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NO HAPPY ENDING...USING PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH TO
PRODUCE A PHOTO-NOVEL ABOUT UNEMPLOYMENT WITH AN
ENGLISH-AS-A-SECOND-LANGUAGE (ESL) CLASS

Draft Paper

by

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CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

The international crisis of Capitalism hit Canada in the early 1970's. During post-war economic expansion, 3½ million immigrants entered the country to help meet labour market needs, and the participation rate of women in the labour force doubled. However, Canada's industrial development policies, influenced by a high degree of foreign ownership, favoured capital-intensive development rather than the development of labour-intensive, job-producing sectors of the economy, such as manufacturing. Multinationals which dominate Canadian manufacturing are now relocating in the Third World, where labour is cheap. The textile industry, a large employer of women and of immigrant women in particular, is a good example. 40,000 jobs have been lost since its peak in 1973-74, when 210,000 workers were employed.

The years since a prolonged recession in 1974 have been characterized by stagflation -- rising inflation combined with low productivity and high unemployment. Official unemployment has hovered around eight per cent since 1977 and represents 1,000,000 unemployed workers. When the hidden unemployed are counted, estimates of real unemployment can reach 2,000,000 people. The hidden unemployed include discouraged job seekers, part-time workers who cannot find full-time work, people in government training courses, housewives who cannot find jobs, native people on reservations and seasonal workers. Women, young people and immigrants are prominent in these categories.

Government response to the unemployment crisis has constituted an attack on the unemployed rather than on unemployment. Canada has a system of unemployment insurance (UIC) based on the "user-pays" principle, and a variety of measures have been implemented to deny benefits to workers. These have included a \$12 million dollar government campaign against "cheaters," denial of information and intimidation of claimants by UIC "counsellors." Most critical, however, are changes in the regulations which cut all weekly benefits and make it harder to collect benefits for part-time workers, new workers, workers returning to the labour force and workers who have collected benefits before. It is implied in UIC publicity and literature that workers who cannot maintain a lengthy "attachment" to the labour force want a "free ride" on UIC benefits. Women, young people and immigrants, again, are the victims of these policies, because they are concentrated in the least secure, lowest-paying and least-desirable occupations.

In the economic crisis, immigrants are subject to severe exploitation by employers and indifferent government bureaucracies. With poor English, desperate for work and ignorant of the few rights they have, they suffer high rates of unemployment and underemployment. Immigrant women are doubly oppressed, because they find themselves in the bottom ranks of the female job ghettos. The repressive new Immigration Act of 1977 cut the flow of immigration, legitimized the "guest worker" system of temporary permits, and increased grounds for deportation. Attendant publicity has implied that immigrants take Canadian jobs when in fact they do work that Canadians will not do.

ORIGINS OF THE STUDY

As the Toronto-based Participatory Research Group developed its work with marginal peoples in Canadian society -- immigrants, women, native peoples, workers in declining industries -- it became clear that the issue of unemployment was crucial and needed to be addressed directly. During a year of volunteer, part-time work developing contacts with other groups concerned with the issue, the team became aware of particular difficulties which concerned groups face in taking action to combat unemployment:

- (1) The unemployed are fragmented and isolated from each other, minimizing their potential for organizing themselves.
- (2) Due to lack of resources, concerned groups have trouble:
 - (a) moving from casework with individuals to working with the unemployed in broader-based organizations.
 - (b) working collectively with other groups to lobby effectively on behalf of the unemployed.
 - (c) retrieving and collecting data for research and public education.
 - (d) producing effective educational materials for the unemployed and the general public.

Two PRG members who are also graduate students in the Department of Adult Education at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (O.I.S.E.) applied for and received a small-scale research and development grant from the Department for a short-term project with a small group of unemployed. The purpose of the project was to explore the usefulness of participatory research methods for helping the unemployed record and analyze their situation as a step toward taking action.

As is so often the case with projects dependent upon funding sources with fixed funding deadlines, the cart was a bit before the horse; the researchers then had to locate a group of unemployed with whom to work. Other members of the team introduced the principal researcher to the teacher of English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) class for the unemployed at St. Christopher House in Toronto. She was involved in ongoing work to develop a methodology for doing ESL teaching and consciousness-raising as part of a larger group of community workers engaged in this task.

The Adult Services Unit of St. Christopher House has a tradition of exploring collective, social solutions with groups who share concerns about social issues. Their emphasis is on community organizing and community education. They work with Portuguese cleaning women and publish the Cleaners' Action Newsletter; they were instrumental in establishing the English in the Workplace Task Force that provides ESL classes on the job; they have experience in working on labour issues with labour groups.

The Unemployment Help Centre approached St. Christopher House to do educational work with unemployed immigrants since it could not do the work itself, and has provided on-going consultation for the ESL course for the unemployed. The Toronto Board of Education sponsored the course by funding teaching time.

The course is based on the rationale that dealing with the UIC bureaucracy is a felt need of course participants. Its objectives are to:

- (1) Provide information and develop language skills for dealing with the UIC.
- (2) Facilitate taking a critical look at the UIC system through statistics, readings, etc., on how it works or doesn't work.
- (3) Look at the context -- the causes and effects -- of unemployment.
- (4) Engage in consciousness-raising about the need for social solutions.

Negotiation between teacher and researcher was done quite quickly. Both were pressed for time and well-disposed toward each other because of references. The researcher explained that she wanted to test out participatory research methods for education and action with a group of unemployed, document the process and out of the mutual experience produce a product that would have educational value. Her project had a small amount of money for honoraria for participants (\$200) and the production of the product (\$400). The teacher needed assistance in the classroom and was interested in producing curriculum material. Her class in the previous year had produced a short Super-8 film, and she had already worked out extensive ideas for a photo-novel on unemployment. It was agreed that the researcher would work with the more advanced students in the area of consciousness-raising so that the teacher's time could be freed to work more intensively with the beginning students.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF EVENTS

The course was offered three mornings a week from 9:30 to 11:30 from September 24 through December 13, 1979. In addition to the researcher and the teacher, one other woman assisted as a volunteer. Although there was considerable turnover in the composition of the class, a core group of eight students remained throughout the course. Twelve students, six men and six women, were involved in the production of the photo-novel. Apart from two students from Portugal, the long-term students were from several Spanish-speaking Latin American countries and had a wide variety of educational backgrounds, work experiences, political perspectives and levels of English. Five were unemployed, two men did shiftwork in factories, three women with children found it difficult to find convenient work, and two women were housewives.

A major objective of the facilitators was to facilitate a group project through which a collective analysis of the immigrant experience of unemployment could take place at the same time as English-language learning. Four phases of the course are described below in terms of that objective. It is not surprising that the most intensive generation, collection and analysis of information among the group came during the times we worked on the group project in Phases II and III. The researcher's notes, upon which this description is largely based, were of little use in the actual classes, since the teacher planned the classes. The researcher acted as a recorder of the process.

Phase I: Finding Our Way, September 24 - October 23

Phase I followed the course outline dealing with the UIC system quite faithfully. Always with a language-teaching point, discussions were generated by the teacher's lesson plans and designed to introduce students to each other and to begin discussion around certain topics, such as "my country," "my job," working conditions ("There are not enough dull people for the number of dull jobs available."), and termination of employment. Role-plays were used to illustrate problems around collecting UIC benefits and terminating employment. Many students' experiences were recorded on experience charts for the purpose of reproduction, circulation and discussion at a later time. Most, however, were not followed up on. A few discussions by the advanced students were taped and played back as listening exercises for the beginning students. Newspaper articles were used.

October 4: Two weeks after the class started, it began to feel like a group. The teacher led an English-language lesson on "making comparisons" into making comparisons between Canada and home countries. Although the discussion quickly lapsed from English into Spanish, it became heated, moved onto political issues, and most students stayed long after 11:30.

October 15: A newspaper article, "Voluntary quitter called top target in unemployment insurance reform," led the facilitators into a long discussion with two highly politicized students about multinationals, unions and wages. These students showed a great and lasting interest in the class and talked with the facilitators over lunches about plans for the class, with particular attention to the needs of the beginning students and the less politicized ones. One student felt that the class was amenable to consciousness-raising because they were aware that something was wrong and dissatisfied with their position. He advised the facilitators to call students who had not come to class for awhile. He thought that the personal contact would encourage some to return.

Several serious problems had to be overcome in Phase I:

(1) The initial class size was much smaller than the teacher was used to (around eight as opposed to twelve) and remained so. Facilitators were worried that enrollment might not stay high enough to justify the class. Furthermore, the initial group was predominantly men, and all three facilitators were experienced in and used to working with women or mixed classes.

(2) The teacher was far more disconcerted by the researcher's presence in her classroom than the researcher realized. Although we had agreed that the researcher would work with the advanced students, the teacher found that consistently dividing the class interfered with her teaching style, her ability to facilitate a group-building process and her ability to work towards a group project.

(3) The researcher, on the other hand, had no idea that the teacher had been trying to provide her with so much independence within the class structure. She had thought that she and the teacher would work together far more than time and other circumstances allowed.

(4) A death in the teacher's family made it impossible for us to talk about these and other problems in the classroom for several weeks.

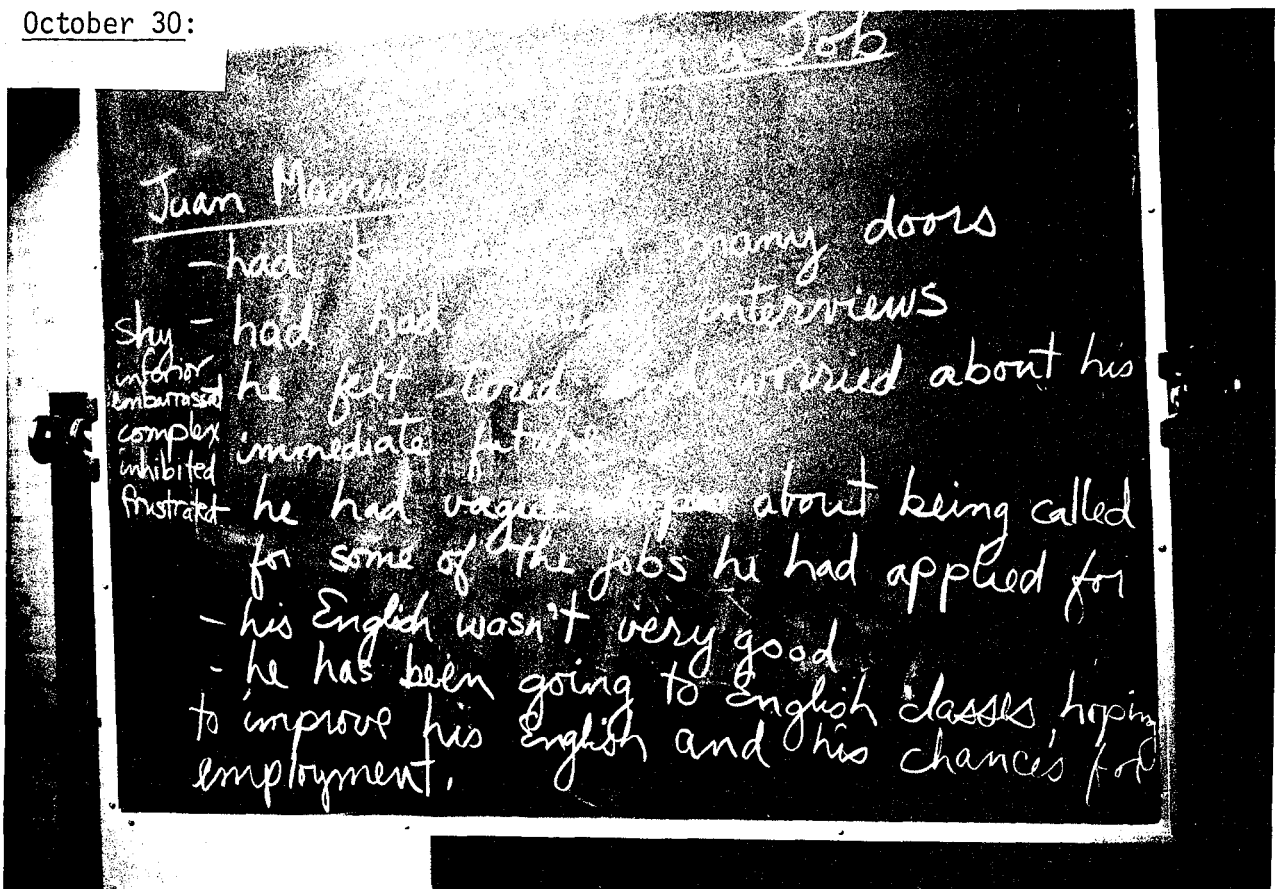
When we were finally able to talk, the researcher agreed to play a more passive role in the classroom, assisting when necessary and participating when possible. It was the teacher's class after all; she was responsible for it and she was the skilled ESL teacher. The researcher felt that a much healthier situation in the classroom would exist and that a good consciousness-raising process would be much more likely to emerge if she were able to follow her instincts.

Phase II: Birth of the Photo-Novel, October 24 - November 15

October 24: The facilitators had discussed a photo-novel as a possibility for a group project. The teacher, however, waited for an opportunity to make the suggestion naturally. As is often the case, a party was the catalyst. It was a group experience which broke the ice among students and facilitators, and the pictures which we took on that day reflected the experience. The pictures led naturally into a creative activity: the teacher worked with the beginning students to organize them into a photo-story. When the photo-story was finished, the gaps (missing photos of people in action -- the cook, for instance) led her to use the story as an example of how not to do a photo-story.

October 29: The teacher asked the class if they would like to do a photo-novel on job search and suggested that we might use it outside our own class with other classes and groups. The class eagerly agreed, and we moved right into discussing what was needed -- script, camera, camera-man, film, director, flash-bulbs, actors, set, scenario, props, stage manager, etc.

October 30:



October 30, cont.: A student wrote the script overnight. It was written in Spanish and the teacher translated it. The script was generative because the student was able to express himself freely. The script continued:

"...He had come as a political refugee; he had imagined that life would be easier in Canada. Every morning he read the want ads in the newspaper. He was willing to take any kind of work, but he hoped to earn enough to support his wife and three children."

The teacher arbitrarily drew 20 frames on newsprint paper and suggested that the class map out Juan Manuel's story. At each sequence, she asked the class what their experience had been and, after some discussion, consensus was reached on what picture should go in the square. The task was to translate the prose into visual images. The challenge was to "conjure up" visual images for those statements that were more abstract, to translate them into concrete experience. She asked "How do you picture 'tired and worried about the immediate future'"? This led to a discussion of financial problems. The decision was made to picture the husband and wife in a discussion about bills (frame 5):



In many cases, experiences were quite different, and the teacher thought it important to suggest that the class, after comparing experiences, generalize to a situation representative of the immigrant experience as a whole. She suggested that being a refugee is not typical of most immigrants, and the class agreed. We had to decide what Juan Manuel had done in his own country, what work was typical in Latin America; engineer, mechanic and plumber were suggested. The teacher suggested that a mechanic was a good example of a skilled worker who could not easily get employment in the trade without Canadian credentials and/or experience. She had a friend in that position and the husband of one of the students was in that position.

When we neared the end of the frames, the teacher asked, "Will the story have a happy ending?" Several of the students described the rapid turnover in jobs they had experienced as new immigrants. The group decided that Juan Manuel would get a job, then get laid off and in the final frame be back at an office door. At the end of the discussion, there was this interchange:

- R: "It's not a happy ending."
A: "It's life."
J: "It's not the end of his life."
A: "But almost."

Decisions were quickly made about who would be responsible for what tasks the next day.

November 1:

THE DIRECTOR



November 1, cont.: This was a day when the students took over and the facilitators had virtually nothing to do. The teacher, with great foresight, brought her own camera and took pictures of the students at work, so that a photo-account of the production process will eventually be available. Pictures for the photo-novel were taken with Polaroid cameras and with a regular camera.

November 5: It was important that the students as well as the facilitators have an overview of the entire process, including the final goal, so that they could have more ownership of the process and more input into decisions. The teacher recalled the planning process we had gone through on October 30 and led us into the next stage of planning with the questions, "What do we want to do?" "What have we done?" and "What do we still have to do?" We discussed such tasks as (1) writing dialogue to fit the pictures as they turned out; (2) layout; (3) the available budget and what possibilities it gave us for quality, quantity and distribution of the photo-novel. At this time the researcher explained briefly the project for which she had received funding and the available budget. Some tasks were assigned -- one student, an accountant, agreed to help the researcher with the budget, since it was clear that she had some trouble adding and subtracting.

November 6 - November 13: In this period, there was no direct work on production of the photo-novel, less by design than by accident. One major reason was that only a few of the polaroid pictures turned out, and the student who had taken the other pictures was not able to come to class. The researcher recalls thinking for several days that it was his responsibility and that the delay was a natural part of the process. After a week or so, however, both teacher and researcher began to worry that it would be difficult to get back to the work. We contacted the photographer through another student, who picked the pictures up at a meeting one night and delivered them to the library where the class was held very early the next morning on his way to a job interview.

In the meantime, however, the available photos provided us with codes for discussing concrete situations relating to job search. On November 6, the teacher supplied the class with a number of discussion questions relating to available pictures.

On November 8, she introduced a language lesson around giving orders and requesting information, common experiences in job search (i.e. "Sign here...;" "Could you please tell me if you have a job?"). Then the teacher quickly moved the class into a role-play of a job interview, followed by a discussion and another role-play and discussion. Questions after the role-plays focused on whether or not they had been realistic and how they compared with experiences of students in the class. One student thought the first interview was too short; his own had been longer, with the boss asking him about his years of experience, his strength and his health. Another student, however, said the interview for his present job had been "super short." The boss had asked, "How much English do you speak?"

On November 13, the teacher introduced a listening exercise involving detailed calculations of what it takes a family of four to live above the poverty-line in Toronto. In 1978, one bread-winner had to earn \$7 - \$8 dollars an hour in order to maintain a family of four above the poverty

line. In the past, students had often felt that \$5.00 an hour was a good wage, and the teacher felt that the perspective presented in the exercise was important for people engaged in job search to have. She also felt it would help unorganized workers to understand the wage demands of organized workers. Unorganized workers often think organized wage demands are too high.

Phase III: Growth of the Photo-Novel, November 19 - December 13

After the two-week delay, we had all of the pictures to work with. The teacher felt that we as facilitators should not make an issue out of "whether" to continue work on the photo-novel but "how" to. She suggested that we work with two groups -- beginners and advanced -- and produce "bubbles" for the pictures. Students marked out 20 large squares on newsprint and pasted up the pictures according to the original sequence. Extra pictures were pasted to the side. As soon as a group had decided on the dialogue for a bubble, it could paste the bubble up next to the picture, providing "instant feedback" for the authors. There were lots of bubbles, because in the advanced group, each student had his or her own version for the picture being discussed. The researcher did not want to push for consensus and deny the validity of each individual's experience.

The class became bogged down again after several days. Although we had many useful discussions, everyone was aware that the photo-novel itself was not advancing very quickly. One day the facilitators simply made a decision to speed up the process, and each group began to work with every other picture so that each box would have a bubble by the end of the day.

November 27: It was time to recap again. The group recalled the steps we had gone through and those that remained; the teacher recorded them in a flow-chart. Then we sat in a semi-circle around the photo-story and bubbles. The teacher asked if we needed more pictures to fill in missing parts of the story. She suggested several in order to make the transition between scenes smoother and more intelligible. We also decided which pictures needed to be taken again to improve the quality.

The day we took the second set of pictures was very different from the first, because the teacher was concerned at that point that we just get it over with. The researcher recalls doing a good deal of "bossing around" that day so that we could get through the five additional sequences. The teacher stayed late with the other facilitator and edited the dialogue into colloquial English.

December 3: Feeling that some students were not satisfied with the amount of time being spent on the photo-novel, the facilitators decided to raise the issue with the class. The teacher organized the discussion in the form of a meeting which allowed some language teaching as well. The group set up an "agenda," and defined the role of "chairperson." During the discussion, it became clear that the less advanced half of the class did not want to work on the photo-novel during class time. The teacher also explained her reasons for wanting to separate work on the photo-novel from class time:

She wanted students to have English practice in class, and she wanted new students to be able to fit into the classes easily. Most of all, she wanted the photo-novel to be a function of the class and not vice versa. The group decided to work after class time, from 11:30 to 1:00, and it turned out that everyone was willing to stay the extra time.

At this time the teacher also explained the facilitators' plans for including a study-guide with the photo-novel in order to give other students and teachers background information on issues raised in the photo-novel -- material such as a job application form, the poverty-line exercise, newspaper ads and statistics.

December 4 - 10: Work on the photo-novel proceeded with renewed energy after class time for the next few days. The new photos suggested new material. For instance, the new husband-wife sequence suggested the intimacy of home life more than the original, single, photo. This dialogue emerged:

Wife: I'm tired of living here.
Juan-Manuel: I'm having trouble finding a job...
Wife: It's hard to pay the bills; Why don't you go to English class with me in the mornings

...Then Juan-Manuel gets laid off

Juan-Manuel: Now what are we going to do?
Wife: Maybe you can get unemployment insurance.

This sequence led to a great deal of discussion among the students and clarification of what the new immigrant experience is like. Some students were not in such precarious circumstances; others became aware of similar aspects in their own situations or recalled periods in their past that had been similar. One of the most politically aware students, who had played a consciousness-raising role throughout the class, raised these issues:

Issue #1: New immigrant families don't have bills. They don't have telephones, for instance, and they don't have credit cards.

Issue #2: If an immigrant is seriously looking for a job, he doesn't go to English class in the mornings; he spends his days looking for a job and goes to English class at night.

There was heated debate around these issues. We became aware that one woman in the class did not, in fact, have a telephone. The debates were finally resolved by the suggestion of the facilitators that the situation most representative of the new immigrant experience be included in the dialogue.

The debate around issue #2 led us to change another sequence in the photo-novel. Originally, the story made a direct connection between improving English and finding a job. It became clear in our discussions that immigrants did not need English to find a job. They needed English in order to find a better job, and there was no guarantee of that either. The sequence was changed as follows:

<u>Original</u>	<u>Revised</u>
Blackboard: Why do you come to English class?	Same
Juan-Manuel: I want to find a job.	I want to find a better job.
Narration: After several months, Juan-Manuel's English has improved and he begins to look for a job.	After some time, Juan Manuel is able to read the job ads.

The above discussions represent a process that was duplicated at different points in the development of the story and dialogue. Students told of their own experiences, experiences were compared and contrasted and, finally, students attempted to make a generalization based on their individual cases. The process of generalization is an important step in articulating the social dimensions of particular problems.

Phase IV: Completion of Photo-Novel and Study-Guide, January - April, 1980

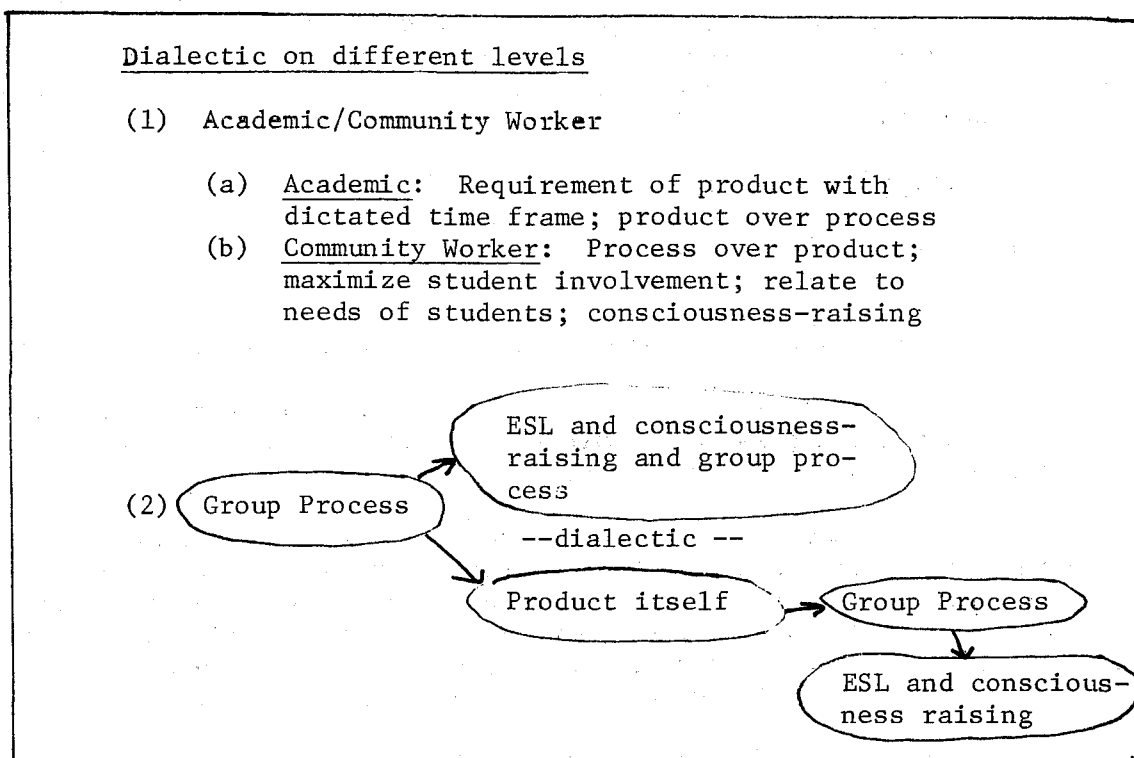
The class ended in December, and the material is on the way to the printer at this very moment. For pragmatic time reasons, the facilitators continued the work alone. Work included further editing of the dialogue, layout of the pictures (delegated to an artist), and further conceptualization and compilation of the study-guide.

We remained true to the dialogue completed in December, editing with English-teaching principles in mind and the issue of generalizability as well. An example is the title. A student had suggested "Dreams, Only Dreams " as the title. When we sat down with the artist to consider layout for the title-page, we realized that the content of the photo-novel would not be clear to the general public. We wanted the title to tell ESL teachers that the photo-novel dealt with the issue of job-search. Consequently, we changed the title to "Juan Manuel Looks for a Job." We retained the dreams theme in the title-page photograph and in the first and final frames of the photo-novel.

ANALYSIS OF THE PROCESS -- STRUCTURAL ISSUES

Most of this section was developed in a discussion in which the teacher responded to the researcher's written observations. Since the teacher and researcher often have different perspectives, it seemed appropriate to reflect the dialogue in the paper. The teacher's responses, often in point form, are boxed.

1. Many Agendas



2. Academic/Community Worker Tension

The researcher's involvement with the course was an academic one -- funding came from a university source. Particular problems which emerged during our working relationship were:

(1) The issue of ownership of the product. St. Christopher House did not want to entrust copyright of material coming out of its project to O.I.S.E. We were able to make arrangements to give the copyright to St. Christopher House because the material was, as far as O.I.S.E. was concerned, in the experimental stage.

(2) Participatory research methods were not new to the teacher. She had been integrating them into her teaching format for several years. Until the opportunity to do the photo-novel emerged from the course process, there was some tension on both our parts about how the researcher would fulfill her obligation to the funding source to produce a product without interfering with the teacher's primary responsibility to teach English to her students. When the researcher proposed to act as recorder of the course process, the teacher expressed a long-felt envy of the researcher's opportunity as an academic to write about the teacher's work in the field. She felt that she was so busy doing the work that she never had time to write about it.

Agendas: We didn't explain facilitators' agenda; it was patronizing to impose a project; teacher felt guilty that she should succumb to that when students outnumbered facilitators.

Teacher

- *Worked with students before in that way; wanted to do more of it
- *Believed in a group project as an important group-building experience and opportunity for collective action, language development and application in group activity
- *Ought to learn to work with someone else
- *Reservations: When it's something you're not that clear about, many variables make it more unclear
- *Easier to keep track of your own agenda and biases; you aren't juggling so many things at once; someone else who is not a student brings in an additional agenda
- *Time constraints imposed by teacher's new job
- *Having timelines set outside of student group means not being free to go at students' pace; the locus of decision-making for decisions that determine class work should be the class itself -- the students and facilitators
- *ESL development took back seat to production of photo-novel partly due to time constraints both in the class and outside the class (lack of adequate planning time)

3. Budget

The budget allowed facilitators to propose to the students that we do an ambitious project that would have broader educational value beyond the group. We took into account things like the quality of pictures and layout...

And length appropriate to the story. For adult educators, the constraints of funding can interfere with the process.

4. English-language teaching

Since we took the opportunity to relate activities around the photo-novel to English-language teaching, these and other interruptions interfered with completion of the photo-novel.

This should be an ongoing part of the product of the photo-novel. The push toward completion of the photo-novel interfered with language practice related to the photo-novel process.

There should have been more balance. Each activity re the photo-novel should have been the basis for more extensive and related language development.

After about a month, some students began to complain that (1) beginning students were left out of discussions around the photo-novel and (2) activities around the photo-novel interfered with English-language lessons. The frustrations were resolved when we arranged for interested students to stay for an extra hour after class to work on the photo-novel.

Agenda of facilitators and understanding of the students: reading the students was a serious problem. We were never sure how they felt, even when they told us; our position was one of guilt; the process was predetermined; ideally it should be more integrated.

5. The Mood of the Group

Attendance and the mood of the group had to be taken into account, and there were days when it simply was not appropriate to work on the photo-novel in class. We discussed issues of importance at the moment, played games, sang songs, etc., as activities for language development as well as consciousness-raising. The songs were about the experiences of immigrant workers. Playing games developed language skills in giving and receiving instructions and requesting and giving explanations. These skills are useful in dealing with institutions such as the UIC.

Problem of working out. The class and project were not necessarily in conflict. We were exploring. We needed better balance to make the project a vehicle for both language development and consciousness-raising.

Approach: Don't lay on the process; get involved; see what comes up. Tended to be ad hoc; not a good fit between language development, communication skills and the process of photo-novel development.

Rationale: No pre-conceived notions of process; you learn from actual experience what kind of language development to prepare for the next time. The teacher likes to work that way -- learning from the students themselves what kinds of language they need, how the process goes. But was dissatisfied this time since the imbalance was so pronounced because of the timelines.

6. The Study Guide

The facilitators decided that the photo-novel could not stand on its own as an educational tool, because other teachers did not have the information and analysis necessary to deal with the issues introduced. We decided to integrate an information supplement into the photo-novel for the use of students and teachers. Unfortunately, this delayed completion of the photo-novel until long after the course was over.

Information: Helps students position their own experience in the economic system, to see larger causes, effects, solutions, that it's not just a personal problem but systemic, economic, political. The analytical material is necessary to make the product useful. Exercises and activities help people to engage in making connections.

7. Collectivity of the Project

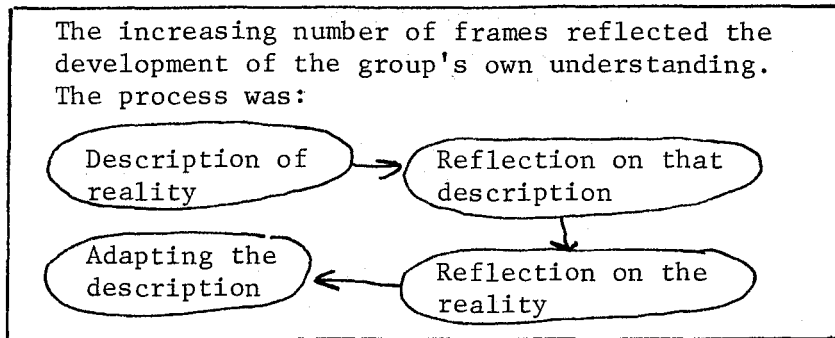
It is clear from the account that the idea of the photo-novel was initiated by the facilitators. From the researcher's point of view, there were serious limitations to the degree to which its production became a collective activity of the group. The most obvious limitation is the fact that the group did not complete the production process. Several of the students were sorry about this and have inquired about it from time to time during the Winter. We do not know how the group as a whole felt about it, because we postponed an evaluation of the process until we thought the photo-novel would be finished in January. It is only now, however, on the way to the printer. The teacher, however, plans to bring the students together again when it is printed. Another serious drawback to the collectivity of the production process is that critical decision-making stages, such as major editing of the "bubbles" and the layout, remained in the hands of the facilitators.

On the positive side, the students were enthusiastic about the idea when it was proposed and eagerly returned to work after each lag. It appears to the researcher that the activity was in their hands most completely in Phase II, when the script was being written, the photo sequences decided and the first round of pictures taken. As interruptions occurred in the process, two or three students expressed discontent that the photo-novel was being neglected (one student was particularly interested in the layout), but they did not have enough control over the process in the classroom to provide leadership to change the direction of the process.

8. Collective Learning

The value of the production of the photo-novel as a vehicle for collective learning is clearer. Some of the activities which delayed collective completion of the product were important for consciousness-raising and language learning:

- (a) The story expanded beyond the original twenty frames.



- (b) Group involvement in the writing of the dialogue was in itself delaying. It is very hard to get a group of three or four people to reach consensus on the dialogue for any given picture. We recorded all suggestions and in the end the facilitators did the editing.

Essence of the process: producing a vehicle for developing group skills. The inability to reach consensus was an opportunity to develop language and group skills. The facilitators didn't take full advantage of such opportunities.

We were responding to the need to finish the photo-novel -- using the group for the photo-novel rather than the photo-novel for the group.

We have to be able to build a successful group experience.

9. Collective Action

The production of the photo-novel itself was an important collective action, entered into by people who did not know each other very well and who disagreed on many political matters.

The termination of the class, however, seriously threatens the potential for further collective work among the group, because they lost their base for meeting due to economic reasons: The criteria of the funding agency, the Toronto Board of Education, requires a minimum attendance of 12.

It would be unreasonable to expect that any great steps toward collective action could be made among a transient group of strangers who have only a three-month period of time in which to begin to know each other and to work together. Members of the group reflected many of the problems and burdens which militate against the development of collective action among the unemployed, among immigrants and among oppressed peoples in general:

- (1) Many were unemployed and active job search made them often absent from class
- (2) Several had been injured on the job and had to take time to get compensation from the Workmen's Compensation Board
- (3) As immigrants in a hostile society, many of them refugees, they were naturally cautious about disclosing their personal opinions and details of their private lives

Furthermore, several of the students were already politically active with organized groups outside of the classroom.

CONCLUSIONS

We have described a situation in which many of the conditions appeared to be favourable to developing a group experience as a vehicle for consciousness-raising: The group met on a regular basis; the teacher had developed a set of materials designed to raise critical questions about unemployment, was a skilled teacher and facilitator and was bilingual; the students included several who, to quote the teacher, "could raise the facilitators' consciousness."

As a collective experience, however, the production of the photo-novel was far from satisfactory for any of the participants. Obstacles commonly confronted in participatory research were present here too:

- (1) The facilitators acted as initiators in defining the problem and to a large extent controlled the process whereby the problem was explored.
- (2) The major vehicle for addressing the problem -- the photo-novel -- conflicted to a large extent with the major concern of the students -- English-language learning.
- (3) Facilitators were both working within the limitations of State funding. Funding constraints from one source imposed a deadline on production of the photo-novel and from another source ultimately terminated the class itself. Funding issues also created tensions between the facilitators.
- (4) The costs of the project were high in terms of staff-time, student time and investment of State Capital. The teacher and researcher also contributed considerable volunteer time beyond that covered by their funding sources.

A question raised is: "Was it worth it?" When we are thinking of working with the unemployed, who are by definition disorganized, what alternatives are there? A class such as this offers a place to meet, to move toward organization. In the experience, the teacher learned many ways of integrating the two objectives of consciousness-raising and English-language teaching. The product itself will be a good one, a useful tool for use with others who are unemployed at present or who go through frequent lay-offs. These can be seen as small steps in a long process of integrating education with political action in a hostile environment. Was it worth it?

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