

# *Cultural Action for Freedom*

**Paulo Freire**

## *Introduction*

I think it is important—for my own sake as well as the reader's—that we try, at the very outset, to clarify some points fundamental to the general understanding of my ideas on education as cultural action for freedom.

This is all the more important since one of the basic aims of this work, where the process of adult literacy is discussed, is to show that if our option is *for man*, education is cultural action for freedom and therefore an act of knowing and not of memorization. This act can never be accounted for in its complex totality by a mechanistic theory, for such a theory does not perceive education in general and adult literacy in particular as an act of knowing. Instead, it reduces the practice of education to a complex of techniques, naively considered to be neutral, by means of which the educational process is standardized in a sterile and bureaucratic operation.

This is not a gratuitous assertion. We will later clarify the radical distinction between knowing and memorizing and the reasons why we attach such importance to the adult literacy process.

But first, some words about the socio-historical conditioning of the thinking presented here, as well as an explanation of the necessity for critical reflection on such conditioning.

From a non-dualistic viewpoint, thought and language, constituting a whole, always refer to the reality of the thinking subject. Authentic thought-language is generated in the dialectical relationship between the subject and his concrete historical and cultural reality. In the case of the alienated cultural processes characteristic of dependent or object societies, thought-language itself is alienated, whence the fact that these societies do not manifest an authentic thought of their own during the periods of most acute alienation. Reality as it is thought does not correspond to the reality being lived objectively, but rather to the reality in which the alienated man imagines himself to be. This thought is not an effective instrument either in objective reality, to which alienated man does not relate as thinking subject, or in the imagined and longed for reality. Dissociated from the action implied by authentic thought, this mode of thought is lost in ineffective, false words.

Irresistibly attracted by the lifestyle of the director society, alienated man is a nostalgic man, never truly committed to his world. To appear to be rather than to be is one of his alienated wishes. His thinking and the way he expresses the world are generally a reflection of the thought and expression of the director society.<sup>1</sup> His alienated culture prevents him from understanding that his thinking and world-expression cannot find acceptance beyond his frontiers unless he is faithful to his particular world. Only to the extent

that he reflectively feels and knows his own particular world for having experienced it as mediation of a collective transforming praxis will his thought and expression gain significance beyond that world.

Such awareness of oneself and the world, however, is not the result of a purely private choice, but of a historical process in which object societies, some more rapidly than others due to the structural transformations they undergo, reflect upon themselves and perceive themselves to be dependent. These moments, which characterize the transitional stage of such societies, are both problematic and creative. They are witness to the emergence of the masses and to their clamoring presence in the historical process in varying degrees of intensity.<sup>2</sup>

This popular presence naturally creates a new lifestyle in the society. It begins to reveal society's internal and external contradictions, formerly undetected both by the masses and the so-called intelligentsia. In this way the alienated culture begins to be judged. Certain intellectuals begin to change their former view of society, really discovering society's structure for the first time. What alienation defined as the intrinsic inferiority of the popular masses is now objectively recognized to be the result of alienation itself, which is discovered as the manifestation of a situation of domination. Thus the more the alienated culture is uncovered, the more the oppressive reality in which it originates is exposed. A twofold pattern thus emerges. On the one hand, the culturally alienated society as a whole is dependent on the society that oppresses it and whose economic and cultural interests it serves. At the same time, within the alienated society itself, a regime of oppression is imposed upon the masses by the power elites that in certain cases are the same as the external elites and in others are the external elites transformed by a kind of metastasis into domestic power groups.

In either case there is a fundamental dimension to these societies resulting from their colonial phase: their culture was established and maintained as a "culture of silence."<sup>3</sup> Here again, the twofold pattern is apparent. Externally, the alienated society as a whole, as the mere object of the director society, is not heard by the latter. On the contrary, the metropolis prescribes its word, thereby effectively silencing it. Meanwhile, within the alienated society itself, the masses are subjected to the same kind of silence by the power elites.

When the popular masses get beyond the stage of fascination with their own emergence, and from demand to demand announce by their action that they are nearing a stage of sufficient organization to be able to break their submissive silence, the power elites violently attempt to arrest the process.<sup>4</sup> And if the elites lack the power to return the masses to their original silence, the director society, "invited" or not, takes it upon itself to do so.

The repression used to return the masses to their silence is preceded and accompanied by a myth-making effort to identify as diabolical all thought-language that uses such words as *alienation*, *domination*, *oppression*, *liberation*, *humanization*, and *autonomy*. To counter this effort among a well-intentioned but naive population, a demystifying work is necessary to show what the words really stand for: the expression of objective, socio-historical, and political categories whose dramatic character in the Third World allows no one to be neutral.

At a time in Brazil when the "culture of silence" was being exposed for what it is, I began, as a man of the Third World, to elaborate not a mechanical method for adult literacy learning, but an educational theory generated in the womb of the culture of silence itself—a theory that could become in practice not the voice of the culture, but one of the instruments of that still faltering voice.

The thinking developed here is not, of course, free of the influence of other thought. That would be impossible. We have never rejected positive contributions from men of the Third World or of the director societies. But confrontation with our particular world has taught us that any ideas coming from another part of the world cannot simply be transplanted. They must first be submitted to what Professor Guerreiro Ramos calls *sociological reduction*.<sup>5</sup> Unfortunately, such a rigorously scientific attitude is still not widespread in the Third World. Being a world of silence it is still unable—not because of any “ontological” incapacity, for such a thing does not exist—to assume the posture of one who “has a voice,” of one who is the subject of his choices, of one who freely projects his own destiny. Nevertheless, the emerging Third World is rapidly becoming conscious of its plight. It is beginning to understand that the much publicized need for development cannot be realized under the continuing conditions of silence or of an illusory voice. Under such conditions, only mere modernization is possible.

Thus the fundamental theme of the Third World—implying a difficult but not impossible task for its people—is the conquest of its right to a voice, of the right to pronounce its word. Only then can the word for those who silence it or give it the mere illusion of speaking also become an authentic word. Conquering the right to speak its word, the right to be itself, to assume direction of its own destiny, only the Third World itself will create the currently nonexistent conditions for those who today silence it to enter into dialogue with it.

As a man of this world, who has already lived some significant, if not excessively traumatic, experiences for having presumed to have a voice in the culture of silence, I have only one desire: that our thinking may coincide historically with the unrest of all those who, whether they live in those cultures that are wholly silenced or in the silent sectors of cultures that prescribe their voice, are struggling to have a voice of their own.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> These managing societies in their turn usually suffer, as is natural, from the contrary illness: they are convinced of the infallibility of their thought, and for this reason find it normal that it should be piously followed by the dependent societies. In saying this we merely underline an obvious fact; in the relationship between metropolitan and dependent societies, the alienation of the latter (which implies what Guerreiro Ramos calls *exemplarism*) corresponds to the lordly manner of the former. In either case, however, one must refrain from absolutizing the statement, for just as among the alienated there are those who think in a non-alienated manner, there are unlordly denizens of the metropolises. In both cases, for different reasons, they break with the norms of their respective contexts.

<sup>2</sup> This process of transition also takes place in its own way in metropolitan societies, which give an appearance of unshakable stability. There also we see the emergence of the most depressed popular sectors, which previously did not exist as problems, hidden as they were in their society’s affluence. As they emerge, these groups make their presence felt by the power structures, whether by organizing themselves to give simple witness to their inescapable presence in the historical process, or by the most aggressive forms of political pressure.

Student groups, which for a long time concentrated on purely academic demands, gradually come to share the restlessness of the oppressed groups. The same happens to the most progressive among the intellectuals.

Thus the entire scheme of metropolitan societies begins to be called into question.

It is true that in speaking of the process of social change within these societies, one has to take into account their greater capacity for absorbing dissent due to their far more advanced technology. Marcuse has repeatedly called attention to the fact that this technological power is able to transform many of these protest movements into mere manifestations of folklore. This point, however, is not part of our subject, nor can it be adequately dealt with in a simple footnote.

<sup>3</sup> On the “culture of silence,” see Paulo Freire, “Cultural Freedom in Latin America,” in *Human Rights and the Liberation of Man in the Americas*, ed. Louis M. Colonese (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1970).

<sup>4</sup> Even a cursory analysis of Latin American politics confirms this assertion. Nevertheless, the successive coups d'état must not be seen as a demonstration of the incapacity of Latin American peoples to control their own destiny. On the contrary, the coups, and the violence with which some of their leaders try to maintain themselves in power, are a reaction of the oligarchies, dominated by the metropolis, to the pressure of the people attempting to become people.

<sup>5</sup> Guerreiro Ramos, *A redução sociológica* (Rio de Janeiro: Instituto Superior de Estudos Brasileiros, 1965).

## **Part I:**

### **The Adult Literacy Process as Cultural Action for Freedom**

#### **Every Educational Practice Implies a Concept of Man and the World**

Experience teaches us not to assume that the obvious is clearly understood. So it is with the truism with which we begin: All educational practice implies a theoretical stance on the educator's part. This stance in turn implies—sometimes more, sometimes less explicitly—an interpretation of man and the world. It could not be otherwise. The process of men's orientation in the world involves not just the association of sense images, as for animals. It involves, above all, thought-language; that is, the possibility of the act of knowing through his praxis, by which man transforms reality. For man, this process of orientation in the world can be understood neither as a purely subjective event, nor as an objective or mechanistic one, but only as an event in which subjectivity and objectivity are united. Orientation in the world, so understood, places the question of the purposes of action at the level of critical perception of reality.

If, for animals, orientation in the world means adaptation to the world, for man it means humanizing the world by transforming it. For animals there is no historical sense, no options or values in their orientation in the world; for man there is both a historical and a value dimension. Men have the sense of "project," in contrast to the instinctive routines of animals.

The action of men without objectives, whether the objectives are right or wrong, mythical or demythologized, naive or critical, is not praxis, though it may be orientation in the world. And not being praxis, it is action ignorant both of its own process and of its aim. The interrelation of the awareness of aim and of process is the basis for planning action, which implies methods, objectives, and value options.

Teaching adults to read and write must be seen, analyzed, and understood in this way. The critical analyst will discover in the methods and texts used by educators and students practical value options that betray a philosophy of man, well or poorly outlined, coherent or incoherent. Only someone with a mechanistic mentality, which Marx would call "grossly materialistic," could reduce adult literacy learning to a purely technical action. Such a naive approach would be incapable of perceiving that technique itself as an instrument of men in their orientation in the world is not neutral.

We shall try, however, to prove by analysis the self-evidence of our statement. Let us consider the case of primers used as the basic texts for teaching adults to read and write. Let us further propose two distinct types: a poorly done primer and a good one, according to the genre's own criteria. Let us even suppose that the author of the good primer based the selection of its generative words<sup>1</sup> on a prior knowledge of which words have the greatest resonance for the learner (a practice not commonly found, though it does exist).

Doubtlessly, such an author is already far beyond the colleague who composes his primer with words he himself chooses in his own library. Both authors, however, are identical in a fundamental way. In each case they themselves decompose the given generative words and from the syllables create new words. With these words, in turn, the authors form simple sentences and, little by little, small stories, the so-called reading lessons.

Let us say that the author of the second primer, going one step further, suggests that the teachers who use it initiate discussions about one or another word, sentence, or text with their students.

Considering either of these hypothetical cases we may legitimately conclude that there is an implicit concept of man in the primer's method and content, whether it is recognized by the authors or not. This concept can be reconstructed from various angles. We begin with the fact, inherent in the idea and use of the primer, that it is the teacher who chooses the words and proposes them to the learner. Insofar as the primer is the mediating object between the teacher and students, and the students are to be "filled" with words the teachers have chosen, one can easily detect a first important dimension of the image of man that begins to emerge here. It is the profile of a man whose consciousness is "spatialized," and must be "filled" or "fed" in order to know. This same conception led Sartre, criticizing the notion that "to know is to eat," to exclaim: "O philosophie alimentaire!"<sup>2</sup>

This "digestive" concept of knowledge, so common in current educational practice, is found very clearly in the primer.<sup>3</sup> Illiterates are considered "undernourished," not in the literal sense in which many of them really are, but because they lack the "bread of the spirit." Consistent with the concept of knowledge as food, illiteracy is conceived of as a "poison herb," intoxicating and debilitating persons who cannot read or write. Thus, much is said about the "eradication" of illiteracy to cure the disease.<sup>4</sup> In this way, deprived of their character as linguistic signs constitutive of man's thought-language, words are transformed into mere "deposits of vocabulary"—the bread of the spirit that the illiterates are to "eat" and "digest."

[ . . . ]

Therefore the educator must strive for ever greater clarity as to what, at times without his conscious knowledge, illuminates the path of his action. Only in this way will he truly be able to assume the role of one of the subjects of this action and remain consistent in the process.

### **The Adult Literacy Process as an Act of Knowing**

To be an act of knowing, the adult literacy process demands among teachers and students a relationship of authentic dialogue. True dialogue unites subjects together in the cognition of a knowable object that mediates between them.

If learning to read and write is to constitute an act of knowing, the learners must assume from the beginning the role of creative subjects. It is not a matter of memorizing and repeating given syllables, words, and phrases, but rather of reflecting critically on the process of reading and writing itself, and on the profound significance of language.

Insofar as language is impossible without thought, and language and thought are impossible without the world to which they refer, the human word is more than mere vocabulary—it is word-and-action. The cognitive dimensions of the literacy process must include the relationships of men with their world. These relationships are the source of the dialectic between the products men achieve in transforming the world and the conditioning that these products in turn exercise on men.

Learning to read and write ought to be an opportunity for men to know what *speaking the word* really means: a human act implying reflection and action. As such it is a primordial human right and not the privilege of a few.<sup>12</sup> Speaking the word is not a true act if it is not at the same time associated with the right of self-expression and world-expression, of creating and re-creating, of deciding and choosing and ultimately participating in society's historical process.

In the culture of silence the masses are "mute," that is, they are prohibited from creatively taking part in the transformations of their society and therefore prohibited from being. Even if they can occasionally read and write because they were "taught" in humanitarian—but not humanist—literacy campaigns, they are nevertheless alienated from the power responsible for their silence.

Illiterates know they are concrete men. They know that they do things. What they do not know in the culture of silence—in which they are ambiguous, dual beings—is that men's actions as such are transforming, creative, and re-creative. Overcome by the myths of this culture, including the myth of their own "natural inferiority," they do not know that *their* action upon the world is also transforming. Prevented from having a "structural perception" of the facts involving them, they do not know that they cannot "have a voice," that is, that they cannot exercise the right to participate consciously in the socio-historical transformation of their society, because their work does not belong to them.

It could be said (and we would agree) that it is not possible to recognize all this apart from praxis, that is, apart from reflection and action, and that to attempt it would be pure idealism. But it is also true that action upon an object must be critically analyzed in order to understand both the object itself and the understanding one has of it. The act of knowing involves a dialectical movement that goes from action to reflection and from reflection upon action to a new action. For the learner to know what he did not know before, he must engage in an authentic process of abstraction by means of which he can reflect on the action-object whole, or, more generally, on forms of orientation in the world. In this process of abstraction, situations representative of how the learner orients himself in the world are proposed to him as the objects of his critique.

As an event calling forth the critical reflection of both the learners and educators, the literacy process must relate *speaking the word* to *transforming reality*, and to man's role in this transformation. Perceiving the significance of that relationship is indispensable for those learning to read and write if we are really committed to liberation. Such a perception will lead the learners to recognize a much greater right than that of being literate. They will ultimately recognize that, as men, they have the right to have a voice.

On the other hand, as an act of knowing, learning to read and write presupposes not only a theory of knowing but a method that corresponds to the theory.

We recognize the indisputable unity between subjectivity and objectivity in the act of knowing. Reality is never just simply the objective datum, the concrete fact, but is also men's perception of it. Once again, this is not a subjectivistic or idealistic affirmation, as it might seem. On the contrary, subjectivism and idealism come into play when the subjective-objective unity is broken.<sup>13</sup>

The adult literacy process as an act of knowing implies the existence of two interrelated contexts. One is the context of authentic dialogue between learners and educators as equally knowing subjects. This is what schools should be—the theoretical context of dialogue. The second is the real, concrete context of facts, the

social reality in which men exist.<sup>14</sup>

In the theoretical context of dialogue, the facts presented by the real or concrete context are critically analyzed. This analysis involves the exercise of abstraction, through which, by means of representations of concrete reality, we seek knowledge of that reality. The instrument for this abstraction in our methodology is codification,<sup>15</sup> or representation of the existential situations of the learners.

Codification, on the one hand, mediates between the concrete and theoretical contexts (of reality). On the other hand, as knowable object, it mediates between the knowing subjects, educators and learners, who seek in dialogue to unveil the “action-object wholes.”

This type of linguistic discourse must be “read” by anyone who tries to interpret it, even when purely pictorial. As such, it presents what Chomsky calls “surface structure” and “deep structure.”

The “surface structure” of codification makes the “action-object whole” explicit in a purely taxonomic form. The first stage of decodification<sup>16</sup>—or reading—is descriptive. At this stage, the “readers”—or decoders—focus on the relationship between the categories constituting the codification. This preliminary focus on the surface structure is followed by problematizing the codified situation. This leads the learner to the second and fundamental stage of decodification, the comprehension of the codification’s “deep structure.” By understanding the codification’s “deep structure” the learner can then understand the dialectic that exists between the categories presented in the “surface structure,” as well as the unity between the “surface” and “deep” structures.

In our method, the codification initially takes the form of a photograph or sketch that represents a real existent, or an existent constructed by the learners. When this representation is projected as a slide, the learners effect an operation basic to the act of knowing: they gain distance from the knowable object. This experience of distance is undergone as well by the educators, so that educators and learners together can reflect critically on the knowable object that mediates between them. The aim of decodification is to arrive at the critical level of knowing, beginning with the learner’s experience of the situation in the “real context.”

Whereas the codified representation is the knowable object mediating between knowing subjects, decodification—dissolving the codification into its constituent elements—is the operation by which the knowing subjects perceive relationships between the codification’s elements and other facts presented by the real context—relationships that were formerly unperceived. Codification represents a given dimension of reality as individuals live it, and this dimension is proposed for their analysis in a context other than that in which they live it. Codification thus transforms what was a way of life in the real context into “objectum” in the theoretical context. The learners, rather than receive information about this or that fact, analyze aspects of their own existential experience represented in the codification.

Existential experience is a whole. In illuminating one of its angles and perceiving the inter-relation of that angle with others, the learners tend to replace a fragmented vision of reality with a total vision. From the point of view of a theory of knowledge, this means that the dynamic between codification of existential situations and decodification involves the learners in a constant re-construction of their former “admiration” of reality.



We do not use the concept “ad-miration” here in the usual way, or in its ethical or esthetic sense, but with a special philosophical connotation.

To “ad-mire” is to objectify the “not-I.” It is a dialectical operation that characterizes man as man, differentiating him from the animal. It is directly associated with the creative dimension of his language. To “ad-mire” implies that man stands over against his “not-I” in order to understand it. For this reason, there is no act of knowing without “ad-miration” of the object to be known. If the act of knowing is a dynamic act—and no knowledge is ever complete—then in order to know, man not only “ad-mires” the object, but must always be “re-ad-miring” his former “ad-miration.” When we “re-ad-mire” our former “ad-miration” (always an “ad-miration *of*”) we are simultaneously “ad-miring” the act of “ad-miring” and the object “ad-mired,” so that we can overcome the errors we made in our former “ad-miration.” This “re-ad-miration” leads us to a perception of an anterior perception.

In the process of decodifying representations of their existential situations and perceiving former perceptions, the learners gradually, hesitatingly, and timorously place in doubt the opinion they held of reality and replace it with a more and more critical knowledge thereof.

Let us suppose that we were to present to groups from among the dominated classes codifications that portray their imitation of the dominators’ cultural models—a natural tendency of the oppressed consciousness at a given moment.<sup>17</sup> The dominated persons would perhaps, in self-defense, deny the truth of the codification. As they deepened their analysis, however, they would begin to perceive that their apparent imitation of the dominators’ models is a result of their interiorization of these models and, above all, of the myths of the “superiority” of the dominant classes that cause the dominated to feel inferior. What in fact is pure interiorization appears in a naive analysis to be imitation. At bottom, when the dominated classes reproduce the dominators’ style of life, it is because the dominators live “within” the dominated. The dominated can eject the dominators only by getting distance from them and objectifying them. Only then can they recognize them as their antithesis.<sup>18</sup>

To the extent, however, that interiorization of the dominators’ values is not only an individual phenomenon, but a social and cultural one, ejection must be achieved by a type of cultural action in which culture negates culture. That is, culture, as an interiorized product that in turn conditions men’s subsequent acts, must become the object of men’s knowledge so that they can perceive its conditioning power. Cultural action occurs at the level of superstructure. It can only be understood by what Althusser calls “the dialectic of overdetermination.”<sup>19</sup> This analytic tool prevents us from falling into mechanistic explanations or, what is worse, mechanistic action. An understanding of it precludes surprise that cultural myths remain after the infrastructure is transformed, even by revolution.

When the creation of a new culture is appropriate but impeded by interiorized cultural “residue,” this residue, these myths, must be expelled by means of culture. Cultural action and cultural revolution, at different stages, constitute the modes of this expulsion.

The learners must discover the reasons behind many of their attitudes toward cultural reality and thus confront cultural reality in a new way. “Re-ad-miration” of their former “ad-miration” is necessary in order to bring this about. The learners’ capacity for critical knowing—well beyond mere opinion—is established in the process of unveiling their relationships with the historical-cultural world *in* and *with* which they exist.

We do not mean to suggest that critical knowledge of man-world relationships arises as a verbal knowledge outside of praxis. Praxis is involved in the concrete situations that are codified for critical analysis. To analyze the codification in its “deep structure” is, for this very reason, to reconstruct the former praxis and to become capable of a new and different praxis. The relationship between the *theoretical context*, in which codified representations of objective facts are analyzed, and the *concrete context*, where these facts occur, has to be made real.

Such education must have the character of commitment. It implies a movement from the *concrete context* that provides objective facts, to the *theoretical context* where these facts are analyzed in depth, and back to the *concrete context* where men experiment with new forms of praxis.

It might seem as if some of our statements defend the principle that, whatever the level of the learners, they ought to reconstruct the process of human knowing in absolute terms. In fact, when we consider adult literacy learning or education in general as an act of knowing, we are advocating a synthesis between the educator’s maximally systematized knowing and the learners’ minimally systematized knowing—a synthesis achieved in dialogue. The educator’s role is to propose problems about the codified existential situations in order to help the learners arrive at a more and more critical view of their reality. The educator’s responsibility as conceived by this philosophy is thus greater in every way than that of his colleague whose duty is to transmit information that the learners memorize. Such an educator can simply repeat what he has read, and often misunderstood, since education for him does not mean an act of knowing.

The first type of educator, on the contrary, is a knowing subject, face to face with other knowing subjects. He can never be a mere memorizer, but rather a person constantly readjusting his knowledge, who calls forth knowledge from his students. For him, education is a pedagogy of knowing. The educator whose approach is mere memorization is anti-dialogic; his act of transmitting knowledge is inalterable. For the educator who experiences the act of knowing together with his students, in contrast, dialogue is the seal of the act of knowing. He is aware, however, that not all dialogue is in itself the mark of a relationship of true knowledge.

Socratic intellectualism—which mistook the definition of the concept for knowledge of the thing defined and this knowledge as virtue—did not constitute a true pedagogy of knowing, even though it was dialogic. Plato’s theory of dialogue failed to go beyond the Socratic theory of the definition as knowledge, even though for Plato one of the necessary conditions for knowing was that man be capable of a *prise de conscience*, and though the passage from *doxa* to *logos* was indispensable for man to achieve truth. For Plato, the *prise de conscience* did not refer to what man knew or did not know or knew badly about his dialectical relationship with the world; it was concerned rather with what man once knew and forgot at birth. To know was to remember or recollect forgotten knowledge. The apprehension of both *doxa* and *logos*, and the overcoming of *doxa* by *logos* occurred not in the man-world relationship, but in the effort to remember or rediscover a forgotten *logos*.

For dialogue to be a method of true knowledge, the knowing subjects must approach reality scientifically in order to seek the dialectical connections that explain the form of reality. Thus, to know is not to remember something previously known and now forgotten. No can *doxa* be overcome by *logos* apart from the dialectical relationship of man with his world, apart from men’s reflective action upon the world.

To be an act of knowing, then, the adult literacy process must engage the learners in the constant

problematizing of their existential situations.

## Notes

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1. In languages like Portuguese or Spanish, words are composed syllabically. Thus, every non-monosyllabic word is, technically, *generative*, in the sense that other words can be constructed from its decomposed syllables. For a word to be authentically generative, however, certain conditions must be present, which will be discussed in a later section of this article. [At the phonetic level, the term *generative word* is properly applicable only with regard to a sound-syllabic reading methodology, while the thematic application is universal. See Sylvia Ashton-Warner's *Teacher* (1963; rpt. London: Virago, 1980) for a different treatment of the concept of generative words at the thematic level.—Editor]

2. Jean Paul Sartre, *Situations I* (Paris: Librairie Gallimard, 1974), p. 31.

3. The digestive concept of knowledge is suggested by “controlled readings” by classes that consist only of lectures; by the use of memorized dialogues in language learning; by bibliographical notes that indicate not only which chapter, but which lines and words are to be read; by the methods of evaluating the students' progress in learning.

4. See Paulo Freire, “La alfabetización de adultos, crítica de su visión ingenua; comprensión de su visión crítica,” in *Introducción a la Acción Cultural* (Santiago: ICIRA, 1969).

12. Freire, “La alfabetización de adultos.”

13. “There are two ways to fall into idealism: The one consists of dissolving the real in subjectivity; the other in denying all real subjectivity in the interests of objectivity.” Jean Paul Sartre, *Search for a Method*, trans. Hazel E. Barnes (New York: Vintage Books, 1968), p. 33.

14. See Karel Kosik, *Dialéctica de lo Concreto* (Mexico: Grijalbo, 1967).

15. [Codification refers alternatively to the imaging, or the image itself, of some significant aspect of the learner's concrete reality (of a slum dwelling, for example). As such, it becomes both the object of the teacher-learner dialogue and the context for the introduction of the generative word.—Editor]

16. [Decodification refers to a process of description and interpretation, whether of printed words, pictures, or other “codifications.” As such, decodification and decodifying are distinct from the process of decoding, or word-recognition.—Editor]

17. Re the oppressed consciousness, see: Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 1968); Albert Memmi, *Colonizer and the Colonized* (New York: Orion Press, 1965); and Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, (New York: Seabury Press, 1970).

18. See Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*; Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*.

19. See Louis Althusser, *Pour Marx* (Paris: Librairie François Maspero, 1965); and Paulo Freire, *Annual Report: Activities for 1968, Agrarian Reform, Training and Research Institute ICIRA, Chile*, trans. John Dewitt (Cambridge, MA: Center for the Study of Development and Social Change, 1969; mimeographed).