consequences and actions outside of the classroom. Action-oriented problem posing offers an opportunity for students to exercise control in class and in the rest of their lives.

To end this chapter, a chart compares problem posing with four other major ESL approaches. Though noninclusive, the chart graphically depicts the conceptual uniqueness of the problem-posing approach as applied to ESL teaching. The four approaches are counseling or community language learning, situational approaches (survival and competency-based ESL), values clarification or cultural relativism, and notional/functional.

Comparison of Freire's Problem-posing Approach and Other ESL Methodologies (Moriarty and Wallerstein)

Counseling-learning/community language learning (CL/CLL)
Similarities
  • Extends beyond the artificial environment of the classroom
  • Attempts to use language creatively, not just repetitively
  • Topics for discussion determined by students
  • Emphasizes group and social interaction
  • Demonstrates relevance of conflict and emotions to learning

Differences
  • Counselor/teacher doesn't ask questions, but simply translates; Freire teacher proceeds by questioning and dialogue
  • Topics for discussion can be anything (Curran's examples—a trip to Tokyo, miniskirts); Freire content is always posed as a problem or central concern for the group
  • CL/CLL teacher participates as expert translator; Freire teacher participates as a peer

Survival ESL, competency-based education (CBE) (situational approaches)
Similarities
  • Attempts to deal with adult situations
  • Shows relevance of learning to daily life
  • Emphasizes needs assessment and feedback for evaluation
  • Bases pattern of competencies on social inequities
Differences
  • CBE emphasizes skills to cope and assimilate; Freire emphasizes skills to create and change problem situations
  • Freire focuses on the survival skills and strengths that students already have
  • Freire emphasizes teacher and students as co-learners

Values clarification, cultural relativism
Similarities
  • Affirms students' expression of feelings and value statements
  • Encourages participation by all
  • Teacher is nonjudgmental
Differences
  • Values clarification remains at individualistic level; Freire views values and cultural attitudes as a group creation

Notional/functional
Similarities
  • Assumes communicative competence as starting point
  • Uses language with its social context and purpose (opinions, intentions, emotions)
  • Teaches language that students need
  • Organizes teaching by content and integrated skills
Differences
  • Life skills are taught for individual competence; Freire emphasizes collective approach
  • Notional/functional organizes curriculum by purpose and need only; Freire takes problem orientation and thinking skills as major need
  • Freire adds cultural context to expressions and communication

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Freire advocates challenging the "forces" that keep us "passive." What assumptions lie behind these words and their associated propositional meaning?

2. Discuss the progression from *listening* to *dialogue* to *action.* How does the "language of empowerment" enter into the picture?

3. When Wallerstein talks about "taking risks to get respect," what does she mean? Similarily what meanings undergird the phrase "the self-confidence to take action" (p. 202)? Is social action in the sense intended necessary to language acquisition? In what ways might it help the process along?

4. It is recommended that the teacher "listen," and then "select and present back the familiar situations to the students in a codified form: a photograph, a written dialogue, a story, or a drawing" (p. 197). In what ways would these activities lead to a progressively more thorough grasp of the target language? Consider the recommended movement from "the concrete to a more analytic level" and subsequently to recommended solutions.

5. Compare Freire's problem-posing approach with the other methods discussed throughout this book. What elements might you incorporate from it into your own teaching?

Part IV
Roles and Drama

The authors in this section offer practical insights into the "whys," "wherefores," and "how-tos" of drama and role-playing. In Chapter 13, Susan Stern presents some insightful observations about how it is that drama activates the body and emotions as well as the intellect. The influence of the thinking expressed in Part III can certainly be felt here, but there seems to be a shift in emphasis away from the therapeutic goals of the authors in that section back to more mundane language teaching in this section. Di Pietro (Chapter 14) praises the developers of the "notional/functional syllabi" and at the same time comments on the need for relevance of communicative devices to particular contexts of experience. His idea of the open-ended scenario leads smoothly into Scarcella's discussion (Chapter 15) of "sociodrama." Her conception stresses again the critical element of conflict and the motivating force it gives to the development of a scenario. The section concludes, then, with Chapter 16 by Rodriguez and White, who offer an explanation and exemplification of the transition from classroom exercises and activities to real-life experiences through field trips. Their example of a supermarket trip is just the sort of thing that we would have liked to learn about early in our own training as language teachers.

SUGGESTED ADDITIONAL READINGS

JOHN SCHUMANN.
   1975. Affective factors and the problem of age in second language acquisition. *Language Learning* 25:209–235.

   In this insightful article Schumann challenges the favored hypothesis that children are better second language acquirers than adults because of the greater plasticity of their brains. He contends that other factors may enter the picture as well—in particular, affective factors. Indeed he makes a