

Visual Literacy in Adult Basic Education:

a study of ABET learners' visual perception
with regard to their general level of
English Second Language learning

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ABSTRACT

Adult learners face many difficulties in their learning programmes, particularly due to the fact that having mastered literacy in their mother tongues, they move on to further educational programmes which are mostly produced in English. In contemporary society, people need to be adept in a number of literacies, termed multiliteracies. Adult learners are rarely taught visual competence as visual images are relegated to illustrations for written texts, and attention is mainly focussed on the all-important written word. Adult basic education learners need to be able to interpret pictures in books, newspapers and magazines, just as much as they need to be able to read and write.

It is the premise of this research that visual literacy enhances thinking skills and that adult learners need to be actively taught how to interpret visual images in order to more ably deal with the written word, the more 'important' part of literacy.

The goals of this research are to develop understanding of the processes which go into understanding images and text, and to examine how pictures can be used to help adult learners develop proficiency in English. Another goal is to teach learners the basics of visual literacy so as to improve their comprehension of the plethora of images surrounding them.

The research findings could help to inform adult educators facing the current crisis in Adult Basic Education and Training in South Africa, focusing on a little-studied aspect of literacy, visual literacy, one of the critical outcomes in the new South African curriculum for Adult Education and one of the multiliteracies required by citizens of today's world.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

Background to the study

We live in a floating borderless mass of impressions and images which come at us.

(Warner, quoted by Gleick in *Time*, June 7, 1999 : 64)

South African education continues to focus on verbal skills, although Curriculum 2005 is attempting to address this weighting. Due to our rapidly developing technological society, being literate no longer means only being able to read and write, but is a far more complex state of being, which includes knowing how to 'read' both words and images. In this introductory chapter, I will focus on what literacy and Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) mean in South Africa today and how the concept of 'multiliteracies' has seized the educational imagination. I will consider Visual Literacy and the teaching of Visual Literacy skills and my personal interest in the subject over many years. The goals of the research are also determined in this chapter.

Literacy

The official figures for literacy in South Africa, quoted in an Internet report by *Statistics South Africa* (</reports/reports.htm>), state that 81 % of South Africans over 15 can read, write and speak their mother tongue. Such figures are taken from census results, where people have to answer questions like "Can you read or write in any language?". As Ed French points out,

Can they scratch their names awkwardly on official forms instead of using a thumb print? Can they recognise the STOP sign on the corner, but little else? Can they slowly read a letter, but not a newspaper? Do they read two library books, several newspapers and a specialist magazine every week, and make regular use of their personal computer? Or are they too embarrassed to admit that they can't read and write at all?

(French (1992) in Hutton, 1992 : 48)

There are a number of definitions of literacy depending on whether the writer is looking

at literacy in terms of the “autonomous model” or “the ideological model” (Street 1984 : 7). The autonomous model of literacy sees it as a technology which can be used to achieve certain ends, e.g. literacy programmes in industry hope to ensure a more productive workforce. Those proponents of literacy programmes coming from an ideological viewpoint

assume that the meaning of literacy depends on the social institutions in which it is embedded, that is, how and why it is used in particular contexts. How and what is taught reflects the social structure and relations of power within a society.

(Lyster in Hutton, 1992 : 20)

Paulo Freire, the great Brazilian educator, put it like this at an International Symposium for Literacy in Persepolis in Iran in 1975,

It is not systematic education which somehow molds society, but, on the contrary, society which, according to its particular structure, shapes education in relation to the ends and interests of those who control the power in that society.

(news97/0506nfre.htm)

The demands of our contemporary high-tech world have served to rewrite the definition of essential skills and knowledge involved with literacy. The skills comprising the definition of literacy have become more complex as the developed world moved from a pastoral to an industrial to an information technology age. Over the past two hundred years, the definition of literacy has broadened from the ability to write one's name, to being able to recite written passages, to the ability to understand what is read, to a more comprehensive definition found in the National Literacy Act of America in 1991:

the ability to read, write and speak in English and compute and solve problems at levels of proficiency necessary to function on the job and in society, to achieve one's goals, and to develop one's knowledge and potential.

(public-law.html)

Various researchers into the use of pictures for second language learning, (Blacquiére, 1988; Maley, 1990; Potgieter, 1987 and Wright, 1989) all agree that “pictures make a

powerful contribution to the content and process of L2 learning" (Wright, 1989 : 161).

Wright (1989) believes that pictures have unlimited potential when used communicatively and lists their uses:

to provide a gentle stimulus, a purpose and a stress-free context which motivates learners to express, exchange and evaluate their feelings, ideas and experiences through the promotion of disciplined interactional activities; to foster an understanding of L2 syntax, lexicon and vocabulary through the use of all four language skills; and to motivate learners to bridge information and reasoning gaps which are the basis of natural conversation (Wright, 1989 : 161).

(Basel, 1995 : 50).

Against the statistical evidence that 81% of South Africans are literate, the *Population Census 1996* (</census96/html/default.htm>) quotes figures of 19% of adult South Africans who have never been to school at all, and 24% of South African adults with some primary schooling. Taking into account that statistics need interpretation and interpretation is subjective (Eco, 1977) and the fact that a generally accepted level of education signifying "functional illiteracy" is only 3 - 5 years of schooling, this means that about 45% of South Africans are probably "functionally illiterate". Kenneth Levine, a sociologist, after describing the historical process of the term, which has tended to be very employment-based, attempts a broad definition of "functional literacy":

Functional literacy can be defined as the possession of, or access to, the competences and information required to accomplish transactions entailing reading and writing in which an individual wishes - or is compelled - to engage.

(Levine, 1986 : 43)

What is meant by competences? I would argue that such competences involve not only reading and writing but ability in what are now termed "multiliteracies" (Cope & Kalantzis, <archive/features/mult1.html>). This term stretches over many "literacies", such as the literacy of the Internet, global English, automated machine interfaces, multimedia etc. In relation to this research, such competences involve the ability to negotiate and deconstruct images, both visual and verbal. As Jay Lemke states,

Literacies are legion. Each one consists of a set of interdependent social practices which link people, media objects, and strategies for meaning-making ... Each is an integral part of a culture and its subcultures. Each plays a role in maintaining and transforming every aspect of a society because literacies provide essential links between matter and meaning. Literacies are themselves technologies, and they give us the keys to using broader technologies. They also provide the link between self and society: the means through which we act on, participate in, and become shaped by larger 'ecosocial' systems and networks ... Literacies are transformed by the dynamics of these larger self-organising systems, and our own human perceptions, identities, and possibilities are transformed along with them.

(Lemke 1997, p. 1, quoted in http://www2.deakin.edu.au/divisions/lrs_web/ecl610/Topic2/intro.htm#redefine)

I have quoted such a long excerpt because it seems to explain perfectly what is meant by multiliteracies. The notion that even our perceptions are transformed by multiliteracies is a fascinating one. If we look at the world of images for example, described by Gottschalk:

we are in turn bombarded by pictures not only of hopelessly unattainable images of idealized identities, but also images of past and present suffering, images of destruction, of bodies quite literally in pieces. We are ourselves "torn" in the process, not only emotionally and morally but in the fragmentary structure of the act of looking itself. In an image-saturated environment which increasingly resembles the interior space of subjective fantasy turned inside out, the very subject-object distinction begins to break down, and the subject comes apart in the space of its own making. As Terry Eagleton has written, the postmodern subject is one "whose body has been scattered to the winds, as so many bits and pieces of reified technique, appetite, mechanical operation or reflex of desire.

(Gottschalk, 1997 : <http://www.unlv.edu/Faculty/gottschalk/PAINS.html>).

Gottschalk paints a fairly gloomy picture of the influence of the glut of visual images on our lives. The ability to deal with this glut or abundance, depending on your point of view, is one the multiliteracies contemporary people need to attain.

That millions of South Africans are not able to adequately deal with a world increasingly filled with printed images and texts, let alone computer-generated hypertexts, is due to a

variety of factors: the fact that literacy was originally imposed on an oral society, some of whose members rejected it; the effect of years of inferior Bantu education; the reality that many people living in rural areas never went to school, that thousands of migrant labourers have jobs where literacy is not a prerequisite; and the fact that apartheid laws and economic hardship offered little chance of advancement to justify the enormous effort it takes to become literate (Hutton (ed.), 1992).

Researchers like Brian Street and Kenneth Levine, coming from the “ideological” view of literacy (Street, 1984 : 96), challenge the notion of ‘illiteracy’, asserting that it unfairly stigmatizes certain people.

People are not born literate, therefore the existence of illiteracy is a manifestation of social deficits - the question “Why did so many not develop the skill of reading and writing?” points not to intelligence but to opportunity.

(Jules St Lucia, in Street, 1990 : 38)

And Rigg and Kazemek point out, ‘We don’t have 23 million “functionally illiterate” adults ... we have an uncouned number of real people, each using literacy in different ways’ (Rigg & Kazemek, 1984 : 14).

The fact remains that, although people should not be stigmatised for being illiterate, they are definitely at a disadvantage in a South African society, in our mixture of third and first world cultures , overflowing with image, print and multimedia hypertext. A simple example is the old grandmother of one of my participants who constantly has to depend on one of her grandchildren to shop for her because she is unable to read the names or prices of items on a supermarket shelf. Another example involves a success story with one of our adult learners, a domestic worker whose unsupervised children used to roam the streets and get into mischief after school, a great worry to her. After she had learned to read and write she used to leave them notes detailing their homework and household

chores for each afternoon, then tick them off and reward or punish the children depending on how they had done. Literacy gave her an enormous advantage in her relationship with her literate children. There seems to be one essential commonality in the many contradictory notions of literacy. "It is generally recognised that literacy has something to do with empowerment - ... and that consequently literacy contributes to change." (Jules St Lucia, in Street, 1990 : 36)

Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET)

Within our new education system, Adult Basic Education is generally seen as both part of and as a foundation for lifelong learning, particularly in South Africa moving into the new millennium. In the ideal sense, ABET should enhance a common South African vision for a better life for all, requiring not just rights for all, but responsibilities for all. ABET should provide numerous opportunities for further learning, development and the enhancement of learner self-confidence, respect, self-reliance and empowerment. Unfortunately, becoming literate does not suddenly lift one up to finding employment, to a better standard of living:

... there is little evidence to indicate that enculturating an underclass adult population into canonical literacy leads directly to upwards economic mobility in post-colonial societies with uneven terms of trade, and uneven development between various socio-economic sectors.

(Kell, in Prinsloo and Breier, 1996 :243)

but the potential is there. In the Grenada Revolution, for example, the Centre for Popular Education "encouraged the working people to reflect on the meaning of an education that 'takes you from where you are to where you want to be!'" (Jules St Lucia, in Street, 1990 : 38).

The future of adult education in South Africa

There is a move to standardise ABET countrywide. The National Qualifications Framework (NQF) has recently completed its development of unit standards for ABET in all eight of the Curriculum 2005 learning areas. In the meantime, however, non-governmental organisations (NGO's) and enlightened industries have developed their own widely differing ABET programmes. The Adult Literacy Unit (ALU) is a project based in the Institute for the Study of English in Africa (ISEA) at Rhodes University. Working for the Unit, I have developed (written and illustrated) ABET Level Two and Three courses in Integrated Sciences and in Social Studies. My research into visual literacy was possible as I was able to run a visual literacy course concurrently with the Social Studies and Integrated Sciences pilot programme at the Grahamstown Community Learning Centre (CLC).

Although ABET has received national support and development with regard to Unit Standards etc., funding for ABET-providing NGOs is drying up at a rapid rate. Three years ago there were 40 literacy programmes running in the Eastern Cape, today there are 8 survivors. Our own CLC had to close at the end of June 1999. Even USWE, the flagship of ABET, which has been going since the early 1980's, was closed down in 1999. The closure of our CLC led to difficulties with my research, as I will discuss later. In the South African context there is a crisis in Adult Education due to a lack of finance for relevant stakeholders such as NGO's, the immense numbers of adults (and children) living below the breadline, diseases such as HIV/AIDS: "60% of hospital admissions throughout the country are AIDS-related diseases, many of them children who have to be turned away because we don't have the resources to cater for them anymore" (Dr Costa Gazi speaking to Tim Modise on SAFM, 10-11-1999), vast numbers of unemployed and unskilled people, the huge increase in crime, particularly violent crime, and lack of

adequate housing for massive sectors of the population. According to the South African ABET expert, John Aitchison,

[This] ... has led many people to question the relevance and responsiveness of education to national and local development needs at the same time that expectations of transformation and renaissance are rising. The group [a meeting of concerned adult educators] is convinced that education, training and development directed at literacy and basic education for adults is indeed relevant and important ... for enhancing socio-economic and political transformation in our country.

(Aitchison, 1999 : 2)

With no certain funding for ABET in the near future, Kader Asmal has called on religious, political, social, educational and community formations to "stimulate the civic virtue of voluntary service in support of our illiterate compatriots", to provide facilities for students and other literate volunteers to teach literacy (Asmal, 1999 : http://www.gov.za/search97.cgi/s97_cgi?action).

Adult learners in South Africa

Adults learning basic literacy are probably the most varied and erratic group of learners in South Africa. Adult literacy programmes are widespread and individualistic, tending to be run by small NGO's and private enterprise. There is a high dropout rate amongst adult learners due to the huge effort often needed to attend classes after working hours and the battle for adults to learn, especially in a second language. Learning materials in English abound for newly literate adults e.g. Prolit course materials, the ASECA programme published by SACHED, although basic reading and writing is learnt in the mother tongue (Hutton (ed.), 1992).

The Department of Education has put its weight behind an ABET drive for the next 10 years. The Cape Times of Wednesday April 15, 1998, carried a report of a R5 billion government plan for ABET, aimed at educating 9,4 million adults with less than 9 years of

schooling. At the beginning of the 21st century, this has yet to be realised, although the new Minister of Education, Kader Asmal, has pledged his support for Adult Literacy. In his 27 July 1999 statement, Asmal points out:

We will not fulfil our democratic responsibility, nor will our nation be prepared for the demands of the 21st century, unless we rapidly improve the access of all our people to sound basic education and training in satisfactory facilities, and ensure a fully functioning system of good quality at all levels, from early childhood to university and beyond. The Multi-Year Implementation Plan for ABET will enable close to a million new learners to achieve the equivalent of Grade 9 by 2003, provided the funds can be found and ABET practitioners trained.

Asmal, 1999 : http://www.gov.za/search97cgi/s97_cgi?action

An advantage for workers and for ABET in the workplace is the Skills Development Act which was implemented on October 7, 1999. The World Competitiveness Report, quoted in the October issue of WORK TO RULE, a supplement to the Mail & Guardian newspaper, indicates that:

currently only about one in five South Africans is formally qualified to perform highly skilled work. South Africa has an overall illiteracy rate of slightly less than 20%. ... It has been argued that the decade-upon-decade growth that has been achieved by the newly industrialised economies of Singapore, Hong Kong, Taiwan and South Korea has been achieved, at least in part, through a strong emphasis on education and skills development.

(Turpin, 1999 : 7)

This South African Development Programme is being funded by the European Union, to the tune of about R276 million. Levies on businesses will be introduced from April 2000, at a planned rate of 0,5% of the total remuneration paid by an employer to its employees per month, rising by 0,5% annually (Turpin, 1999 : 7).

Visual literacy

Seeing comes before words. The child looks and recognizes before it can speak.

(Berger, 1972 : 7).

The use and interpretation of images is a language in itself. Images are used to communicate messages which must be deciphered in order to translate meaning. People use phrases like 'the language of art' and 'the syntax of interior decorating'. This is probably because we have come to recognise the interconnection between so many of the ways in which we communicate and because we perceive patterns and conventional meanings and systems in these forms of communication, like those in language.

However, what we see and the meanings associated with what we see are often very different. The study of how people make meanings is called semiology or semiotics and was first defined in the pioneer writing of Ferdinand de Saussure, the 19th century Swiss linguist. Jay Lemke, Professor of Education at the City University of New York, defines semiotics as:

the general study of meaning-making, including not just meanings we make with language, but meanings we make with every sort of object, event or action in so far as it is endowed with a significance, a symbolic value, in our community.

(Lemke, jlemke/reinking.htm)

In semiology, the term 'denotative' is used to refer to the actual process of seeing an object, or, in language, the word which 'points' to the object, e.g. the Amazon River.

The denotative meaning can be constructively understood as the dictionary definition of the word (Koegel, 1998 : <http://www.comweb.org/100/content/exercise.htm>). The term

'connotative' refers to the meanings associated with what we see. For example, the swastika is a symbol made of a series of lines which resemble the convergence of 4 "Ls".

This explanation reflects the denotative level. Many people all over the world will associate the swastika symbol with the terror of Nazi Germany during the 1930's and 1940's. This explanation operates at what is called the connotative level, which could also be thought of as the emotional power of the word.

However, connotation in language and image is open to interpretation, dependent on the

user and his/her world view, history, and so on. For example, in Buddhism, a swastika, composed of the Sanskrit su = good, and asti = to be, with the suffix ka, is the symbol of auspiciousness and good fortune - literally, "It is well". In Finland, the swastika can be seen on the Finnish Cross of Freedom, an order of decoration created by the winning side in 1918; as a sign for Finnish women's voluntary defense; and on army unit standards. It was also the sign for the Finnish air force from 1918 up to the 1950s (symbols.com/encyclopedia/15/151.html). An adult learner in South Africa may never have heard of Hitler or Finland or Buddhism and therefore the swastika may just be an interesting design to their eyes. So the connotative meaning of a sign is not always the same. Understanding images depends on many factors, some of which are dealt with later.

According to semiology, verbal language and non-verbal communication are composed of systems of signs. If one is communicating visually one is combining objects, space, light, aspect and atmosphere while a writer is using words (also made up of symbols), sentences and paragraphs. To be verbally literate, one needs to be able to manipulate the basic components (or signs) of written language, the letters, words, spelling, grammar and so on. Once one has done this, the possibilities for verbal expression and interpretation are endless. In the same way, there are components, signs and common meanings for the elements of visual literacy. When one develops an understanding of these elements and comes to understand visual syntax, one can better interpret visual images.

The Goals of the Research

Largely due to my own involvement in developing ABET materials for adult learners, I wanted to:

- examine adult learners' perceptions of visual images in books, newspapers and magazines
- understand how visual images add to or detract from the participants' understanding where they are used to illustrate texts
- engage in dialogue with the participants in order to find ways to better understanding of visual images in reading materials and textbooks with dual expectations:
 - a) to provide some kind of benefit, by helping the participants to develop qualitatively better modes for comprehending both visual images and texts, and
 - b) to gain insight into the area of visual literacy which would inform my own work in the development of ABET materials.

I intended to achieve these goals by teaching the participants a course in Visual Literacy, and then asking them to complete questionnaires on some of the items we had covered in the course. This course would run alongside a Pilot Programme in Social Studies and Integrated Sciences, conducted in English, so I would have ample opportunity to see improvements in Visual Literacy and in the participants' use of English.

Personal Interest

During the course of my work I have observed that many adult learners (who come from previously disadvantaged backgrounds) have great difficulty interpreting visual data, usually a 'spontaneous concept'¹, in Vygotskyian terms (Kozulin, 1990 : 38). This difficulty is due to a variety of possible factors, including little or no prior formal education and a dearth of drawing materials and other 'educational' toys in childhood,

¹ Vygotsky, the famous Russian psychologist, coined this term for concepts which are learned unconsciously through experience.

things the majority of white advantaged South Africans take for granted.

As an educator of English Second Language (ESL) students for nearly twenty years in a wide range of subjects including English, Geography, Art, Communication, Social and Cultural Studies, and Integrated Sciences, I have always been interested in the range of perceptual differences I have found in my students. Each subject tends to have its own specific 'culture' and images, e.g. Geography students have contended with cross sections and aerial photographs and Art students have struggled with the conceptual side of painting, i.e. the meaning or explanation of the image.

As a textbook developer for adult learners I have laboured to find appropriate images with which to illustrate key concepts, e.g. the Big Bang theory in Integrated Sciences, so I have a vested interest in understanding how adult learners gain meaning from such pictures. Books for neoliterates tend to combine visual images and printed text in ways that make cross-referencing between them essential to understanding them. As Griffiths (1997), explains:

The visual text, therefore, has considerable impact, not only in terms of its aesthetic and interest value, but more importantly its intended function of providing meaning to the learner. It is crucial then that the learner recognizes, understands and interprets the content and style of the visual imagery and the integrated meaning from the composite, visual and written, text.

(Griffiths, 1997 : 14)

So many factors come into play to determine how much each person understands while reading a page composed of text and images. Jay Lemke uses the term "intertextuality" for how we do this:

Every time we make meaning by reading a text or interpreting a graph or picture we do so by connecting the symbols at hand to other texts and other images read, heard, seen, or imagined on other occasions (the principle of general intertextuality). Which connections we make (what

kind and to which other texts and images) is partly individual, but also characteristic of our society and our place in it: our age, gender, economic class, affiliation groups, family traditions, cultures and subcultures.

(Lemke, <http://academic.brooklyn.cuny.edu/education/jlemke/reinking.htm>)

Lemke, reflecting the views of Vygotsky (1978), also points out that literacies are always social, that we learn them by collaborating in social relationships: “their conventional forms evolved historically in particular societies; the meanings we make with them always tie us back into the fabric of meanings made by others” (Lemke, 1998 : [jlemke/reinking.htm](http://academic.brooklyn.cuny.edu/education/jlemke/reinking.htm)).

Teaching Visual Literacy for better thinking skills

It is the purpose of this research to understand and report on some of the ways in which different learners decipher pictures, and also to report on the process of actively introducing the participant adult learners to the basic skills of how to decode pictures, how to interpret photographs, how to enjoy colour, tone, texture and symbols. Donis A Dondis, in his book, *A Primer of Visual Literacy*, proposes that of all the languages in the world,

only one nears universal understanding: visual language. Visual intelligence is crucial to understanding the physical realities of our environment, symbols found in gesture and text, and abstractions of reality, such as those found in works of art.

(Dondis, 1973 : 5)

Dondis believes that “problem solving is inextricably connected with the visual mode” and mentions that some people see “no further than a primary level of information”, giving the example that everyone can recognise a bird. He goes on to explain that people who are taught to ‘see’ more than this ‘primary level’ get more out of an image:

To Leonardo da Vinci, a bird meant flying, and his investigation of that fact led him to try to invent flying machines ... the visionary does not stop at the obvious; he sees beyond the surface visual facts into greater realms of meaning .

(Dondis, 1973 : 68).

Curriculum 2005 stresses thinking skills. The first of the eight Critical Cross-field Outcomes goes thus: "Learners should be able to successfully demonstrate their ability to communicate effectively using visual, mathematical and/or language skills in the modes of oral and/or written presentation." (Department of Education, 1996 : 16). The other seven outcomes follow, including being able to "identify and solve problems by using creative and critical thinking"(ibid). By focusing on visual literacy aspects such as compositional elements, interpretation of visual data and the persuasiveness of the visual image, adult learners have to learn to think critically as they become more visually aware, which in turn can lead to greater competency in thinking skills in general and in their English second language skills in particular. Keefe & Walberg suggest:

developing proficiency in a number of key thinking skills enables students to cope successfully with a wide variety of thinking challenges. And improved thinking results in significant gains in academic achievement as well as in the quality of one's life.

(Keefe & Walberg, 1992 : 97)

Conclusion

Brian Street, speaking at a seminar on Literacy and Development in 1990, recommended that literacy programs worldwide should include an ethnographic component which goes beyond studies and surveys to include interviews and observations on the local populations. He mentioned a study by Shirley Brice Heath, in which she discovered that the children she was studying came from a group which used literacy in a "collaborative" way, gathering around a letter to read it aloud, review its contents, then composing a cooperative reply, discussing all the while what should go into the letter and so on. When they got to school they had difficulty adjusting to the private way in which schools tend to think of literacy, as a "sole, separate and silent activity" (Street 1990 : 35). My research lent itself to this kind of collaborative participation by the learners, something they are used to and which is a large part of how they deal with the world in general.

There was much peer-group discussion and co-operative effort in reaching certain conclusions, or in defining social structures. Street also suggested that literacy practitioners think about programmes that integrate various communicative practices like visual literacy and orality, in addition to the written word. I hope that my research will inform further ethnographic study and integrative literacy programmes.

This chapter has set out the goals of the research and the reasons for the choice of visual literacy within the broader ambit of ABET, as my area of study. In Chapters 2 and 3 I will review the literature and theory which inform the study and describe and evaluate the methodologies applied to this study. Chapter 4 deals with data analysis and discussion while Chapter 5 concludes the study.

Chapter 2

"I have never doubted the truth of signs, Adso; they are the only things man has with which to orient himself in the world. What I did not understand is the relation among signs . . . I behaved stubbornly, pursuing a semblance of order, when I should have known well that there is no order in the universe." "But in imagining an erroneous order you still found something. . . ." "What you say is very fine, Adso, and I thank you. The order that our mind imagines is like a net, or like a ladder, built to attain something. But afterward you must throw the ladder away, because you discover that, even if it was useful, it was meaningless . . . The only truths that are useful are instruments to be thrown away."

(Eco, 1984 : 183)

Theory informing the study

This chapter offers a critical analysis of various theoretical perspectives informing the study. I briefly examine various theories of personality, culture and society to consider what makes us who we are because adult learners bring their mature personalities to the classroom, formed by a whole wealth of a lifetime's experience. I regard Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of culture as influential to my research, which sees "dialogue as ontologically related to the essence of the human condition, rather than limited to speech activity" (Emerson, 1996 : new_literary_history/27.1emerson.html). There are all kinds of sociopsychological forces at work in this typical intercultural context of a white 40-something educated English-speaking South African woman researcher teaching literacy to the participants, a group of mostly neo-literates, certainly educationally disadvantaged black South African men and women of various ages. The participants, including myself, the researcher, experience adult literacy and visual literacy classes from multiple dimensions, including our race, gender, class and English-language proficiency.

I consider these circumstances from a feminist viewpoint, concentrating on this perspective's emphasis on the role of gender in shaping our outlooks (Bart, 1998), and the fact that the implicit aims of critical feminist research are political. I explore from a

postmodern stance,

... a stance which makes essences and foundations problematic, does not mean that nothing exists, that no positions are taken. It only means that we must be comfortable marking a path on shifting ground, easy with the notion of seeing meaning between the cracks, locating signifiers in spaces that were not there yesterday and may not be there tomorrow.

(Nielsen, in Flood, Brice Heath and Lapp, 1997 : 203)

To become an individualized and socially integrated person “(what in Russian is called a *“lichnost”*) [one must go] through the proper sort of contact with culture, both one's own and others” (Klage, 1997 : [new_literary_history/27.1emerson.html](#)). Michelle Fine has redefined the interviewer's place in research:

As researchers we need to position ourselves as no longer transparent, but as classed, gendered, raced and sexual subjects who construct our own locations, narrate these locations, and negotiate our stances with relations of domination.

(Quoted in Thomas, 1999 : [/v05n01/thomas.html](#))

I look briefly at the hegemony of English and the socio-political context in which I find myself as a researcher. The participants meet at adult literacy classes where “English forms a part of the local language ecology” (Norrish, 1997), but the dominant language of books and facilitating is English, an issue of power and problematic consideration (Fairclough, 1989), (Pennycook, 1998) and (Phillipson, 1992): “the dominance of English is asserted and maintained by the establishment and continuous reconstitution of structural and cultural inequalities between English and other languages” (Phillipson, 1992 : 78).

Critical feminist theory, literacy and reading theory are referred to, in particular reading as a contextualised and politicised ‘intertextual activity’ in western culture which is organised by “the most complex system of textuality the world has ever known” (Scholes, 1989 : 11).

I will use the term 'text' throughout this dissertation to mean both written and spoken texts (Halliday, 1989) and also "poems, plays, stories, letters, essays, interviews, books, magazines, newspapers, movies, television shows, yes and even tax forms" (Scholes, 1997). This idea of text conforms to the idea that signs, images, and even non-verbal communication are all part of literacy, things to be 'read' and interpreted - "the semiotic assumption that all the world's a text" (Scholes, 1989). This is close to the famous statement by Derrida, who said that there was nothing outside textuality (Turner, 1999 : <http://www.connect.net/ron/derrida.html>). Finally, I look at the conceptual and cognitive theory implications of the teaching of literacy in general and visual literacy in particular.

Becoming an adult

What we call "me," "mine," or "myself" is, then, not something separate from the general life, but the most interesting part of it, a part whose interest arises from the very fact that it is both general and individual. That is, we care for it just because it is that phase of the mind that is living and striving in the common life, trying to impress itself upon the minds of others.

(Cooley, 1902 : 179. Cooley/LKGLSSLF.HTML)

How do we become ourselves? So many things influence our becoming. The early 19th century German poet and philosopher, Johann Wolfgang Goethe felt that only within society do we achieve self-knowledge: "Only in man does man know himself; life alone teaches each one what he is." (Goethe, Tasso, act 2, sc. 3). Personality-theory psychologists like Freud, the grandfather of psychoanalysis; the behaviourist Skinner and his disciples like Eysenck; and the more recent humanist approach to personality theory typified by psychologists Rogers and Frankl, take into account genetics, physiology, family, learning and development, social interaction and culture, to name but a few factors (Revelle, 1995 : AnnRev/some.html). All these influences make up the individual person. There is no set theory of personality, dealing as it does with such intangible

philosophical ideas such as people's inner thoughts and feelings, our instincts and unconscious motivations, our prejudices and biases picked up over the years and our experiences of self and the 'other'.

How society shapes us

Every human being is part of a society, everyone imbibes their own culture from the moment they arrive on earth. Whether you are a member of a small insulated town, a large city, or the larger world-wide "global village" which the Internet claims to have made of all its connected users, each person, to some extent, unconsciously takes on the values and traditions into which they are born. Robert Muffoletto, an American communications expert, believes that it is the power of discourse which shapes who and what we are, and what 'they' are: "A discourse is situated in historical, social, political, and institutional relationships. The meaning and interpretations about the world and our role in it that emerge from those relationships construct a sense of "self" and other(s)" (Muffoletto (1994) in Moore & Dwyer, 1994 : 295). Erich Fromm, the great humanist psychologist, believed that the psychoanalytic emphasis on the preeminence of the family in human development can also be given a historical materialist twist:

Our economic system must create men who fit its needs; men who cooperate smoothly; men who want to consume more and more. Our system must create men whose tastes are standardized, men who can be easily influenced, men whose needs can be anticipated. Our system needs men who feel free and independent but who are nevertheless willing to do what is expected of them, men who will fit into the social machine without friction, who can be guided without force, who can be led without leaders, and who can be directed without any aim except the one to "make good." It is not that authority has disappeared, nor even that it has lost in strength, but that it has been transformed from the overt authority of force to the anonymous authority of persuasion and suggestion. In other words, in order to be adaptable, modern man is obliged to nourish the illusion that everything is done with his consent, even though such consent be extracted from him by subtle manipulation. His consent is obtained, as it were, behind his back, or behind his consciousness."

(Fromm, in Neill, 1962 : x)

This powerful attack on the hidden coerciveness of society illustrates Fromm's conviction that people think they are living their own lives, in charge of their destinies, but that in fact we all follow the same trends, buy houses, send our children to school, wear blue jeans etc. Fromm suggests some of the ways that the global patriarchal social structure "is closely bound up with the class character of present-day society.... The patriarchal family is one of the most important loci for producing the psychic attitudes that operate to maintain the stability of class society." (Fromm {1934} 1970, p. 124). Erich Fromm was one of the first psychologists to attempt a critique of the patriarchal system. In certain ways, he anticipated later attempts to produce a feminist Marxism and poststructuralist analyses of the socially constructed nature of gender. He is seen as a link to critical feminist theory, with its numerous critiques of the patriarchal mode, still the kind of society within which all the participants in my study live, who have all developed their own personalities, prejudices, likes, desires, and ambitions as a result of some of the factors mentioned above. Even though we live in a 'new' land, South African society has many problems, and I believe that education in all spheres can play an enormous part in building a society of literate, critical-thinking people who become aware of societal predicaments like pollution, violence, and so on and feel moved to act on their knowledge.

Living in South Africa

South Africa is a land of divergent and convergent cultures, a gigantic mixture of societies, all part of the capitalist consumerist global trend. In South Africa today the possibilities for personal development are great, the best they have been for many years, with the death of apartheid and the election of a new democratic government with our new constitution which guarantees human rights to all. However, we live at present under a tyranny of crime and rape and the pandemic of AIDS which affect all members of society,

particularly women (Simpson, Robertson and Hamber, 1999 : [csvr/artrape1.htm](#)). Millions of South Africans still live in abject poverty. Education and its opportunities mean nothing to a hungry child or a shelterless adult. We are a strange nation, first and third world in one country, a microcosm of Africa and the Western World, developed and developing all at once. And as in the macrocosm, an enormous gap exists between rich and poor. As Noah Samara, CEO of World-Space Corporation said recently, "Nearly 2.5 billion people [in Africa] have never made a phone call, yet Manhattan alone has more phones than all those combined in sub-Saharan Africa" (quoted in Naidu, 1999 : 1). In South Africa many people's fate still seems predetermined, so many are stuck in mindless poorly paid jobs or in the hopeless ditch of unemployment, which lead to all kinds of related problems, like crime, depression and domestic violence. Like everyone in South Africa, to a greater or lesser degree, the participants in my study are battered by all the prevalent influences I have mentioned and are affected by these contemporary pressures.

Cultural influences

Critical theorist Eddie Yeghiayan differentiates two conceptions of culture, one allied to cultural studies and the other to anthropology:

on the one hand, a cultural studies (or "aesthetic") approach is oriented primarily to cultural products and expressive forms; on the other, the anthropological understanding of "culture" is directed to the lifeworlds of people, to symbolic and cosmological systems.

(Yeghiayan, 1996 : [scctr/cti.html](#))

I believe my research explores the increasingly important intersections between these two conceptions, the one dealing with what people make, including 'texts', and the other to do with people's worldviews, each one influencing the other back and forth. Adult learners in South Africa generally come from a different culture from the writers and deliverers of literacy programmes. The participants in my study come from a particularly

deprived background with regard to visual literacy. They have not grown up with crayons and paper available to them, for example, or been exposed to picture-books and magazines or been taught about interpretation of visual images. They probably have a very different self-image from a person from an image-rich culture. 'Doing' art tends to make one conscious of the proportions of limbs, how bodies fit together. When I taught art to school students and also to adult learners, they took a long time to realise some things I (with my very visual background) took for granted, like the fact for example, that hands are as big as faces.

Cultures are never static and from this it follows that the meaning in cultures changes, that cultures are vibrant, mediated, innovative, constantly shifting. Because of South Africa's historical background of colonialism, struggle, democratic transition, and our new place in the world since 1994, it seems as though there is a general leaning towards capitalist, western-style culture, epitomised by individuals trying to further themselves for their own good; a move towards English as the dominant language (witness the language of parliament, the law, science and technology, trade and industry, the media (Clifford & Kerfoot, in Hutton, 1992), more and more predominantly black parent-body decisions to have their children learn in English from Grade 1); a generally accepted western-style dress code; youth's aspirations for fast cars, big houses and cellular phones (information garnered from many years' personal teaching experience), and all these reinforced by so many British and American television shows watched by millions of South Africans, including my participants. So adult learners are at a double disadvantage. They cannot read or write in their own language; after painstakingly learning this skill they find that there is another enormous leap to make to literacy in English and then to more multimodal literacies which are almost a necessity in order to be able to survive in the 21st century in South Africa.

The culture of the researcher

I come from a culture which values education as being of primary importance and so I believe in the power of learning, the integrity of reading, the virtue of critical awareness, the delight and disappointments of discovery. I teach people from another culture, who have matured into adulthood with very little education, very different experiences from mine, different worldviews, but with no less valid histories and ideas. I am constantly aware of this fact while teaching adult learners. The awareness has much to do with being white, and privileged, and living with the guilt and confusion which these things bring to the psyche of a white woman in South Africa. Giroux proposes:

that educational institutions ... presuppose and legitimate particular forms of history, community and authority ... The question is what and whose history, community, knowledge, and voice prevails? Until this question is addressed, the issues of what to teach, how to teach, how to engage our students, and how to function as intellectuals becomes removed from the wider principles that inform such issues and practices.

(Giroux, 1992 : 91)

As a white person writing Social Studies textbooks for black adult learners and teaching various courses, I have tried hard to bring in perspectives different from the type of colonially-biased History I learnt as a child. History is all about culture, and the clash of cultures, and the material goods, often art and artifacts, cultural groups generate. The two cultures presented here are almost at odds, their histories separate but intertwined, affected by the brutalities of apartheid and enforced separation, which has made our experiences and our frames of reference so disparate.

My involvement in developing books and courses for adult learners, in teaching the participants and in writing up this dissertation, has made me very aware of this prevailing 'voice', to which Giroux (1992) refers. I am aware that:

Behind the visible words of every written text there lurks the writer's context, his or her life in the world and in the mind, in actions and in language. The words of the text are laden with the meanings of their time

and place, augmented by the writer's reading as well as by the assumptions of the culture.

(Meek, 1991 : 35)

Along with feminist scholars (Benhabib, 1992; Marchand & Parpart, 1995), I don't see the need to degrade this subjectivity, this voice, and regard myself as an "experience-near" researcher (Geertz, 1983 : 57), one who is engaged with the participants.

Intercultural competence - researcher and participants

All language takes place within a cultural context, and the kind of intercultural exchange which took place in the research environment, takes place every day in such a multicultural climate as South Africa's. This kind of exchange may help people realise that there are multiple ways of viewing the world, and thus assist in developing intercultural competence. Intercultural understanding comprises knowledge, attitudes and behaviour (Risager, 1994 : sprogforum/Espr1/Risager1.html).

- *Attitudes* are an umbrella term for feelings and attitudes towards people, including awareness of others' and one's own identity. This includes working with values, ethics and morals. For example, the participants had huge problems with my lack of desire to attend church regularly. I found it hard to understand their unswerving belief that God would look after them when (S)He had patently failed to do so for the last 40 or so years.
- We all have *prejudices* and see *stereotypes*. Some examples: the learners marvelled at the rust holes in my car door. Because I am white they thought I must be rich enough to fix the rust. When I complained of a leaking roof one evening they all laughed in disbelief - surely I could not have a leaking roof, whites don't experience leaking roofs! A stereotypical view of which I was guilty can be seen in the following example: classes were supposed to begin at 5.00pm every day but after becoming really annoyed because of the participants always being

late, I decided they were using what in colloquial South African parlance is known as 'african time' and I began to arrive about 15 minutes late myself, which worked out much better.

- The ability to have *empathy* for people is an important quality when working with people. In the context of my research, working with attitudes, ethics, and so on involved discussion on interdisciplinary topics like human rights, AIDS and environmental issues, all of which came up during our Pilot programme and visual literacy sessions.
- *Behaviour* is:

an umbrella term for knowledge of the cultural rules and conventions that apply in the environment in which one finds oneself as well as the ability to follow such rules oneself. It may involve social conventions in daily communication, clothing, eating, the relationship between the two sexes, etc.

(Risager, *ibid*).

My experiences at Nombulelo secondary school and Dakawa Art & Craft Community Centre in Grahamstown and Jongilanga High School in Kwelerha outside East London, which afforded me a smattering of isiXhosa and a knowledge of Xhosa customs, like how to address elders, women's position in society, shyness when speaking of sexual matters, etc. helped me to communicate better with my participants. Karen Risager asserts that the aspects of intercultural competence discussed above are interdependent: "Feelings and attitudes have, for example, links with the knowledge one has, and one's behaviour is partially determined by one's knowledge and ability to empathise" (Risager, *ibid*).

Strauss and Corbin (1990) assert that their construct of the researcher's "theoretical sensitivity" comes from four major sources: the researcher's personal experience, the existing literature, their professional experience, and the analytical research process itself. My personal experiences over the last 44 years, life experiences of joy and sorrow and

my nearly 20 years of working with black disadvantaged people, which have made me into the person I have become, have helped me understand and analyse my data. Through my professional experience as a teacher of black children and adults, I have been exposed to an enormous range of needs, backgrounds and abilities. These experiences have made me sensitive to the differing developmental needs of learners, both young and old, as well as giving me an opportunity to reflect on cross-cultural issues affecting our many-faceted society: "The more professional experience, the richer the knowledge base and insight available to draw upon in the research" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990 : 42). If one looks at traditional "African" culture versus "White" culture in South Africa, it is possible to see how coming from one or the other greatly affects one's attitudes to education and literacy. African collectivism contrasts strongly with Western individualism, which is dominant within the education system, so that anyone teaching within the system needs to be sensitive to possible clashes between the central belief-systems and ways-of-life and so on of the people one is teaching with the subject matter, language and the teacher her/himself.

Along with Paulo Freire (1995) I dislike the use of the term 'facilitator', preferring the word 'teacher'.

As a teacher, I have the responsibility to teach, and in order to teach, I always try to facilitate. In the first place, I am convinced that when we speak of dialogue and education, we are speaking, above all, about practices that enable us to approach the object of knowledge.

(Freire & Macedo, 1995 : harvard95/1995/fa95/f95freir.htm)

Through my teaching years I have been constantly aware of a major problem, which remains with me, even after teaching for so many years, because as soon as I walk through the door of the adult literacy classroom, as soon as I open my mouth to speak, I am perpetuating domination, just because I am white, educated, part of the former ruling classes, English.

The hegemony of English

English is a world language, the language of the Internet, commerce, technology, science, international traffic control and many more. It has been estimated that over one billion people (roughly one-sixth of the world's population) speak English (Rosengrun, 1999). More than half of these people, including my participants, speak English as a second language, and in some countries English is considered the official language over and above the native language(s) (McCrum, Cran and MacNeil, 1986 : 38, quoted in Rosengrun, 1999 : ~rrosengr/english/english.html). Economics plays a major role in advancing the cause of English: "The demands of modernization, technological change and international bank funding . . . provide the main reason for global English, the language of the multinational corporations" (ibid). English is also an "international business that - in textbooks, language courses, tape cassettes, video programmes and computerized instruction - is worth hundreds of millions of pounds or dollars to the economies of the US and the UK." (Ibid). Phillipson (1992) claims that:

the development of English language teaching (ELT) as a profession was itself a direct response to a political imperative. English was seen to be a key component of the infrastructure required for the spread of British neocolonial control and, as such, there was a vast infusion of funding to support the development of ELT in the late 1950's and early 1960's.

(Phillipson, cited in Auerbach, 1993 : 9)

The British Empire left a lasting mark upon all the lands it once incorporated. English is either a designated official language or has some official purpose, in all but two of the countries which formerly belonged to Britain (Rosengrun, ~rrosengr/english/english.html).

Several African countries, including Nigeria, Kenya and South Africa, have adopted English as their official language. Although technically in South Africa it is one of eleven, it is still the main one in use in the socioeconomic sector. Adult learners hoping to gain employment work hard at their English, acknowledging that it is the best language to

know to be able to find a job. Clem Sunter (speaking on the Tim Modise show on SAFM, 18 November 1999) speculates that entrepreneurial undertakings are the only ways in which 90% of South Africans will be able to make a living, considering an unemployment figure which is constantly rising and will continue to do so, with massive retrenchments in the civil service, banking and other large corporations likely in the near future.

Fairclough, (1989) writing of the power of English, said that power is exercised by the dominant groups in two main ways: "through coercion (the use of force) or through consent (willing acquiescence). Consent, however is not always the result of conscious choice; rather, it comes about through the unconscious acceptance of institutional practices" (Fairclough, 1989 : 29). Those among my learners with entrepreneurial spirit are part of this willing acquiescence, as they accept that they need a certain proficiency in English in order to be able to sell to shops, take orders and to carry out general business transactions, like banking. Robert Scholes (1989) considers the relation between the texts we read and the world in which we act and suffer: "a relationship which is itself textualised in the tension between the aesthetic, the rhetorical, and the ethical dimensions of the reading process" (Scholes, 1989). Literacy, then, and reading in English in particular for ESL learners, is so much more than just seeing the words. Reading involves one's whole being, one's history, one's prior knowledge, one's appreciation of beauty, even one's ethics. Scholes believes that "reading is not complete unless and until it is absorbed and transformed in the thoughts and deeds of readers. I believe that reading can and should answer to social and ethical concerns." (Scholes, 1989 : x). Paulo Freire believed in the power of literacy and reading to change people's mind-sets. His concept of consciousness-raising through literacy training is one still followed in many literacy programmes today.

At the 1999 African Development Forum (ADF) on "The challenge to Africa of

Globalisation and the Information Age” in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, K Y Amoako, United Nations Under-Secretary-General, said that in the century to come there would be a shift in education “from learning to development of real understanding. Education would be a lifelong affair, starting in the first year and lasting through old age” (Naidu, 1999 : 1). I hope that my course in Visual Literacy helped the participants to ‘look’ rather than just to ‘see’, and that they discovered their own ability to criticize and interpret in order to better understand ‘texts’ and visual images in particular, and that a consequence of these new abilities was an improvement in their level of English proficiency. Curiosity about the world is what drives people to educate themselves, and certainly new experiences like looking through a microscope at a suddenly gigantic head-louse, caused a great deal of hilarity and wonder which led to more examples and for some, a rapid understanding of magnification which could then be transposed to map scales and other instances fairly easily. Literacy training should, in the words of Renee Hobbs, (1996): “prepare students to function as informed and effective citizens in a democratic society; prepare students to realize personal fulfillment; and prepare students to function effectively in a rapidly changing world that demands new, multiple literacies” (Hobbs, 1996, in Flood, Heath and Lapp, 1997 : 5). English is the language of the ‘Information Age’ (Radkovsky, 1996 : /Athens/4206/essay1.html), and however much we argue against it, it seems to be the language of international communication and trade. To enter this ‘Information Age’, English language literacy and Visual Literacy are probably two of the most important of the multiple literacies one needs to learn.

How do adults learn?

Teaching adults is very different from teaching children. There is no established authoritative theory of adult learning. Adult Basic Education learners generally find it a long and difficult process. By early adulthood, most people have already learned a

complete set of behaviours and ways of doing things for coping with the society in which they live. So when adults set out to learn something new they have to sometimes 'unlearn' an internalised learned behaviour, to use Freire's (1995) terminology. In contemporary educational terminology we talk of multiliteracies, but even basic literacy varies from group to group, as Alan Rogers (1986) points out. Tony Morphet (1996) articulates what many literacy teachers experience: "Some adults appear to learn with brilliant speed and depth; others make slow and uncertain progress" (Morphet, in Hutton, 1992 : 87).

The famous Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky theorised that culture and biology combine to produce particular forms of cognitive action. So people have both a universal cognitive capacity and an individual way of putting that common inheritance to use. He also spoke of people "knowing" how to do something, but of not being able to express that knowing to others, something very common in adult learners particularly when trying to explain it in a second language, and also very appropriate for the challenge of describing visual images, something which is quite difficult to do until you have learnt how to use words to interpret an image. In Vygotsky's words:

The adolescent will form and use a concept quite correctly in a concrete situation, but will find it strangely difficult to express that concept in words, and the verbal definition will, in most cases, be much narrower than might have been expected from the way he used the concept. The same discrepancy occurs also in adult thinking, even at very advanced levels.

(Vygotsky, 1978 : 54)

We have all experienced this problem, for example it is very hard to tell someone in words how to ride a bicycle without demonstrating the method.

According to Vygotsky (1978) teaching must be matched in some manner with the student's developmental level, taking into consideration the

student's "zone of proximal development". Vygotsky defines this zone as "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development ...

(Díaz-Rico and Weed, 1995 : 16)

The cultural psychologist, Sylvia Scribner, conducted a great deal of research into literacy and cognition, and believed that "literacy, a skill by which the individual appropriates a social product (writing) for private use, is a pivotal mechanism in cognitive growth" (Tobach, Falmagne, Parlee, Martin and Kapelman, 1997 : 163). We all learn to speak automatically, but everyone has to be taught, over a long period of time, to read and write. After we have learned these cognitive skills, we "direct the process of writing, participate in it actively and intentionally and keep it under conscious control" (ibid : 170). So Scribner, like Vygotsky, (1987: chap. 6) hypothesizes that literacy moves thinking to a new conceptual level and also that it "moves thinking from the spontaneous to the conscious level" (ibid : 171). Although my study does not aim to research cognitive skills per se, it is interesting to note this hypothetical link between cognition and literacy (within which I include visual literacy and all the other literacies), and the subject would make for a very interesting further study with adult learners. Like Howard Gardner, (1999) I believe that:

... knowledge and skills are not the ultimate goal--at least they are not my ultimate goal. The ultimate goal should be disciplinary mastery and understanding. Knowledge and skill are necessary if one is to understand consequential topics and be able to approach and answer questions in a sophisticated way. Otherwise, the knowledge and skills are like a loose collection of Christmas tree ornaments without an undergirding Christmas tree.

(Gardner, 1999 : /pzweb.harvard.edu/WhatsNew/HGNYT.htm)

Vygotsky (1987) believed that it was an educational essential to introduce conscious awareness into learners' activities (like the teaching of visual literacy), so that learners could manage and become proficient in various psychological processes through the manipulation of tools of thinking.

For literacy to benefit learners, it must be rooted in reality, it must help people to read and write texts outside the classroom as well (Rogers, 1986). Learners are very excited when they finally pluck up the courage to write their own letters, to fill in their own Post Office Savings forms, to write their own stories. It must be such a liberating act, to finally be an independent writer. Capetonian Ms Elizabeth Roman started learning to read and write when she was 78 years old. "People who can read and write do not realise what a battle everyday life is without being able to read and write. Banking is impossible. You cannot even understand what your post is about" (Lund, 1998 : 15). She is determined to learn so that she can read the Bible at church meetings. As Figure 1 on the following page shows, literacy helps people in many different areas.

Factors affecting adult learning

There are various acknowledged factors which affect adult learning (Fordham, Holland and Millican, 1995; Hutton, 1992; Rogers, 1992).

Age

The age of the learner can work against him/her, although some researchers (argue that adults make better language learners than children because their minds are better developed to comprehend complicated matters like grammar.

Time

Adults lead busy lives and so can usually only spend short stretches of time on lessons, often in the evenings after work when they are already tired. The learners at our centre told me that many other women would love to come to classes but they have to care for their husbands and families and so have little extra time to study.

Lack of Self-confidence and Fear

Adults are very fearful of embarrassing themselves in front of their peers. Most adults don't like making mistakes. The literacy classroom should be a place where people feel

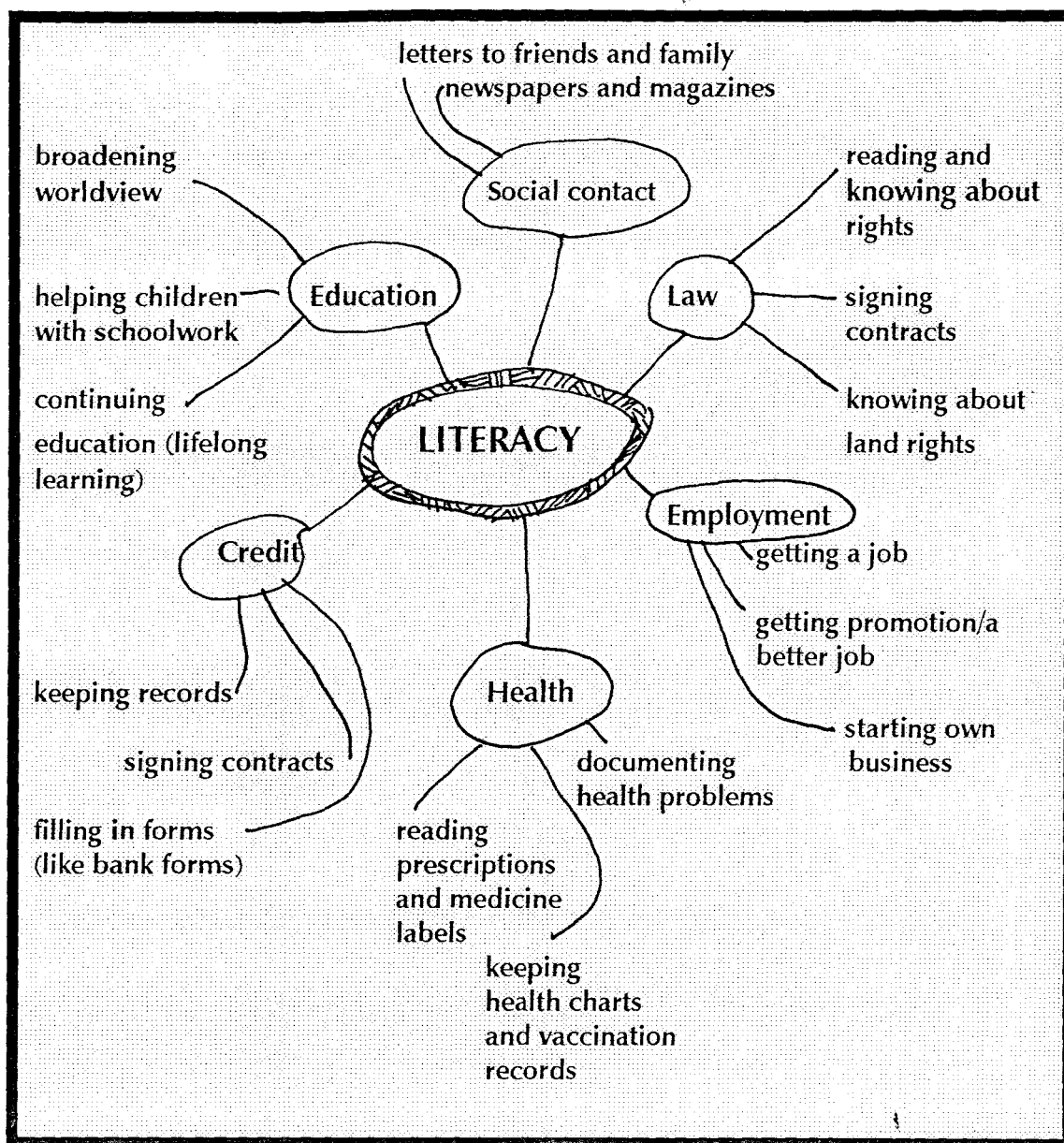


Figure 1. Where literacy can help people in a community
(acknowledgement to Fordham, Holland and Millican, 1995 : 17)

safe from ridicule and where learners understand that it is alright to make mistakes.

Attitude and motivation

If learners have a strong motivation and a positive attitude to what they are learning, they will find it easier to learn, e.g. one old man in my group was fascinated by Science, and kept on telling me how wonderful it was to finally learn about such things, which no one had ever taught him before. We used to study Social Studies every Monday and Tuesday, and Integrated Sciences every Wednesday and Thursday, and after a while he

just came on Wednesdays and Thursdays, with an astonishing memory from one week to the next. Also, if learners can see a reward of some kind waiting at the end of the hard work, like a job, or even the minor motivation of a certificate, they will find learning easier because they are pushing themselves towards a goal (adapted from USWE's Teaching Basic English for Adults, 1996).

Second language proficiency

Many learners are wary of speaking English in the belief that they are not proficient enough. In adult literacy classes at the Centre, many learners seemed to be stuck in the second language acquisition stage of 'interlanguage'. An interlanguage system is "neither the system of the native language nor the system of the target language, but instead falls between the two" (Brown, 1994 : 204). It is an independent and legitimate system that the learner constructs while actively striving to make sense of (and make sense in) the new language. Errors and odd bits of language are not bad habits but hypotheses within this active process of language exploration and formation. There is an interaction between the language forms in a learner's system: when a learner starts to learn a new form, formerly "mastered" forms often become destabilized. Likewise, seeing a 'rule' in a new context temporarily destabilizes the learner's understanding of that rule (Ellis, 1995). Larsen-Freeman (1998) points out that while the notion of systematicity in interlanguage remains intact among researchers like Crookes (1989) and Young, (1988), it is not yet clear just what kind of system it is.

For adult learners to succeed in their quest for further education, it is important that the abovementioned factors are taken into consideration by their teachers and by the learners themselves.

Literacy delivery problems

There are many problems facing the delivery of literacy in contemporary South Africa.

Financial

Development Aid funders used to donate money directly to projects but now funding is diverted through the Department of Education, and many NGO's have suffered as a result.

Little training

Although there are millions of people needing literacy, there is a serious problem in the lack of qualified literacy teachers/facilitators in South Africa (Hutton, 1992).

Dropouts

There is also a high dropout rate amongst literacy learners. The fact is that the dominant ideology lies behind the ABET programme, which mean that the learners must, to an extent, take on the values of the middle class in order to succeed. A statement by a high school student in Zola in the rural Eastern Cape sums up the paradox of education: "Education advantages, it gives you the green light. It disadvantages, it makes you forget your tradition" (Quoted by McEwan and Malan, in Prinsloo and Breier, 1996 : 197). As someone from the dominant ideology I can see how education should be transformative, opening the learner's eyes to new things and sparking a curiosity in the world, but I am most definitely acting just as my culture has prescribed to me, wanting to 'help' others to think along the same lines. I like Judith Langer's words with regard to her Freirian idea of literacy, which make of it much more than just an idea of the dominant class :

Literacy is an activity, a way of thinking, not a set of skills. And it is a purposeful activity — people read, write, talk, and think about real ideas and information in order to ponder and extend what they know, to communicate with others, to present their points of view, and to understand and be understood.

(Langer, 1987 : 4)

But if your life is one of struggle and hardship, wondering where the next meal is coming

from or how to fix the hole in your makeshift wall, it is unlikely that literacy will have high priority in your life (Hutton, 1992).

Few Resources

There are many problems with resources for adult learners. Many projects have very few materials and no funds to purchase more, so learners tend to repeat elementary exercises over and over because tutors don't know what to do with them once they have acquired the basics of writing. However, adults can learn from one another's multiple perspectives, what they bring to the 'classroom' is as important as what they take away. The textbook is not the only source of truth. A good teacher/facilitator will use "many different resources, including things like developing learners' own stories as materials" (Street, 1990) .

An example of using learners' own stories occurred when the participants in my study, when learning about timelines, a linear kind of perspective fairly foreign to people who use large events like "the year of the Great Flu" or "after the Bloukranz railway disaster" to measure time, wrote their own histories, in the form of a short date-related autobiography, illustrated with a picture of themselves. We then used these stories to talk about language errors, and the pictures (mostly drawn) to talk about bodies, perspective, backgrounds and so on, all part of the language of visual literacy. As has happened to teachers in the new resource-based Outcomes-based Education (OBE) introduced into the lower grades a couple of years ago, the Department of Education's new policy has meant that often poorly-educated teachers and tutors must now develop their own materials, with no resources, financial or otherwise. This state of affairs does not augur well for the future of ABET.

I agree with Tony Morphet, who theorises that "the basis of our understanding of the

processes of adult learning lies in observation and interpretation" (Morphet in Hutton, 1992 : 88) and hope that my small study adds to this growing body of research into literacy in South Africa.

Visual Literacy

Vision is normally so swift and sure, so dependable and informative, and apparently so effortless that we naturally assume that it is, indeed, effortless. But the swift ease of vision, like the graceful ease of an Olympic ice skater, is deceptive. Behind the graceful ease of the skater are years of rigorous training, and behind the swift ease of vision is an intelligence so great that it occupies nearly half of the brain's cortex. Our visual intelligence richly interacts with, and in many cases precedes and drives, our rational and emotional intelligence. To understand visual intelligence is to understand, in large part, who we are.

(Hoffman, 1998 : ii)

There is a vase of bright nasturtiums on the desk next to my computer. Glancing at the colourful flowers I enjoy the warmth of the different oranges, the glowing faces turned to the window, the contrast of the green leaves with the ambers and saffrons, how intrinsically related they are. I remember the summer atmosphere of the sun-dappled early morning garden when I picked them this morning, strange flowers which hide under their umbrella-like leaves, so that you have to search for them, hidden jewels. My grandmother loved these flowers the best, so whenever I pick them she is there, her influence on my life powerful and evocative.

There is an entire text behind these little splashes of brightness: images and words, words and images. Our lives are full of them, and of all their many contexts and meanings, as Derrida says, multiplying the number of legitimate interpretations of 'text'. He maintains that a definitive reading of a text is impossible, that there is no one meaning to any text, that paradoxes abound in the use of words and that no two readers ever see exactly the same thing. He does not "argue that there is no such thing as meaning. He just thinks

anything can be the jumping-off point for further inquiry" (Froomkin, 1993 : stanger/1Derrida.html). So any 'text' can lead us on to other things, depending on our frames of references, on our curiosity. Vision research has produced the surprising insight that "vision is not merely a matter of passive perception, it is an intelligent process of active construction. What you see is, invariably, what your visual intelligence constructs" (Hoffman, 1998 : iii).

During a 1999 speech to US education policy-makers entitled "Images at the Core of Education," Stanford University Professor of Education and Art, Dr. Elliot Eisner, expressed the notion that images have the power to transform classrooms. He said:

Experience itself is rooted initially in a world of images. Ordinary experiences are, in a sense, multimedia events that focus on images, and education shapes the way in which those images are experienced. The world that we occupy is a world of sight, sound, taste, smell, and it is an interactive world. It is an image-filled world, and without access to that world or without the ability to experience the qualities that constitute the world in which we live, I think no education could go forward.

(Eisner, quoted in ArtsEdNet/Read/power.html)

Adults and children alike live in a world abundant with experiences. The advent of film and television have influenced the very depths of our beings. Very often now, our memories exist in movie format within our heads. Our dreams are often in "full, technicolour", sometimes experienced from disparate perspectives which we have encountered in film, for example, a bird's eye view of a city. Remarking on the ability of the cinema to "extend . . . certain of our means of perception and . . . throw out bridges beyond the impassable zones of our senses and our skills," the great modernist architect Le Corbusier singled out scientific documentary's time-lapse films on the growth of seeds and plants as proof that "nature and human consciousness are . . . two terms of the [same] equation" (Lavery, 1997: 112).

As mentioned before, curiosity drives the mind to learn, and education should stimulate that curiosity. The Getty Institute for the Arts, established in 1982, advocates the necessity of the arts in education, of which visual literacy is a part, because “the arts convey knowledge, meaning, and skills not learned through the study of other subjects. They represent unique forms of knowing and ways of thinking” (ArtsEdNet : ArtsEdNet/About/gei.html).

Visual Literacy Teaching in South Africa

A few years ago, the policymakers for our new education system, Curriculum 2005, which applies to ABET as well, saw the arts, when integrated throughout the curriculum, as invaluable to students' education because the arts play an important role in preparing students for work and life. The reality in most schools, and certainly in Adult Education, is that the arts are still sadly neglected, the first thing to go when budget concerns are discussed. When I taught at a ‘black’ school during the eighties and early nineties, we were one of only two black schools in the entire Eastern Cape which offered Art as a subject. The numbers have not altered much since then. Art, Music and Drama are virtually non-existent in formerly disadvantaged schools, which are still disadvantaged as far as I can see, and not just in the arts, which is way down on the agenda. For example, in Kwazulu-Natal next year, “only half the number of learner’s books required will be acquired and ‘learners will have to share’” (Fine, November 1999), and, irony of ironies: “there is a budget for stopping textbooks getting into schools : the superintendent general of the province notes that implementing these cuts will mean extended working hours and ‘over-time payment will be made’” (Fine, November 1999). There are hardly any textbooks for adult education, and none being published in the near future. Juta, in what surely constitutes a crime in the context of the state of South African education, pulped thousands of tons of illustrated Easy Readers in September 1999 because they had been

sitting in warehouses gathering dust, moths and worms for a couple of years.

In addition to the low value given to the arts in all sectors of education, most teachers and tutors of adult learners in South Africa are not trained in the arts at all, but are nevertheless expected to produce creative arts-related lessons. It is internationally recognised that the arts develop “skills needed for the 21st-century workplace by fostering the capacities for: critical thinking; problem solving; teamwork; informed perception, tolerating ambiguity; and appreciating different cultures”

([Read/Improving/index.html](#)). South Africa, with its vast education system in disarray, particularly in the area of adult education, doesn't seem able to pay attention to this wonderful learning tool. Wright, (1989 : 159, in Basel, 1995 : 56) considers that complex information processing skills, such as skimming, scanning, assimilating all the details and an appreciation of how the constituent parts contribute to the overall meaning, are acquired through learning how to read images. However, Blacquiere, (1985, quoted in Basel, 1995 : 58) argues that communication occurs mainly through verbal language, which he claims is “the most compatible code as the sender and the receiver usually apportion the same meaning to the words in a message” (Basel, 1995 : 58), and that the visual code poses a communication problem as images can have more individual meanings. I strongly disagree with Blacquiere's position, taking into account the enormous impact of visual text surrounding us today, and the need for us to be able to interpret and analyse such text. In addition, we all use the words of our own language to speakers of our own and other languages, but as Sperber and Wilson have pointed out,

No one has any clear idea how inference might operate over non-propositional objects: say, over images, impressions or emotions.... We see it as a major challenge for any account of human communication to give a precise description and explanation of its vaguer effects. Distinguishing meaning from communication, accepting that something can be communicated without being strictly speaking meant by the

communicator or the communicator's behaviour, is a first essential step.
(Sperber and Wilson, 1988 : humanities/SperberAndWilson 1988.htm)

Moholy-Nagy, an artist with the Bauhaus movement in the 30's stated, "the illiterate of the future will be ignorant of pen and camera alike" (Rosenblum, 1997 : 56). This stems from his understanding of the camera as a modern graphic tool - a device for capturing aspects of reality that might stand by themselves or be reworked into further visual statements. We are surrounded by such statements in contemporary society. Many of the graphic materials we see in our day-to-day life are pictures derived from photographs, designs on containers to promote a particular type of soap powder or cereal or other manufactured object. Teaching adult learners about visual literacy, e.g. the hidden persuasiveness of images in advertising, can help them to a better understanding of how advertising works, giving them a more informed way of living. In his 1960 book, *Art and Illusion*, Ernst H. Gombrich, an art historian, states: "the study of art will be increasingly supplemented by inquiry into the linguistics of the visual image" (Gombrich, 1960 : 9). Increasingly, visual literacy is seen as a language, and consequently there is a need to know how to communicate and listen to visual messages.

Working with the adult learners in my research study, I concurred with Donis A Dondis's views on visual literacy which still make so much sense and do not seem to have dated much since first published in 1973. He identified three levels of visual information which we perceive: the physical, perceptual and conceptual levels.

Physical realities are objectively factual - a tree has green leaves, a snake has smooth skin, a computer is smaller than a house. In dealing with the perceptual level, Dondis explains that not everything we see has a physical reality that is tangible and therefore our

brains fill in the missing information, e.g. we may read a portion of a television screen as one colour, when our brain is actually blending several pigments together to create a single colour in our minds. An interesting perceptual difficulty occurred with some of my participants: cropping is a common tool of advertisers and others, and even after exercises on the subject, a few of the learners still saw a boy without his legs in the picture as physically challenged by having no legs, in other words, their minds did not fill in the missing legs. Conceptual seeing is interpreting visual information to understand meaning in the information e.g. understanding non-verbal communication like gestures and being able to interpret a picture. It is more of a searching for meaning in images (Dondis, 1973; Brown, 1997: ArtsEdNet/Read/power.html). In the Visual Literacy course we moved through these three levels with varying degrees of success.

Visual Literacy for ESL Adult Learners

The Educational Resources Information Centre (ERIC), the online resource centre for educators, defines visual literacy as: "A group of competencies that allows humans to discriminate and interpret the visible action, objects and/or symbols, natural or constructed, that they encounter in the environment" (ERIC : <http://www.ericsp.org/>).

Visual literacy develops critical viewing in learners: "viewing carefully to comprehend and evaluate information presented by television, video recordings and other visual media"; visual discrimination: "the ability to recognize and identify visual shapes, forms and patterns"; visual perception, which involves interpreting what is seen, and an understanding of non-verbal communication, an enormous part of our everyday communication (ERIC_Digests/ed355205.html). For example, during the time I taught at Nombulelo Secondary School, from 1984 to 1993, some of the teachers became aware of a type of sign language understood and utilized by all the students, involving gestures

like the one shown in figure 3, for “half-jack”, which an adult would use when asking a child to go to the bottlestore. There was a particularly apt sign for “Mlungase”, which meant ‘white woman’, here used in the teaching context. It consisted of three quick movements with the forefinger. One breast, then the other was touched in quick succession and then the same finger used to create a large nose on top of the



Figure 2. Gesture denoting a “half-jack”.

signer’s own nose, denoting a woman (breasts) with a long nose, therefore a white woman, particularly appropriate for me as I have a large nose! These signs were part of a vast visual language and non-verbal communication of which I came to understand only a few symbols. The students were amazed that I didn’t use a similar non-verbal language. It was part of them, acquired before they could remember. Talking about the language raised their awareness of non-verbal communication, sign language used by deaf people, cultural differences, exploitation by adults of children etc. It was very interesting and enlightening for all of us.

According to the latest required outcomes for ABET in Visual Literacy, mentioned in learning areas like Social Studies, learners should be able to: interpret visual information, read and draw fairly complex maps and interpret and create graphical representations of information, such as tables, graphs and statistics (Unit Standards for ABET, Dept of Education 1999). “Interpreting visual information” is a very broad outcome indeed.

According to Dondis:

Literacy means that a group shares the assigned meaning of a common body of information. Visual literacy must operate somewhat within the same boundaries. Its purposes are the same as those that motivated the development of written language: to construct a basic system for learning,

recognizing, making and understanding visual messages that are negotiable by all people, not just those specially trained, like the designer, the artist, the craftsman.” (Dondis, 1973 : x).

The participants in my study learnt did not “share the assigned meaning of a common body of information” (ibid). They spoke about visual literacy mostly in English, their second language, yet another disempowering experience. Learning visual literacy is almost like learning a new language on its own, and the learners were already struggling with English.

Noam Chomsky’s theory that all human beings have an innate ability to acquire language is generally accepted. Van Zyl, using de Saussure’s (1915) concepts of *langue* and *parole*, explains this as “the ability to perceive language, to reproduce and represent those configurations (*langue*) which may vary across individuals and cultures but are ultimately learnable (*parole*)” (Van Zyl, 1989 : 15). Hoffman (1998) argues that children are born with innate rules of universal vision just as Noam Chomsky has argued for innate rules of universal grammar. These inborn rules of vision allow children to accumulate, through visual experience, rules of visual processing by which the child constructs, in a variety of stages, visual scenes. In his book on how we construct what we see, Hoffman spells out a number of rules acquired for dealing with the “grammar of vision” - a set of rules which govern our perception of line, colour, form, depth, and motion, e.g. “Rule 1: Always interpret a straight line in an image as a straight line in 3D” (Hoffman, 1998 : 17).

Cassidy and Knowlton (in Van Zyl, 1989 : 15) and Dondis (1973) argue that everyone has a similar innate ability to understand the visual interpretations of reality (decode visual messages) and to reproduce and render visual language (encode visual messages). I agree with Dondis who argues that although we have these innate abilities, they have potential for fuller development through ‘educating’ them. An example to explain this is

a person who has an ability to draw well. This person attends an art school where they learn to look carefully at objects, they learn to use the basic visual elements: the dot, line, shape, direction, texture, hue, saturation, value, scale, dimension and motion. After a couple of years at art school their drawing has improved and they can also paint, etch, take photographs and so on.

Do illustrations help adult learners in their acquisition of English?

If pictures are used as effective second language aids for adult learners, it is important to try to understand how learners comprehend, filter and interpret visual images, and how they respond to paired signals - namely words and pictures.

Brand Knew (Pty) Ltd., a South African literacy programme using brand names, developed on the basis of their claim that most 'illiterate' adults are visually literate, seems to have a bearing on the use of images to aid ESL learning in ABET. This hypothesis is supported by Enn's (cited in Basel, 1995) research findings which posit that:

... short-term visual integration involves the following processes: a small visual store containing less data than the image because the viewer only codes the task-relevant features (Hochberg, 1968); and the active combination of these features in the short-term memory until they match feature combinations stored in the viewer's long term memory.

(Basel, 1995 : 42).

The viewer's 'meaning' obtained from the image they perceive, determines which part they focus on and also which part they will then be able to recall. Roelofse (1982) mentions an extrinsic aspect of signs or symbols and calls it the 'reference aspect' (Roelofse, 1982 : 30). We think of the symbol, e.g. the word for an image in a book, as that to which it refers. For example, someone looking at a picture of a Great Dane in a book, might say, "What a huge dog!" The 'signal aspect' (Roelofse, 1982 : 28) of the Great Dane is paper and so the "huge dog" merely consists of paper, form and idea. It is

a measure of the power of images that they can cause strong emotions in people, even though they may only be 2-dimensional collections of inks and dots on newsprint. And although we all see the same picture and use the same word to describe it, perhaps, every human being will perceive the same image or word in a slightly different way from everyone else.

In a 1992 research report, Pinnock and Polacsek drew extremely negative conclusions about the future of the first democratic elections, due to their "culturally stereotypical assumptions of the incapacity, cognitively and materially, of 'illiterate' and 'rural' people to participate in, for example, such 'normal', 'threshold' practices of modernity as watching television" (Prinsloo and Robins, 1996, in Prinsloo and Breier, 1996 : 36). As Fairclough points out, "in any discourse, knowledge, social relations and social identities are simultaneously being constituted or reconstituted" (Fairclough, 1992 : 8). Prinsloo and Robins go on to describe their own research amongst rural people of the Western Cape during voter education just before the 1994 elections. One of the trainers is quoted as an example of someone with an attitude that signifies "a substantial advance on the gloom of the Rhodes report, but [who] retains a homogenised understanding of 'illiterates' as consumers at the same urban supermarket" (Prinsloo and Robins, 1996 : 37). The trainer said that all the faces and emblems were necessary on the ballot paper because of the many illiterate people in the country: "They can't read but they are actually very good at decoding symbols. They know where's Shoprite because they know what Shoprite looks like." (Idasa workshop, Hout Bay, March 1994, quoted in Prinsloo and Robins, 1996 : 39). Prinsloo and Robins point out that:

... the ballot form contained a lengthy, potentially confusing list of symbols and photographs of party leaders, where people's discursive resources were fully drawn on, to distinguish one clenched fist or map of Africa from another, or one photo of an old man from another.

(Prinsloo and Robins, 1996 : 39).

In addition, the authors quote the fact that, of the millions of votes cast, only one per cent were spoilt ballots, as evidence that most people managed to decipher the ballot papers admirably.

Adult learners often have difficulties with various western pictorial conventions like time/movement; figure/ground; perspective and so on, all part of the dissemination of Western imagery. Again, 'previously advantaged' children will learn these conventions as a matter of course during their education, through exposure and study. As Dondis mentions, "Almost every visual formulator [such as repetition, sequentiality, activeness and so on] has a counter-force, and each of them is connected with the control of the visual elements that result in the shaping of content, the construction of message" (Dondis, 1973 : 127). If one has no knowledge of these visual elements one will not get the 'message'. To comprehend mostly western 'text', it is necessary for people to understand visual conventions like those used to portray movement, for example.

Visual Literacy Research

Part of the study involved trying to gather how much adult learners integrate information from both image and written text, seeing as so much of literacy material combines the two, ostensibly in the hope that the combination of words and pictures is an aid to understanding. Yee, Hunt & Pellegrino, (1991 : 615) state that many tasks involve integrating data from visual and verbal sources and require the establishment of links between the picture and text. Results of tests Yee et al. (1991 : 616) conducted to compare the coordination of a verbal component task with a visual-spatial and auditory component task indicated that the ability to coordinate perceptual and verbal data is separate from that needed to deal with either data individually. The research discovered

that performance on both easy and difficult perceptual tasks improved when there was a corresponding verbal task. This seems related to Vygotsky's 'process of internalization', and his view that concept development is dependent on language or some other form of semiotic mediation:

It is the functional use of the word, or any other sign, as a means of focusing one's attention, selecting distinctive features and analysing and synthesising them, that plays a central role in concept formation.

(Vygotsky, 1978 : 42).

Wright, (1989, in Basel, 1995 : 51) regards pictures as an important stimulus for developing competence in second language communication skills because "we predict, deduce, and infer meaning from what we see around us and what we remember having seen and not only from what we hear and read" (Basel, 1995 : 51). In research done at the Diebold Literacy Project in New York, adult learners were given many examples of sight-sound correspondences. Once they had acquired a sizeable vocabulary, the sentences were rearranged into questions to wean the student gradually from dependence on the pictures. The pictures were then used as general cues to the material being read. Developmental testing has shown that action and state-of-being verbs need to be associated with stimulating pictures in order to maintain student interest and motivation (Diebold Group, Inc. <http://ericir.syr.edu/plweb-cgi/28learning%26through%26words%26and%26pictures%29>).

Basel (1995) mentions that in one of her later research tests the learners were given a copy of the text read out by the teacher. The results were worse than when they had only listened to the text and focused on a picture. She found that access to the written text did not help the learners to understand the story but rather appeared to inhibit them:

Many learners were so busy trying to decipher individual words that they did not manage to follow the story, and thus found the oral and written tasks more difficult than in Test 1 when they had concentrated on listening

to the story. This appears to confirm theories presented by Nagle et al. (1986 : 21) and Yee et al (1991) that comprehension can be impeded through undue focus on new material as it overloads the learner's processing systems and causes him to fret over his lack of comprehension and inability to respond, thus preventing him from gaining a general understanding of the whole text.

(Basel, 1995 : 71).

It seems therefore that when there are too many tasks to perform the learner can become flummoxed, just as a page with too much visual and verbal text can be disconcerting to the eye.

The majority of books and research around the subject of visual literacy research (Basel, 1995; Maley et al, 1986; Potgieter, 1987; Wright, 1989, in Basel, 1995) seem to imply that pictures are necessary to adult learning but that the layout must remain simple, especially due to the fact that second language learners are struggling with the meaning of the words as well as the related images.

Perhaps books should teach their readers a certain degree of visual literacy while setting out their learning area, as certain textbook writers have already begun doing, for example, in a set of Social Studies textbooks adopted by California schools in 1990, the subject of a book by James Laspina. In these books, depending on the grade level of the learners, there is a sizeable section on "what words and images can do alone and together"(Laspina, 1998 : 27). In the Grade 1 book, a simple comparison is made between two types of visual information : a drawing and a photograph:

A cartoon drawing of a talking ear of corn is compared to a photograph of corn being harvested on a farm. The caption tells the student which is real and which is not. On the next page, students are asked by the caption to distinguish for themselves which is real or not. Above it, appearing in the most basic of terms, the fundamental visual.verbal learning principle appears, which states, "Pictures and words work together. Together they help you learn."

(Laspina, 1998 : 40).

Visual intelligence is a complex phenomenon (Van Zyl, 1989; Dondis, 1973; Hoffman, 1998; Eco, 1996). Most writers on the subject agree that language is a means of expression and communication and can be held analogous to visual communication. To learn how to read and write you start with the basics. It is possible, according to Dondis, that a similar method can be employed for teaching visual literacy. The basic elements mentioned before such as line, dot, light and shadow, etc. can be taught to learners. "At the end of a long period of involvement and exposure to the visual elements, the results should reflect what it means when we finally learn the whole alphabet" (Dondis, 1973: 183). Dondis points out that it takes a long time to become visually literate, and even longer, I realised, if you are learning through a second language. My time with the adult learners in my group was just a short introductory course.

Howard Gardner (1993), observed that of the three universal symbol systems, language, pictures and mathematics, only alpha-numerical literacy is considered necessary for serious study. Dondis (1973) also points out that:

the whole area of vision has been compartmentalized and de-emphasized as a primary means for communication. One explanation of this rather negative approach is that visual talent and competency were not considered available to all people, as verbal literacy was thought to be.

(Dondis, 1973 : 67).

Most curricula ignore the sense of sight and its aesthetic development. Betty Edwards considers drawing a valuable thinking skill. She claims that drawing consists of five basic perceptual skills:

- the perception of edges (e.g., the contour of shape)
- the perception of spaces (e.g. the negative space between objects)
- the perceiving of relationships (e.g. proportion and perspective)
- the perception of light and shadow
- and the perception of the thing itself.

(Edwards, 1986 : 39).

In fact, in schools learners who can't 'do' maths or science must 'do' art, a learning area usually perceived as one of the lowest rungs in the educational ladder. People who take art at school are often the rejects of these more prestigious 'academic' subjects.

Curriculum 2000 has moved to change this imbalance, with a specified learning area:

Arts and Culture, with outcomes for the learner like:

- use the creative processes of arts and culture to develop and apply social and interactive skills
- experience and analyse the use of multiple forms of communication and expression
- demonstrate an ability to access creative arts and cultural processes to develop self-esteem and promote healing.

(Resource pull-out, *The Teacher*, September 1999)

The only problem is that most teachers in South Africa are not qualified to teach Arts and Culture, as they have no experience of these processes themselves.

American researcher Abigail Housen, whose research into aesthetic development has covered nearly 20 years already, has developed a very robust theory. Her conclusions are empirical, and her theory makes no assumptions except a commitment to the overall notion of cognitive development as a process involving time and exposure, which, she claims, has five stages of development. She supports the creation and measurement of actual visual literacy teaching strategies according to these stages. Stage 1 is when learners see things through their own life experiences. They quickly learn to observe more when asked to look more closely and think about what they see. At stage 2 people begin to mistrust their own judgements. At this point they can learn strategies with which to see things more observantly, like comparing and contrasting, or analysing colour to see how it contributes to the meaning of an image. Housen maintains (1987, in Yenawine, in Flood, Brice Heath and Lapp, 1997 : 846) that this stage lasts a long time, but by the end of it people are what might be called "functionally literate" in terms of Visual Literacy.

Housen's third stage involves viewers' "adopting the analytical and critical stance of the art historian" (Visual Understanding in Education, 1995 : home/methodology.html), so that they gain an interpretive understanding of the work of art. Stage Four involves interpretive viewers seeking a personal encounter with a work of art, appreciating subtleties of line and colour, and "seeing their own processes subject to chance and change" (ibid). In Stage five, Housen states that time is a key ingredient, allowing viewers to "know the ecology of a work-its time, its history, its questions, its travels, its intricacies. Here, memory infuses the landscape of the painting, intricately combining the personal and the universal" (ibid). Housen maintains that exposure to art over time is the only way to develop, and without time and exposure aesthetic development does not occur.

Howard Gardner views human artistry as:

an activity of the mind, involving the use of and transformation of various kinds of symbols and systems of symbols. Individuals who wish to participate meaningfully in artistic perception must learn to decode, to "read", the various symbolic vehicles in their culture; individuals who wish to participate in artistic creation must learn how to manipulate, how to "write with" the various symbolic forms present in their culture.

(Gardner, 1991 : 9).

These skills of 'reading' and 'writing' visual language are teachable, I believe, but require a lot more time than I had at my disposal. Learners definitely have great potential to acquire and extend their visual literacy, through extensive and continual practice (Gross in Van Zyl, 1989 : 14), as they all said that they made use of both words and pictures when reading English books for second language learners.

Computer and visual literacy - technology and perception

Kress & van Leeuwen (1993) make a distinction between the way in which so-called "preliterate" cultures view images and how "literate" (verbal language-centered) cultures do so. In highly literate cultures (those cultures in which the logic of verbal language has

subsumed visual representation), images have tended to be viewed not as structured expressions of rational and social meanings but rather as natural, unstructured, transparent replicas of reality or as subjective individual expression. In "pre-literate" cultures (those in which the image functions at least as importantly as language), images have tended to be viewed as openly-structured, perspective-laden purveyors of rational and social meanings (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 1993 : 14).

This "pre-literate" way of seeing, say Kress and van Leeuwen, anticipates what they call 'new' visual literacy: the way in which, in our increasingly visual media environments, images are beginning to be perceived as consciously structured and independently meaningful. "Nowhere is this clearer than on today's World Wide Web. Images in a hypermedia environment instantiate principles of new visual literacy on at least two levels, involving both image production and image consumption" (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1993 : 74). The move from atoms to bits as the building blocks of products of all kinds (Negroponte, 1995) has made and will continue to make obvious to our 'Western' understanding what the so-called 'pre-literates' have known all along: that images are made of parts that are consciously arranged to convey a particular message:

A bit has no colour, size, or weight, and it can travel at the speed of light. It is the smallest atomic element in the DNA of information. It is a state of being: on or off, true or false, up or down, in or out, black or white. For practical purposes we consider a bit to be a 1 or a 0. ... Bits have always been the underlying particle of digital computing, but over the past 25 years we have greatly expanded our binary vocabulary to include much more than just numbers. We have been able to digitize more and more types of information, like audio and video, rendering them into a similar reduction of 1s and 0s.

(Negroponte, 1995 : 14).

Although much of my research was carried out using a computer : to write the materials, the questionnaire, to research on the Internet, to write up this dissertation, none of my

learners has ever used a personal computer. They all visited my PC and were shown some of the tasks it can perform, and marvelled at it as they did at the magnifying powers of a microscope, but they don't have any real understanding of this ubiquitous technology of the future, even though they experience its abilities, on TV, in advertisements, etc. Umberto Eco points out the enormous difference between hypertext and previous linear ways of reading, for example, a detective novel, or even a philosophical tome by Descartes, starts at page 1. The reader follows the story or the argument, till the end, when in the detective novel you discover it was the butler, and in Descartes you read his final conclusions. With hypertext, you can jump about the screen, you can cross-reference, you can ask the computer to search for a specific link. As Eco points out:

Hypertexts will certainly render obsolete encyclopedias and handbooks. In a few CD-ROMs (probably soon in a single one) it is possible to store more information than in the whole Encyclopaedia Britannica, with the advantage that it permits crossed references and non-linear retrieval of information.

(Eco, 1996 : [tekster/Eco/Internet.htm](#)).

I was constantly aware of the enormous gap between the participants' and my uses of technology, as pointed out by Naidu (1999). Laspina (1998) speaks of how much users of computers and the Internet take for granted their visual knowledge and their knowledge of English, the language of the Internet. In South Africa with its vast differences, there are many unshared 'bodies of meanings' (Elkins, in Laspina, 1998 : xiv), incomprehensible to one group of people, everyday language to another. When looking at the world of advertising, for example, any advert is "a selecting of certain elements, things or people from the ordinary world, and then a rearranging and altering them in terms of a product's myth to create a new world, the world of the advertisement" (Williamson, 1978 : 23). Different skills are required to construct meaning from the huge variety of images with which we are bombarded. A straight-forward photograph generally requires fewer, simpler operations than a psychologically manipulative advertisement.

Some images can be understood at face-value, while others have a greater degree of complex meanings (Dondis, 1973).

Conclusion

According to Dondis (1973), our responses to visual images are influenced and conceivably affected by our moods, our cultural conditioning and by circumstances. Our world-view certainly affects what we see. Dondis explains it as similar to cultural eating preferences, for example, some people in South Africa eat mopani worms, while others find the idea sickening. In the same way, visual preferences are ingrained in us by our cultural heritage, by our life experience.

Perhaps there is no universal visual language, just as there is no universal spoken language. But we have to live together in the world with all its vagaries and strangenesses, and it is surely important to try to understand how it all works, to be adept in many literacies.

In this chapter, I have considered some theories relating to my study concerning some of the influences on adults living in contemporary South Africa. I have examined my own position as a white feminist researcher amongst black learners in a predominantly patriarchal society and the delights and difficulties involved in such intercultural communication. I have discussed the hegemony of English and the general challenges faced by adult learners and in particular in their attempts to understand visual image terminology in their second language. I have explained the concept of Visual Literacy and questioned the general lack of any kind of art education in formerly 'black' schools or educational institutions, a lack which hinders learners' critical thinking skills which can contribute to their general proficiency in English.

Chapter 3

Different literacies ... are described ... as embedded in local and dominant discourses; that is, they form part of the complex of conceptions, classifications and language use that characterises local cultural life in the streets, houses and alleyways of these communities, as well as those of bureaucracy, school, church and other formal institutions. The boundaries between these discourses and their literacies are porous and constantly changing.

(Watters in Prinsloo and Breier, 1996 : 103).

Research Methodology

Introduction

In this research the aim has been to explore and to endeavour to understand and appreciate visual literacy in adult learners. The study has tried to investigate the sense that adult learners make of images in the course of their ESL adult literacy classes and has sought to develop visual awareness in the participant group. Because I combined research with teaching and the hope of development within the learners, my study falls within the term Action Research which describes a kind of research which includes both action and research and “fuses practice and research into a single activity” (Elliott, 1995 : <http://www.carn/mission.html>).

The study was conducted in a number of ways, most running concurrently. Data, in the form of questionnaires, evaluation forms, drawings and transcriptions of conversations was collected. Firstly the learners completed a short questionnaire for comparison with a longer one at the end of the course. They were then actively taught the elements of visual literacy like line, tone, perspective etc., how to look at pictures, how to see more than they were used to seeing. Alongside this course, I was also teaching them Social Studies and Integrated Sciences classes as part of a five-month pilot project of the Grahamstown Adult Literacy Unit’s workbooks, which gave me quite a clear picture of their progress in concept development, such as perspective, for example. This

experience helped me to modify my final questionnaire according to the difficulties and successes of the learners. During the course I had many conversations with individual learners, which although they do not constitute formal interviews, produced authentic data according to Thomas (1999) as they were written up in my research journal which I kept for the duration.

I wanted to find out which aspects of visual texts they experienced difficulty in interpreting, particularly because as an illustrator I had chosen some of my own illustrations so carefully, after much thought, trying to put myself in the shoes of an adult learner, which is, I discovered through this study, close to impossible. I changed my ideas about 'putting yourself in someone's shoes' after I read a quote from Herman Hesse: "It is not our purpose to become each other, it is to recognise each other, to learn to see the other and honour him for what he is" (Hesse, 1965 : 73).

Towards the end of the course the second questionnaire was given out which all the learners attempted to complete, although because we closed down during this phase, some did not manage to finish. The purpose of the questionnaire was to look at and interpret specific examples after the course to see if there had been any enrichment in learners' understanding of visual text.

Action Research

Visual literacy is not something easily measured, so this is a qualitative study which falls within the action research approach. I chose this approach as it combines many of the traditional paradigms and was the most suitable for my purposes, which were to learn from my experience and to apply that learning to bring about change. Action Research is considered appropriate for teacher research, a type of research with a "long and robust past, with notable periods of interest and disinterest in the movement" (Baumann,

Bisplinghoff and Allen, in Flood, Brice Heath and Lapp (eds.), 1997 : 122).

Contemporary interest in teacher research began with a resurgence in the early 1950's, with interest diminishing again in the late 50's due considerably to the criticism that research of this nature lacked scientific rigour (Baumann, Bisplinghoff and Allen, in Flood, Brice Heath and Lapp, 1997 : 122). This is because action research focuses on a specific problem in a specific setting: "The emphasis is not so much on obtaining generalisable scientific knowledge as on precise knowledge for a particular situation and purpose" (Cohen and Manion, 1980 : 175). In the 90's, action research came into its own, although there is still criticism over the amount of rigour or lack thereof, but it is acceptable nowadays that this type of research is specific and subjective and that it might not contribute to educational theory in general. As Kemmis discovered of his own research:

Preliminary analysis suggests that the theoretical prospects for action research are only moderate, if 'theoretical' payoff is measured in terms of the literature of educational researchers. ... If the theoretical payoff is defined in terms of the development of critical communities of practitioners, then the results are more encouraging.

(Kemmis, 1988 : 13)

Action research takes place in a cyclical or spiral process: planning, acting, and reflecting, which should go through several cycles (Carr and Kemmis, 1986). Action research often leaves loose ends or tangential questions unaddressed. As Elliott notes:

While self-reflection may lead to the professional development of an individual teacher and perhaps some improvement in practice, it may not contribute to useful educational knowledge which can and should be a part of action research.

(Elliot, quoted in Oja and Smulyan, 1989 : 207).

When a project is written up as a dissertation, it impacts on the life of the researcher as a professional and when it is possibly used as a resource by other teacher-researchers it could be a contribution to both theory and practice (Cliff, 1999 : LearnSup/CLIFF.HTM). I believe that my research has impacted on my development as a teacher and materials

developer and on the participants' visual literacy progress and English second language competence. Participatory research draws upon the basic adult education principles of participation and responsibility (Hutton, 1992 : 258). The impetus for ideas may come from an outside researcher, but "in all cases, the outside researcher is involved particularly in building an indigenous capacity for collective analysis and action and the generation of new knowledge by the people concerned" (Hall, 1981 : 10, quoted in Conti, 1997 : /tcj/summer97/GC.htm).

Qualitative Research

Research is classified as fitting into one of two paradigms, which are known now as qualitative and quantitative research. Quantitative research reflects the traditional scientific approach to problem solving. It assumes that there is a single reality that can be broken down into variables. By identifying and isolating different variables, cause and effect relationships can be established. Emphasis in quantitative research is on measuring, comparison and objectivity. A qualitative approach is based on a view that is holistic and which "seeks to describe, decode, translate, and otherwise come to terms with the meaning ... of certain ... phenomena in the social world" (Van Maanen, 1985 : www.armi-marketing.com/qualitat.htm). Or, as Lindsay Prior, (1997) states: "Qualitative research is a way to gain insights through discovering meaning, by improving our comprehension of the whole" (Prior, in Silverman, 1985 : 68).

The purpose of qualitative research is to better understand a phenomenon. The emphasis in this approach is on description, looking for patterns in the data, giving voice to the participants and being flexible within the development of the research project. It has also been claimed that contemporary qualitative research is essentially an adaptation of the methods used in humanistic psychology, characterised by Abraham Maslow's and

Carl Rogers' basic premise that "the human organism is innately motivated to growth ... to grow/develop into higher levels of functioning ... to move toward self-actualization" (Rogers, 1961 : 16). In regard to this study, both the researcher and the researched grew in knowledge and understanding. Although the participants are the focus of the study, I am interested in what Michel Foucault, one of the most influential of late 20th century thinkers, argued: that analysis was to be based 'not [on] a theory of the knowing subject, but rather on a theory of discursive practice' (1970: xiv, quoted in Prior, 1997). Foucault seems to build on Derrida's notion of 'text' , attempting to analyse the ways in which knowledge comes to be assembled, deciphered and manifested through discursive rules. Adding to Foucault's (1972) and Weedon's (1987) post-structuralist perception that: "the extent to which peoples' own definitions of truth or knowledge are recognised - or how far they resist oppressive definitions of themselves - depends on how they relate to dominant power structures" (Preece, in Benn, Elliot & Whaley, 1998), is the feminist framework for interpreting gender difference, which "explores gender power relations and their social construction" (ibid : 103). This framework is being applied as a research tool for looking at other aspects of difference such as class, age, race etc. (Morris, 1992; Preece, 1995, Skeggs, 1994), and goes into the background explained by Van Maanen (1985): "While quantitative research tells you the who and the what, qualitative research explains the why and how behind the what" (Van Maanen, 1985 : www.armi-marketing.com/qualitat.htm). Qualitative research is developing a strong following because it is a way to answer many of the pertinent questions people have but it still does not hold an equal position with quantitative research in terms of prestige within the academic community.

My particular approach falls within a combination of paradigms. As Giddens, quoted in Cohen and Manion, has suggested, we should see 'all paradigms as mediated by the others' (Cohen and Manion, 1980: 25). The study therefore falls within a mixture of

interpretive, critical and post-structural/deconstructive paradigms, using participative action research methods. I am fascinated by the inter-relationships between culture, history, language and the self, a largely deconstructive model. Reality is seen from a critical perspective, problematic through the distortions of communication of 'text' and speech. Looking at images as a language which is understood as a discourse or a system of meaning falls within both the interpretive and the poststructural approaches. My observation has been conducted using interpretive methods, with critical self-reflection which analyses certain power relationships generated by text and between the researcher and the researched, epitomised by the experience of being white and black in South Africa. The knowledge about visual literacy which has been generated by this inquiry is a mixture of critical and poststructural ideas, in that it considers the frameworks of knowledge and also hopes to aid in the participants' personal liberation and understanding, in the acquisition of a more informed way of looking at the world of images around us, by giving them a belief in their ability to use their descriptive and analytic skills across a wide range of secondary sign systems (e.g. television, newspapers, advertising), and in all the participants gaining some intercultural understanding. The study aims to discover meanings and beliefs underlying comprehension of visual images in textbooks, newspapers and magazines. I believe knowledge is never value-neutral, according to the critical paradigm, and it is always influenced by the effects of power within a particular social structure (Lyotard, 1984).

Doing action research in South Africa

As a researcher I come from a mixture of perspectives which colour the research, based mainly on critical feminist theory, with a postmodern approach, recognising the "complexity, plurality, and unfinished nature of postmodern discourse" (Best & Kellner, 1991). Research in the humanities and social sciences has changed over the last century from a copy of scientific research, striving for objectivity, usually trying to prove

something, to the postmodern paradigm, where education "must celebrate diversity ... must be relevant and interactive" and where "students must be empowered to deconstruct existing ideologies and construct new value-systems based on their own, unique perceptions" (O'Farrell, 1996 : [interests/postmodernism.htm](#)). As many feminists contend (Maynard, 1994; Stanley & Wise, 1993), subjectivity is forced on us by the human condition, so the researcher becomes a subject in her research and her personal history is part of the analytical process. In feminist research there is a desire not just to observe educational or social phenomena, but to make a difference, to enhance the lives of the participants, even if it is in only a minimal way. Thomas, a Canadian researcher in bilingualism, suggests that:

we [the researchers], have an obligation to carry out research, to search for new ways of making meaning of our lives and those who are connected to us through classrooms, schools and homes. At the same time, we also have an obligation to strive to continually question our ethics, to examine our motives and actions, and to strive to work with people in a way that is inclusive, thoughtful and respectful.

(Thomas, 1999 : [v05n01/thomas.html](#))

My position as a white feminist researcher impacted in various ways on my participants, all black Xhosa speakers, mostly women, from what is now called a formerly disadvantaged group, although in many ways their lives are identical to what they were before 1994. Within this context the women are doubly (some would say triply - if you include capitalism) oppressed, living in a racist society for most of their lives, and also being at the bottom end of the Xhosa patriarchal culture, where women are expected to work at a day job and then perform all the housework and childrearing duties as well. Feminist theory, perhaps more than any other, has shown that power is not simply located at the level of the state but is exercised through relations between people, and between people and institutions (Smith, 1990; McNay, 1992). As Oliver Tambo pointed out in a 1990 speech:

(t)he struggle to conquer oppression in our country is the weaker for the traditionalist conservative and primitive restraints imposed on women by man-dominated structures within our Movement, as also because of equally traditionalist attitudes of surrender and submission on the part of women.

(Tambo cited in Anon -Formulating National Policy Regarding The Emancipation of Women and the Promotion of Women's Development in Our Country 1990). (Charman, de Swardt and Simons, 1991 : <http://www.uct.ac.za/depts/politics/macpap.htm>)

As a white feminist I have to acknowledge that I form a part of South Africa's economic and cultural imperialism and that this affects my point of view towards my participants in various ways, for example in my notion of western education as all-important for human development, whereas western education, while developing astonishing philosophical ideas, has also aided "progress" which has ultimately fouled the planet with nuclear waste and other forms of consumer pollution. Added to this is the fact mentioned in chapter 1, that so-called illiterate people are not invalids incapable of functioning in society, but are often incredibly well-adapted to their lives. Diana Gibson (1996), a South African literacy researcher, writes of one of the men she met, Migiel Hendriks, who demonstrated his 'working intelligence', a concept which refers to "intellect at work in whatever contexts and activities those may be and, more narrowly, to the particular context of ... the workplace" (Scribner, 1984: 10, in Prinsloo and Breier, 1996 : 53). Hendriks was asked by the farmer to make a small wagon, unlike any other on the farm where he worked. Hendriks explained to Gibson how the whole thing worked, demonstrating a knowledge and understanding of the distribution of weights, levers, two- and three-dimensional constructions and spatial thinking. "According to Gee's (1990 : 153) definition, Hendriks had mastered a secondary discourse involving 'a great many of the same skills, behaviours and ways of thinking that we associate with literacy', despite not having 'master of, or fluent control over a secondary discourse involving print'" (Gibson, in Prinsloo and Breier, 1996 : 55). Although my participants surprised me by not recognising the Statue of Liberty, they came up with many ideas about images which I had not even thought of,

especially when describing pictures, which demonstrated understandings I had presupposed they might not have.

Subjectivity

Action Research within the interpretive/critical paradigms accommodates research findings which emphasise subjective interpretation and may therefore be biased. In this type of research, subjectivity is valued as a condition for understanding (Fielding and Fielding 1986 : 27). The British researcher Preece discovered in her own research into the marginality of adult learners in Britain, “my bridging role in the research becomes equally a bridging responsibility to ensure appropriate learning opportunities for different sectors of society” (Preece, 1998 : 110). I would love to continue to fight the cause of adult literacy, because even though there are many examples of ‘illiterate people’ who manage perfectly well in society, I still believe that an holistic education is the answer to so many of the world’s problems. When people understand ‘how things work’, a grand term for the earth, sciences, ecology, societies, infrastructures etc., they are more likely to care about the future, each other and the places where we live. These thoughts coincide with Howard Gardner’s, the renowned Harvard psychologist who developed the theory of multiple intelligences: verbal/linguistic, mathematical/logical, visual/spatial, bodily/kinesthetic, musical, emotional, naturalist (the ability of individuals to relate to nature) and existential intelligence (Gardner, 1993). Professor Gardner, whose theories have formed the basis for reforms in education and teaching all over the world, envisions an educated generation that understands the physical world, the biological world, and the social world - in a personal context as well as from a social and cultural perspective.

The issue of ‘the self’ in (mostly feminist) research as substantive or methodological position is not without its critics and problems. As Pat Whaley, who has spent most of

her life in continuing education in Britain, states:

I have always believed that there is a certain vulnerability in teaching and researching in this way but that this is a strength in terms of process and output. It is not however without its dangers. There are tensions around inclusivity and exclusion, empathy and alienation, intimacy and detachment.

(Whaley, in Benn, Elliot and Whaley, 1998 : 94).

I became quite close to some of the learners, and we were all devastated when the Centre closed down in June. It was emotionally draining for me to work with these people so closely, see development and growth beginning to happen and then have to give it all up.

Triangulation is used to overcome researcher bias, by using different methods of data collection, i.e. questionnaires and conversational interviews (Kvale : 1996) and using theories of visual literacy (and other items) to make sense of data. Data was analysed before each new stage of study, rather like a teacher marking learners' books at night and then deciding where to go on to the following day. This helped me, in a flexible approach, to reflect and plan for the next stage of the research cycle (Cohen and Manion, 1980 : 181). In terms of triangulation, learners with different levels of competence and of differing ages would ensure a mixture of responses.

The group

I had worked with this group before and had developed something of a rapport with them. They were a diverse group of four men and twelve women with a range of complex life-stories and experiences. Visual literacy is used everywhere, and a couple of these people were fairly new to literacy in terms of reading and writing skills, which was of added interest in that we were intent on developing a new skill closely related to those they had recently acquired. I worked with the learners every day for nearly 6

months, which gave me great 'entry' (Argyris, Putnam and Smith, 1985) into their world, and helped to build open relationships with the participants, something necessary to enable them to answer in a real way, not just trying to 'please the teacher'.

'Women's issues' within the group

Most of my participants were women struggling daily to manage issues like single parenthood, unemployment and subordination to their husbands' wills. During the course of the various studies at the Centre the participants and I discussed various issues relating to our patriarchal society and the relationships between men and women. Control and subordination within society are reproduced through socialisation, ideology and visual experience. Newspaper and magazine advertising, for example, suggests, to men, women and children, the reality we are expected to conform to. Children watching these images on television or seeing them in books and magazines, learn very early what is expected of them as girls and boys and in the future as adults (NOW, Malibongwe Collection 1990:22, in [depts/politics/macpap.htm](#)). The watershed Malibongwe conference organised by the African National Congress of South Africa and held in Amsterdam in January 1990 discussed and addressed a broad spectrum of issues, from the nature and extent of women's representation in political structures to domestic and public violence against women:

Family issues, for example, the division of labour, allocation of resources for education and food along gender lines, freedom from domestic labour and therefore access to leisure or rest, domestic violence, if seen only as women's issues merely perpetuate the social division of reproduction (daily and generational) and the subordination of women's concerns. This subordination of 'women's concerns' in the so-called private sphere, is part of the continuum which subordinates 'women's issues' in the so-called public sphere. Some of the issues coming from the public sphere are readily identified as political issues whereas others are not. The most obvious are: inequalities in access to skill acquisition and employment opportunities, unequal wages for equal work, inequality in the occurrence of rape and vulnerability to physical assault, distinct from, but including, sexual assault.

(Charman, de Swardt, and Simons, 1991: [depts/politics/macpap.htm](#)).

Although the “new” South Africa after the liberation struggle was accompanied by a revisioning of society, with a new bill of rights for all its citizens, “struggles to end class domination and racial domination do not, in themselves, challenge the gender and ageist organising principles of both capitalist and socialist societies” (Charman, de Swardt, and Simons, 1991: depts/politics/macpap.htm).

The Community Learning Centre

Denzin and Lincoln (1994 : 202) maintain that qualitative research consists of examples which are planned because researchers look for groups and settings where the systems being considered are most likely to be. My four year stint at the Adult Literacy Unit (ALU) situated within the Institute for the Study of English in Africa (ISEA) at Rhodes University in Grahamstown made for an effortless move into my research study. The Adult Literacy Unit employed 5 people, 3 tutors, a co-ordinator and a materials developer. The Community Learning Centre where literacy classes for about 40 learners took place was situated at the old Railway station, in rooms jointly used by a training NGO, Umthathi Training Centre. In addition to the above rationale, the Centre was appropriate for my research for the following reasons:

- proximity
- ease of access - I was scheduled to tutor my pilot materials there during 1999 and the centre expressed much interest in the Adult Literacy Unit's (ALU) new programme design for the year, which included sections on visual literacy, social studies, integrated sciences, civic literacy, AIDS awareness and so on.
- I knew the learners already from brief tutoring experiences with them previous to the study.
- no problems with regard to collection of data could be foreseen from the way in which the centre was run, although as I have mentioned before, the centre had to close down due to lack of funding which curtailed my study and the programme

we had devised for the year.

- the class was relatively small which would not mean huge unmanageable amounts of data.

Voluntary participation and informed consent

I approached the following people for permission to conduct the research: the co-ordinator of the CLC, the other tutors who worked there, and the adult learners who studied there each evening. It was all done verbally, in meetings set up between myself and the people involved. The learners were aware of the fact that I would be teaching them visual literacy and the learning areas involved in the pilot programme and seemed quite excited by the prospect. At the beginning of the study, I explained the overall idea of the research, clarified the fact that there were no right or wrong answers, that everyone saw things in different ways, particularly regarding pictures, and specified that I was only interested in how they saw things, that no one was going to judge their perceptions. The learners all completed informed consent forms at the beginning of the study.

Throughout the course I articulated how it was progressing, and parts of the course were negotiated with the learners according to what had gone before.

The 'observer/translator'

One of the other tutors and I were the main tutors for the advanced group, the group involved in this study. We spent quite a lot of time on the nature of the research study and negotiating her role, which was as translator and observer. I explained that she would be part of the triangulation process to avoid bias, although she also taught and had developed a good working relationship with the learners. As explained later, this part of the triangulation process didn't work so well, as the tutor had personal problems and was retrenched when the Centre ran out of money.

Individual records

It was decided to keep a file on each person which would include examples of their work

and profiles, so that it might be possible to see individuals' progress. The final questionnaire and evaluation were completed near the end of the course, so that there was time to iterate some of the issues from the final questionnaire.

Drawing

The learners were also at various times asked to produce drawings, e.g. drawing after listening to a description of an object; a cross section; a bird's eye view drawing from a description; a drawing of the plan of the room they were in; drawing a route map, etc.. I wanted them to draw because drawing is so strongly related to really **looking** at something, and also to being able to "see" in your head, for example, when you draw a rough map of your town, in order to direct someone to your house. Once people get over their fear of drawing, and most of the participants were quite happy to try, especially when given encouragement, it is quite a therapeutic occupation. Maley (1986) mentions that adult literacy programmes should only use illustrations drawn by adult learners themselves, because they would probably be able to understand and interpret such illustrations more easily. He believes that they have the advantage of "utilizing the learners' store of personalized meanings in terms of their own previous experiences" (Maley, 1986 : 142).

Most of my learners drew at a very elementary level, which I would imagine is the norm in such classes, and while it works well to use learners' drawings for various exercises, like illustrating their own news reports, I think there should be a variety of illustrations for interest's and comprehension's sake. Education is about stretching the mind, not, as Bob Linney suggests, "trapping people at existing low levels" (Linney, 1995 : 30). Kieran Egan, author of *The Educated Mind*, conceives a Vygotskyian view of education as "the mastering of 'cognitive tools' -- but 'tools' not necessarily in the sense of useful, physical objects, but rather "kinds of understanding." However, Linney (1995), in the

developmental book, *Pictures, People and Power*, goes on to describe various tried and tested ways of using learner and teacher-made illustrations in adult literacy work. He claims that:

visual aids can, indeed, help oppressed people to read the world and escape from the culture of silence (see Freire, 1972). They can help people to find their own voice. This is not a voice that can speak only words of one syllable, but one which speaks a rich, complex and creative language.

(Linney, 1995 : 39).

A study carried out by Unicef in mid-western Nepal, to see how quickly villagers could improve their visual literacy, found that the group which received some training in illustration techniques, e.g. perspective, improved dramatically compared to the control group. "Overt teaching of illustration techniques was particularly beneficial with regard to perspective and how illustrations portray ... people" (Ranjit, 1989 : 107).

Linney advocates the teaching of drawing as a part of literacy. Betty Edwards points out that "drawing is a curious process, so intertwined with seeing that the two can hardly be separated" (Edwards, 1979 : 2). When I taught art at Nombulelo Secondary School, the standard six children who came fresh from primary school into the art class, ranging in age from 13 - 15, could barely draw. Many of them produced the "big head" drawings which are usually associated with the developmental stage of 3 and 4 year old children (Jameson, 1971). I had various theories about why this was so, like the fact that most of them lived in cramped quarters which might have contributed to their lack of knowledge of people as large beings with big hands that could cover their faces, for example. By the end of their standard six year, after numerous exercises like lying down on the floor and drawing around each other, thus being able to see exactly how tall they were, how big hands and feet are, how long the body is in relation to the head, etc., just about all of them could draw beautifully, at the 'normal' developmental level of a 14 year old, the

“stage of realism”(Edwards, 1979 : 72).

The questionnaire

The questionnaire consisted of structured and fairly standardised questions to “allow for parity and uniformity of measurement when recording and analysing responses” (Cohen and Manion, 1980 : 243), although there was also a lot of openness about them in that some of the questions could have divergent responses, and occasionally guidance is included on the questionnaire itself. Even though questionnaires are fairly limiting according to Cohen and Manion (1980 : 242) in various ways, such as opportunities for asking probing questions, I had the advantage of interacting with the learners twice or three times a week and could therefore engage them in various discussions around an image or idea about which I wanted more in-depth information. As Pope and Denicolo (1986) argue, this type of interaction is:

... the result of several influencing factors: the interviewer's own personal intuitive theories; the questions in his/her mind which originally defined his/her research; his/her skills in perceptive listening and questioning techniques; and ideas and questions which develop during the interactions with the interviewee.

(Zuber-Skerritt, 1988: edtech88/zuber-skerritt.html).

It was not just answers or patterns in responses which I was looking for, but ways to better extend the learners’ own visual ‘vocabulary’, so this kind of interaction was particularly significant.

Selection of aspects of visual text

From the completed initial questionnaires and introductory part of the course with the learners, the following aspects were considered by the participants and their tutors as potentially problematic for adult learners in terms of interpretation and understanding:

- perspective
- interpretation of symbols/signs
- cross sections

- mapping and plans
- cropping of figures
- sequence and comic format

Based on the preliminary research questionnaire, the visual literacy course I gave the learners, interviews with the tutors and findings from existing research on the subject of visual literacy (Dondis, 1973; Basel, 1995; Berger, 1972; Gombrich, 1982; Hoffman, 1998; Laspina, 1998; Kress, 1993), I asked questions based on a wide spectrum of visual knowledge on the part of the learner, e.g. general visual knowledge, in which they would use their knowledge of basic visual elements such as dot, line, shape, direction, texture, hue, dimension etc. covered in the Visual Literacy sessions. Also included were questions which would test spatial knowledge, graphic symbols, magnification and reduction, cross section, and so on. The following aspects were investigated:

Preliminary questionnaire:

photographic realism; general observational abilities; cross-section; comic format sequence including speech bubbles; movement in drawings.

Final questionnaire:

Question 4 & 5: layout of textbook pages

Question 2, 5, 10, 11, 19, 25, 26, 30, 33: how image and text work together

Question 6: conventional signs and symbols

Question 12e, 13, 14, 16, 19, 25: three-dimensional depth perspective

Question 7a, c, e, 18: plans; maps

Question 8a & b: cropping

Question 10, 11: comic format sequence and speech bubbles

Question 1, 2, 3, 4, 7b, 12a, d, 17, 18, 22,23,24,27, 29, 31, 32: subject recognition

Question 10, 12: stylization

Question 12e, 16, 21, 26, background and foreground identification

Question 5, 7, 8, 12, 25, 29, 30, 31: western pictorial representation

Question 7d: x-ray views

Question 17: identification of famous icons

Question 20, 21: sensory perception from a colour image

Question 5, 7e, 18: stylistic representation of the earth

Question 1,2,3,4, 5, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 16, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 28, 29, 30, 31, 33: inference from observation

Question 25: movement in photographs

Question 13, 14, 19, 21, 23, 25, perspective

Question 13, 14, 19, 23, 25, 29: visual literacy conventions such as oblique angle views

Question 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 12, 16, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 25: descriptions of objects or scenes

Question 30, 33: analysis of advertisements

Question 31: cartoon conventions.

Drawings:

drawing after listening to a description of an object; a cross section, drawing from a written description; a drawing of the plan of the classroom; drawing a timeline; drawing a route map; creative use of dots, line; self-portrait for autobiography; illustrations for their own news reports.

In accordance with the conventions and content to be investigated, about one hundred examples of visual text were selected from various adult workbooks, newspapers, magazines, readers etc. all published within the last ten years. Eighty-five were black-and-white photocopies while about fifteen were full colour images, colour photo-copies of a high standard. Each page had up to three images, sometimes more, and a few questions. There was adequate lined space next to or below each image for the

participants to write their responses. In some cases written text accompanying the images was included, to try to determine if written text and illustration 'worked together' (Laspina, 1998 : 40) and also in some cases to explain concepts. Learners were given the first questionnaire consisting of 11 pages (see Appendix A) to complete during the first week, helped along with discussion and translation from the observer/tutor.

The first questionnaire

The Visual Literacy course was very much linked with the parallel courses in Social Studies and Integrated Sciences, so the questionnaire does not altogether fit the mold. In keeping with action research, even the questionnaire, particularly this section, has an instructive element. Some areas of the study were discussed as a group and did not require written down answers, although I documented the discussion. As McAlpin (1987) says, when a picture is used "as an accessory to a dialogue or discussion within a simulated situation in the classroom" (McAlpin, in Potgieter, 1987 : 10) the learner is able to produce a better level of second language, perhaps greater than could be achieved through the conventional method of merely describing the picture.

I chose the first photographs because they were both 'foreign', therefore posed different views of the world from those to which the learners were accustomed, and good examples of a bold 'figure' on a fairly plain 'ground' (Linney, 1995 : 42). There was a lot of discussion about colour too, and why certain colours 'stand out'.

The description of the sea-horse which was read out to the learners (adapted from Seidman, 1990 : 24) went as follows:

Have you ever seen a sea-horse? It is a tiny creature which lives in shallow sea water. It is usually only a few centimetres in size. Its head looks a bit

like a horse although its ears are just little bumps, not long and pointed like those of a horse. Its body comes below the head, not behind it like a horse, and it has a big bulge in the stomach area. This stomach-bulge narrows into a long thin curling tail, which it attaches to a piece of seaweed (plants that grow under sea water) and hangs on. A sea-horse has no legs, just little fins that look a bit like wings on its back.

This was translated into Xhosa for the learners, so they heard it in English first, then Xhosa and then in English again. Some of the drawings were wonderful, and there was much mirth when they saw the drawing of what sea-horses really look like. Unfortunately a lot of the drawing exercises were done on separate scrap paper and were lost or went home with the learners, never to be seen again.

Towards the end of the 9-week visual literacy course which ran alongside our pilot project, where I also participated in teaching, the learners were given the last part of the questionnaire. Five learners did not complete the entire questionnaire because of the reasons stated before, but eleven were completed so that data analysis could take place. Certain adaptations were made along the way, when learners were struggling with some images, e.g. an image of the globe. In this case different maps and versions of globes were brought in, as well as photographs taken by astronauts from space.

The visual examples on the questionnaire were chosen because they appeared in adult literacy textbooks or were representative of artistic conventions and styles I was investigating with the learners. In some cases more than one example of the same aspect was given so that learners could respond to other determinants, giving a more valid identification of the learners' understanding.

Questions

In the questionnaire itself, there were examples of various types of questions, some open-ended, some gap-fill, a few unscaled response-type questions, and some where they were asked to give their own opinion on something, for example, to write how a particular picture made them feel. These are the least successful type of questions, which most respondents would rather leave out. I understand that it is difficult to write about feelings as it is, let alone in a strange language.

Most of the learners filled in their questionnaires during class, but a few became erratic in their attendance at classes due to the atmosphere of despair which overtook the Learning Centre with the impending closure because of lack of funding. Some took the questionnaires home and then returned them a week or so later. The responses from men and women were influenced by class, age, religion, culture and shared experiential backgrounds. Each questionnaire and conversation/interview produced information that was peculiar to that particular relationship between the researcher and the participant.

Influences on data-gathering

Time plods steadily along in an adult literacy classroom, which I learnt to glide into, as my ideas of what could be 'covered' in an evening or a week's work, were entirely at odds with the learners' expectations and capabilities. It repeatedly brought home to me how much of our education and abilities we (advantaged people) take for granted. Due to various factors like poor attendance towards the end of the life of the Centre; erratic attendance by some people including the observer/translator throughout the course due to ill health, employment opportunities and so on; slowness due to language difficulties

(this arises time and again in my journal entries); and ambitious expectations of the course on my part, we only accomplished about half of what I had planned. Although this setback had some impact on my data-gathering, I still had plenty of data and do not believe that these problems were enough to threaten the research study. They were more disappointing than detrimental.

Research Ethics

The researcher has an obligation to “think through the ethics of the situation and to take the necessary steps prior to requesting access and permissions” (Stake, 1995 : 58).

Ethical dilemmas embedded in qualitative research are to do with “the conduct of qualitative inquiry in the classroom, project implementation, the effect of the researcher's presence in the field, and understanding questions of pedagogy and power” (Ayers, 1993: 83). Ethics are something most teachers are very aware of, as it is a prevalent belief that “schools are moral institutions, designed to promote social norms” (Lashway, 1996: ERIC_Digests/ed397463.html) and teachers are therefore expected to maintain the moral ‘status quo’. Although adult learners are different from the average schoolchild due to their own value-systems they have developed during their lifetimes, teachers/tutors have no less of an obligation to their adult learners. Starratt (1996) argues that a fully informed ethical consciousness will contain three main themes: that of caring, e.g. what our relationships demand of us; justice, e.g. being able to manage ourselves fairly; and critique, being able to look at our own imperfections. As a teacher/researcher one should be constantly aware of the ethics of what one is doing and of one’s own value-system. As I have said before, qualitative research is not value- or bias-free. Janesick

(1998 : 102) states that the researcher should identify and describe their own biases and ideological preferences early on in the study. I have tried to do this all the way through my research and this dissertation.

Problems and limitations of the study

The observer/interpreter and I met after each class that she attended. However there were difficulties with her attendance towards the latter half of the course as I have mentioned before, which caused problems for the learners with regard to understanding, as she had been diligent at translating difficult concepts. I used one of the other tutors when I could, but as he was teaching a class of his own I only bothered him when I really had to. He was very helpful with post-lesson discussions and gave me a lot of encouragement when I was despondent about the learners' progress or non-attendance of classes. Triangulation was also not as rigorous due to the observer/interpreter's absence.

Conclusion

This chapter has described and justified the methodology used in this qualitative research study, which falls within the action research approach. Participants took part in a visual literacy course, filled in questionnaires, made drawings and completed evaluation forms. Methods of triangulation such as observer-interpretation and multiple methods of data collection were used to counter the subjectivity of the study.

Chapter 4

Kaleidoscope

In small lights
darting off a prism
or a glass
of low proportions
the world comes back to me.
Its yellow far from red
and green from blue.
Shining only when
in shards
it gives a partial view.

Sylvia Scribner

Presentation of Data and analysis

The participants

A brief profile of the participants' educational standards and media access follows in Table 2 on the next page. There were four men and twelve women participants. There was a wide range in age, with 9 people in their twenties, 3 in their thirties, 3 in their forties and one in his fifties. Most of the younger participants had been to high school, while the older people had left school at primary level. A few had been at the Centre for a number of years. When learners arrive at the Centre they write a placement test which determines into which level class they will go. A couple had come up from the first level but most of them came in at Level Two or Three, with reading and writing skills and a fair grasp of English. All of the participants had access to television and most watched something every day, especially the soap operas like "The Bold and the Beautiful". Most learners tried to read a newspaper at least once a week, either the Dispatch, Grocott's Mail or Ilizwe LaseRhini. Many read popular magazines, especially after joining the

public library, where they discovered they can go and read them for free. Most of the participants said that they believed that reading was important, “because it improves the knowledge of the reader”; “because it help to improve your English”; “to get some advices and to get more information”; “it make person to be well known about what is happening all over”. Eleven of the learners are unemployed and five work at menial jobs such as domestic work and gardening.

Name	Sex	Age	attended school?	standard reached?	how long at CLC?	watch tv?	read newspaper regularly?	read books and magazines?
Nati	m	55	yes	5	18 mnths.	once a week	yes	yes
Mphumezi	m	22	yes	7	3 years	every day	yes	no
Simphiwe	m	22	yes	9	1 year	every day	yes	magazines sometimes
Lonwabo	m	40	yes	8	1 year	every day	yes	no
Agnes	f	47	yes	5	1 year	once a week	yes	sometimes
Gladys	f	47	yes	4	3 years	sometimes	yes	sometimes
Neliswa	f	31	yes	7	1 year	every day	yes	sometimes
Nomakholwa	f	34	yes	6	4 years	twice a week	no	sometimes
Nomboniso	f	32	yes	6	6 mnths.	every day	yes	no
Nokuthula	f	22	yes	8	2 years	every day	yes	yes
Nolwazi	f	20	yes	9	1 year	every day	yes	yes
Nonthuthuzelo	f	19	yes	7	9 mnths.	every day	no	yes
Ntombekhaya	f	25	yes	6	1 year	every day	yes	yes
Ntombozuko	f	23	yes	6	a month	once a week	yes	yes
Pumeza	f	23	yes	7	6 mnths.	every day	yes	yes
Zanele	f	23	yes	7	2 years	once a week	yes	yes

Table 1: General information on the Participants

The first questionnaire was administered a few days after the beginning of the course, to try to gauge the level of visual literacy of the learners and also as an introduction to the

concept of looking more closely at pictures. The participants had been informed of the lack of pressure on them, that there were no right or wrong answers, and I had taught them all a few times before this meeting, so we were not strangers. Even so, there is most often a measure of discomfort in such a meeting between "the researcher who comes from a different education/cultural background from that of the respondent" (Linney, 1995 : 28). Learners were struggling with their second (or in some cases third) language, English, and then moved into a struggle to express the concepts and their thoughts around this new weird subject, Visual Literacy. Most of the learners exhibited what Selinker (1972, in Singleton and Lengyel, 1995 : 27) termed 'interlanguage' in second language acquisition theory, mentioned in chapter 2. The adult learners in my study did not have the communicative or linguistic facilities to fully express themselves in English and demonstrated the second language acquisition stage of 'interlanguage'. I came to regard their experience of learning visual literacy as similar to developing an interlanguage. The learner grasps various concepts, but when new ones appear, those already mastered often disappear, become irrelevant for a time, or even supercede the previous one, and are therefore forgotten.



Figure 3. The Learners at the Community Learning Centre - all classes

Over the months we became much more comfortable with one another, which in all my years' teaching I have found is mostly the case with a teacher and a class who spend time together, who find out things about each other's families, lives etc., who are genuinely interested in one another. I took them to the Science Festival for an afternoon and they were astounded by all that went on there, and I was astonished to discover that two of my learners had never been inside the 'Monument' (the 1820 Foundation building in Grahamstown) before, which brought home to me again the gap between the 'haves' and the 'have-nots' in South Africa.

The first questionnaire

At first the learners didn't know how to begin discussing the images, but with some help and suggestions, from the questionnaire and the tutors, they were soon looking for as many things as possible, and came up with many interesting ideas. As Jenkins (1988) mentions, pictures are good ways "to get people talking" (Jenkins, 1988 : 3-4, in Basel, 1995 : 54). Often second language learners are too shy to speak in class, but if there is something which captures their attention like a picture they can relate to, this can "nurture a spirit of enquiry amongst the learners" (Basel, 1995 : 55). Observing the image of people on a boat, one group even counted the people on the boat, and attempted to say how many were men and how many were women which I hadn't even thought of. As the exercise was done on the board I have reproduced my notes of the table People, Places, Things in Appendix B. The learners had to be prompted to look at colour, it seemed to be one of the last things they noticed, perhaps because we take colour so for granted, it is only when it is not there, as in a black and white picture, that

we may notice its absence. Most of the learners had many answers for the 'people' and 'place' sections, but when they had to list the 'things', they were stuck, until prompted to look around the figure, at the 'ground' e.g. in the top image, where they were directed to trees, leaves, stones, walls etc.

When asked to choose one of the pictures in Appendix A on pages 5 and 6 or one from a magazine, the learners all chose (a) or (c), black women working at spinning in a factory and four black women dancing respectively. I expected that this might happen, and it strengthened the theory that advertisers all use, that people look at images to which they can relate. The women in the first image wear the traditional kind of 'working uniform' of an overall and a "doek" (headscarf), which many of my learners had worn themselves in their jobs as domestic workers and as wives in the Xhosa culture, who are required to wear a *doek* to show they are married. The other image chosen is the four South African dancers, dressed in semi-traditional dress, to which the learners can also relate. All the learners have experience of dancing, exemplified at the little 'Prizegiving' ceremony, where Independent Examinations Board (IEB) certificates from exams written the previous year were presented to the learners, dressed in their best dance costumes and dancing enthusiastically each time one of the group received their certificate.

A lot of discussion here was done in Xhosa, as learners were talking amongst themselves and I had told them that whenever they needed to speak Xhosa they could. Of course each group chose the best English speaker to report back, so this exercise did not give an opportunity to everyone to speak English. Also, the learners did not come up with as

many people, places and things this time, when they were left on their own. They were not yet used to looking carefully at images. As a class we went through the pictures again when everyone had finished reporting, and through prompting managed to write down quite a lot more, to surprised “Ah!s” from the participants, when they realised what they had missed. Kenneth Goodman, (1982) claims that through reading pictures learners learn how to concentrate on constructing meaning by “seeking the most direct path; developing strategies for reducing uncertainty and selectively using available cues in terms of their own experience” (Goodman, 1982 : 21).

The next section linked the idea of image and verbal text, and the ability to analyse both of them. As there was quite a wide range in language abilities, as mentioned before, some learners managed the exercise very well. ‘Prostheses’ was a word that most of them guessed from the context. I am not going to dwell on this exercise as it was merely to demonstrate to the learners how similar the two types of analyses can be.

The next exercise was to do with cross-sections, which are a common method of explication in Integrated Sciences and Social Studies. When I taught geography at Nombulelo they had been a major stumbling block for many students, and proved to be the same for the adult learners at the CLC. This led to drawings of cut open apples, a few of which are seen below.

Some of the learners were very apprehensive about using their pencils to actually draw the apple. This can be seen in the lightness (and darkness, probably influenced by the diagram of the earth) of some of the drawings, and in the size of all the drawings. My first notion when drawing an apple would be to draw it full size, but not one of the learners did this, they were all quite small, some extremely so. All the learners noticed the seeds, but many did not note their shape and drew them as round black dots. However, most managed an approximation of the apple-half and were pleased with their accomplishments. Towards the end of the course many of the learners were quite willing to draw any time I asked them to. Even though we did not do much drawing, and there was not that much actual drawing instruction, I think that the concentrated 'looking at pictures' that we did changed their own self-confidence in drawing. Linney (1995), who advocates the teaching of drawing to development workers and the people of the communities they work within, mainly to develop visual teaching aids, speaks of qualitative evaluation as, "not centred on numbers but on people - how they feel, how they look at reality, their self-confidence, self-esteem, having a voice, getting organised together" (Linney, 1995 : 181). Even though I realise that my learners should receive a lot more tuition in all the literacies, it was a very satisfying feeling to see this kind of development in my group.

This exercise led on to the portrayal of movement, something seen in the volcano drawing, which is an example of western pictorial convention as mentioned in Chapter 2. We spoke a bit (looking at examples of each) about various western pictorial conventions

like time/movement and others like figure/ground; line/shape; space/depth; stylization; shading/tone; scale/perspective; sign and symbol; cropping; comic-format sequence and thought-bubbles. These would be developed further in the Visual Literacy course. Fortunately , the tutor/observer was there at the beginning and was able to give Xhosa equivalents for much of the strange terminology, which was very difficult for the learners to master, like a new language in itself. Four of the learners were familiar with the little lines following the outline next to running, dancing or otherwise moving figures in drawings to represent movement. One learner said that she recognised those lines because she 'looked at' her son's comics that he got from a friend. The other learners had a little laugh with her when she revealed that she did this secretly so that he wouldn't know his mother was reading comics! The tutor/observer and I gave her positive reinforcement, saying that reading was good practice, no matter what you read. One learner pointed out that you could almost see those 'little lines' in the photograph too, showing blurred movement.

From this short questionnaire/assessment, I devised a concise course which ran alongside and related to the Integrated Sciences and Social Studies Pilot project mentioned previously. A timetable of the course appears on the following pages. The Visual Literacy sections have been italicised for easier observation.

Table 2 : Programme for CLC - April to June 1999

	Monday		Tuesday		Wednesday		Thursday	
April	FAMILY DAY	5	Visual Literacy <i>introduction</i> <i>Where do we find pictures?</i>	6	Visual Literacy <i>Looking at pictures - western pictorial conventions</i>	7	Int. Sciences 4 elements, building blocks of matter. Microscopes.	8
			Social Studies How we look at time in history - Timelines etc.		Int. Sciences Introduction to Integrated sciences - Activity			
	Visual Literacy <i>The language of art - line, dot, tone, shading etc.</i>	12	Social Studies Revision of terminology etc. Origin of Southern African languages	13	Visual Literacy <i>The language of art continued: San images etc.</i>	14	Int. Sciences Science in everyday life cont. Bacteria, Fungi (19-24)	15
	Social Studies Archaeology - the San, the Khoi-Khoi, Iron Age farmers (pgs 8-15)		Stone Age → Iron Age The Khoisan people (1-7)		Int. Sciences Science in everyday life.			
	Visual Literacy <i>How image and text work together</i>	19	Social Studies Organisation of early farming peoples. How do we know about this?	20	Visual Literacy <i>Looking at layout: texts, magazines, newspapers</i>	21	Int. Sciences Introduction to energy	22
	Social Studies The importance of Cattle in early societies				Int. Sciences Helpful and harmful bacteria and fungi - making leather, yogurt, maas etc. (25 - 32)			
	Visual Literacy <i>Conventional signs and symbols</i>	26	Social Studies Early explorers, maps	27	FREEDOM DAY	28	LONG WEEKEND	29
	Social Studies Introduction to geography - The Solar System							

May	Visual Literacy <i>plans, maps</i> Social Studies maps, globes	3	Social Studies Northern and southern hemispheres - mapwork	4	Visual Literacy <i>cropping</i> Int. Sciences Energy continued - kinetic and potential energy	5	Int. Sciences Different kinds of energy: solar energy and photosynthesis	6
	Visual Literacy <i>Comic format and speech and thought bubbles</i> Social Studies pictures and plans, direction and maps	10	Social Studies Big becomes small and small becomes big - Scale.	11	Visual Literacy <i>subject recognition, stylization, figure/ground.</i> Int. Sciences Energy - How plants store food.	12	Int. Sciences How plants store food continued.	13
	Visual Literacy <i>Representation of the earth - globe - images from space etc.</i> Social Studies Direction	17	Social Studies drawing a route map. Lines of latitude and longitude	18	Visual Literacy <i>drawing activity and revision of previous problematic areas x-ray views</i> Int. Sciences How people use fuel	19	Int. Sciences Fossil fuels	20
	Visual Literacy <i>Western pictorial conventions - denotative and connotative meaning</i> Social Studies Long ago in South Africa	24	Social Studies Late Iron Age in South Africa - mining	25	Visual Literacy <i>Looking at pictures - perspective</i> Int. Sciences Alternative/renewable resources	26	Int. Sciences Alternative sources of fuel - make a windmill activity	27

June	Visual Literacy <i>Looking at pictures, inference from observation</i> Social Studies Geographical influences on settlement	1	Social Studies Development of villages	2	Visual Literacy <i>Looking at pictures, literal interpretation of style and content</i> Int. Sciences Light and life	3	Int. Sciences Light and life continued - Fire and people	4
	Visual Literacy <i>Visual literacy conventions e.g. angled viewpoints</i> Social Studies development of craftspeople - working with clay	8	Social Studies Iron Age States: trading, cattle-based confederations etc.	9	Visual Literacy <i>Looking at pictures: descriptions of objects or scenes</i> Int. Sciences Use of light, lamps, development of electricity	10	Int. Sciences Light and colour - activity - colour wheel	11
	Visual Literacy <i>Looking at pictures : advertisements</i> Social Studies Earth Science - The Universe - Big Bang Theory	15	YOUTH DAY	16	Visual Literacy <i>Colour and sensory perception</i> Int. Sciences Colour continued	17	Int. Sciences Living things - what does it mean to be alive?	18
	Visual Literacy <i>Advertisements continued from 21/4</i> Social Studies The Earth	22	Social Studies Shifting continents	23	Visual Literacy <i>Drawings</i> Int. Sciences Living things - energy	24	Int. Sciences Living things - Cells	25
	Visual Literacy <i>Evaluation</i> Social Studies Sound waves, earthquake waves	29	Social Studies Rocks	30	Visual Literacy <i>Drawings</i> Int. Sciences Living things - movement	1 Jul	Int. Sciences Living things - growth	2 Jul

To illustrate the integration and relationships maintained between the Visual Literacy course and the pilot project, many activities utilising images were used, for example, this one when introducing integrated sciences to the learners:

Activity

To understand what the media and society think science is.

You will need:

- ✂ newspapers and magazines
- ✂ scissors
- ✂ large sheet of blank paper
- ✂ glue

What to do

1 Get together with the people in your group and write down ten words which come into your mind when you think of science

2 Choose about 7 of these and write them here:

3 Now write these 7 words in the middle of your group's big page.

4 Look through the magazines and newspapers and cut out the articles, pictures or cartoons which you feel are related in some way to science.

5 When you have all your pictures and things, try to put them into specific groups, using the words you wrote on the newsprint as headings, and stick them in place.

6 When you have finished your poster, talk about it with your group and then think about these questions and write:

a) How is science related to our everyday lives?

b) Do the examples on the poster make me interested in science or not?

This was an idealised version of the programme. In effect, probably only half the pilot course took place, because of absenteeism, the pace of learning, and the problems with funding and eventual closure of the Centre at the end of June 1999.

The final questionnaire

The final questionnaire incorporated most of the subjects covered in the Visual Literacy course, although each learner did not attend all the sessions. Sixteen questionnaires were partially filled in, eleven completed. The full questionnaire is reproduced in Appendix C.

The first page, questions 1,2, and 3, was just testing general knowledge, things mentioned in passing, that I wondered if they had remembered. The learners had been instructed to just leave something out if they really didn't know anything about it, but generally they attempted all the questions put to them.

Question 1, about the Statue of Liberty, was attempted by ten participants, four of whom knew *what* it was, three *where* it was, in New York, and two knew something further about it that they could write. One of the male respondents who watches television every day, according to his profile, wrote that it was shown often at "the beginning of films". The oldest man told me that "all the time people like to see it". One woman realised that it was in America, but confused it with the White House, and another thought that it was a statue of God, saying that "God died to serve the lives of the people". It obviously looks really important to that learner, and I expect she used her powers of logic to arrive at the idea that it is probably a portrayal of the most important being, God. The Statue of Liberty is a symbol my small sons are already familiar with, as

white computer-literate, television-watching, book-rich children, who have been “escorted across the globe even before they have permission to cross the street” (Meyrowitz, 1985 : 238). I was surprised how few learners recognised this picture, having thought of it as a fairly universal image, especially given America’s place within our own TV culture. One of the participants asked if it was in Grahamstown, and when I answered in the negative, gave a big grin and said, “Oh well, that’s why I don’t know it!”, quite happy in the knowledge that her worldview was encompassed by the boundaries of Grahamstown.

The question is whether that learner’s quality of life will be better off knowing about the Statue of Liberty. I told them all about the Statue, how it had been a gift from France, how it had been transported in pieces, then assembled on Ellis Island, etc. etc., thoroughly enjoying myself and my knowledge, thinking it a good story too, a symbol of hope to so many immigrants, such a huge part of my background in literature and film. They all listened dutifully and looked at the pictures and grunted approvingly, but a few months later, when I showed them a little cartoon about the statue of Liberty with hair under her arm, no one remembered who ‘she’ was! There can be many reasons for this, of course, but I think the major one is that it was not culturally significant for them. Of course, an image doesn’t have to be part of Grahamstown, but it has to fit into their worldview, their frame of reference, and if it doesn’t, it is simply forgotten.

I pondered this in my journal around that time, and finally decided to explain the whole concept of ‘frame of reference’ to the participants in a pictorial way (see Figure 3). The frame as I described it and demonstrated, was not wooden but a kind of elastic rubber, which I explained they could push against, change the shape of and expand at will, using the basic processes of literacy set out by Firestone (1993), quoted by Renee Hobbs

(1996): "Access, Analyze, Evaluate and Communicate". Access here means "the ability to access messages ... which include decoding symbols and building broad vocabularies" (Hobbs, 1996, in Flood, Heath and Lapp, 1997 : 4). The ability to analyze messages connects to interpretive comprehension skills, while evaluating messages concerns

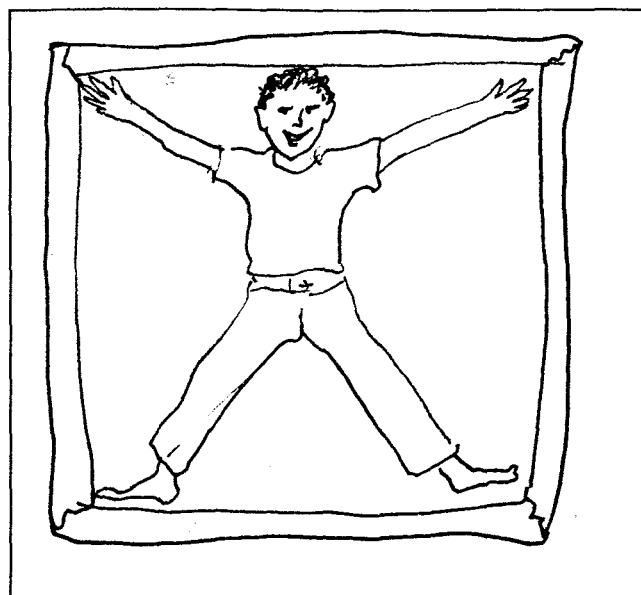


Figure 3: Illustration used for "frame of reference"

"judgements about the relevance and

value of the meaning of messages" (Hobbs, 1996 in Flood, Heath and Lapp, 1997 : 4).

These four processes compare with Peter Freebody's (1993) four interrelated dimensions of language use: code breaker; text participant; text user and text analyst, which incorporates the idea of 'text' as more than just written words. The learners were taught to think about these concepts in a simpler way, through an interpreter, and then we all stood up and visualized our frames of reference and pushed against them a little, stood inside each other's with much delight, and thought of some of the things we had inside our frames of reference which no one else had. This image was what came through strongly in their minds, as in many lessons afterwards learners joked about pushing their 'frames of reference' wider. In this way I was helping them to "use contextual clues to help them [second language learners] decipher meaning and to match new input with appropriate meaning in terms of their own experience" (Diller in Nagle, 1986 : 22). I spoke about the Statue of Liberty again after I had thought about it some more, and this time emphasized the American and French notion of liberty, comparing it to the struggle for liberation in South Africa. Having found a comparative South African concept for them to relate the statue to, I hope that it meant more to the learners and that we all

learned some kind of intercultural understanding. I think that any of them would be able to explain something about it, were they asked about it now.

Only six people out of sixteen realised that Number 2 was a book cover. I think the size of the image had something to do with that, and the fact that the learners are not really exposed to books as such. They read occasionally, but it is usually magazines, newspapers and the like. Hiroshima is obviously not part of their general knowledge. Only the wise eldest man knew that it was “a bomb that bombed at, by America”.

The bat in number 3 was correctly identified by nine of the participants, and then identified again as a bird by seven! Only three learners knew that a bat was covered with fur and many stated that it had slimy skin or bare skin, obviously to do with peoples' general revulsion for bats.

The next two questions, 4 and 5, had to do with cross-sections and textbook layout and involved personal evaluation by the participants. Question 4, responded to by thirteen people, was identified by most of the learners as a “cross-section”, with two participants naming the man on top as the “operator”. In 4 b), six people named the “layers of soil”, while three people thought that they were “waves”, possibly because of other examples seen, like the one below:

4c) was identified as either a hole or a mine by all respondents.

Number 5 was answered by thirteen participants. In 5a), eight liked the picture, many citing the fact that it portrayed rural African culture: "it showed the Xhosa culture"; "shows culture before the 90's" "show where the African came from". One enthusiastic Visual Literacy learner said that she loved it because she "loves pictures". In 5b), only six knew that it was an illustration for the 'Cattle-based confederations', which was quite a surprise. In 5c), five respondents thought there was too much writing on the pages they were required to read, while six replied in the negative. Perhaps this is because of the three previous pages, which are mainly illustration-based. The biggest surprise was in 5c), where six respondents said that they could not understand the pictures. Five people thought there were too few illustrations, two thought there were enough and none thought there were too many. This seems to imply that learners like pictures in their textbooks. The fact that only six knew what the illustration of the young herdboys with the cattle was for, is indicative of the lack of interpretive abilities due to a general deficit of visual literacy skills.

Although the participants in the study were able to analyse individual pictures fairly successfully towards the end of the course, there was still such a lot of practice to be done, further sessions to be enjoyed. The issue of text and visuals 'working together' (Laspina, 1998 : 40) is one which needs to be addressed by illustrators and publishers. Far too often we choose the images we think will work, maintaining the "neo-colonial attitude of 'We know what is best for *them*.'" ... All too often, the language of the powerless is appropriated for use by the powerful" (Linney, 1995 : 29). One of the

changes to my mindset brought about during this study was influenced by Linney (1995) and my experiences with the adult learners, that we (white educators) possess a certain arrogance in deciding what to 'teach', what needs to be learnt by adults. Millions is being spent on people doing just that in Pretoria, deciding on learning outcomes and unit standards and all these words of the new terminology, but very seldom are the learners themselves consulted, and hardly ever are they a part of the design, content and messages of ABET courses. I fell into the same trap with the pilot study, although the visual literacy course did become slightly more of an organic process, growing according to the interests and desires of the learners.

Questions 6 and 7 were to do with common western signs and symbols, plans, maps and x-ray images. We had done a lot of work on maps and plans, in the course and in the pilot project, Social Studies, so I expected the learners to identify most of these things correctly, which to my delight, they did. In number 6, the average number of correct identifications on each questionnaire was 5/9, with the last line being the one least attempted. There were some lovely interpretations, and I was always pleasantly surprised by how hard people tried to explain and interpret all these strange images and symbols. Some of these were "hurt" for heart, which could be a misspelling, but then again could indicate the kind of hurt you get from a 'broken heart', a powerful symbol. One learner saw the cross as that on an ambulance, and even though it was not coloured red, it was indeed the type of cross you see on an ambulance, perhaps the symbol signifying traumatic personal experience in this instance. The cross is a universal ancient symbol, as mentioned before.

The star was seen by one learner as the police sign, no doubt the symbol for 'sheriff'. Many people saw the treble clef as a sign for 'music' and 'song'. The pound sign was interpreted as the dollar sign by most learners - they knew it was a symbol of money, just got the currency wrong, probably because they don't have much cause to know the different currencies.

Question 7 required five conventions be identified. All but three of the sixteen learners knew the house plan (7a), and 7 identified Saturn (7b) correctly. Only four thought it was Earth, and three believed it was Jupiter, which is the only other planet with rings, which was a worthy deduction. Everyone identified the map, and six identified it correctly as a map of South Africa. The x-ray image (7d) was identified correctly by all but one as 'lungs', and as "the inside of a human body". Thirteen people identified the 'globe' and three observant learners mentioned "with direction". One learner called it a "ground map of the world", an appealing interpretation of a 'round map of the world', as we had studied 'round' globes and 'flat maps of the round world'. It also brings to mind a map on the ground, or a grounded representation of the earth which is really spinning in space.

Dondis (1973) and Hewings, (1991, in Basel, 1995 : 58) agree that visual perception is not culture-universal. Graphic representations such as maps, plans, charts etc. are often confusing to learners who do not have the techniques for reading them. I would suggest that teaching Visual Literacy would go some way towards solving this problem. Sharon Fogg (1997) agrees with the belief that learners are not taught enough how to interpret visual images. Especially with regard to advertising, the result of not being able to interpret and analyse visual images leads to manipulation of learners. Education should

“show learners how to look beyond the surface to understand deeper levels of meaning and tactics employed to sway their thinking” (Fogg, 1997 : Nelms/discussion/Reading_RecommendedArticles/TEACHINGVISUALLITERACY). These questions were based on items which had received a lot of attention both in the Visual Literacy course and the pilot project, which had meant a lot of repetition, attesting to the capacity of reiteration as a learning tool. The adults in this study have developed their multiple literacy skills over many years, and it is recognised that repetition is an integral part of literacy learning: “these repeated reading procedures can occur many times a day for as many days, months, or years as is deemed necessary to develop a confident, independent reader” (Gaskins, in Flood, Brice Heath and Lapp, 1997 : 679).

Question 8 has to do with cropping. Sometimes learners are confused because the entire person or animal or thing is not put in the picture. This is a visual convention, done for a variety of reasons, sometimes to emphasize certain aspects of the image, sometimes to fit the image on the page, etc. 8a is taken from a health pamphlet on gastro-enteritis in babies, and 8b is from an ESL textbook, where the boy is a character who ‘guides’ the reader around the book. All the learners identified the first picture correctly, except for one woman who said that it was a picture of “a child called Moses”! The image must have reminded her of the biblical story somehow. In 8b) there were some unintentionally funny explanations as to the whereabouts of this boy’s arms and legs: “he’s got no arms, he is no legs”, “second picture is a man have no legs and arm but carry the book”, “the legs are walking down the street”, this last conjuring up an extraordinary image in my mind of legs striding along independently of their body! Many learners mentioned that the photographer had cut off the missing pieces, which came directly from our study of

cropping where we had looked mainly at photographs and had done some cutting of our own magazine pictures to see how it was done. Six learners gave reasonable explanations, such as that the artist didn't draw them because of lack of space, "I can't see the legs", and "not shown by artist". It seems as though there were still some learners who didn't understand this convention, who needed a more literal portrayal of a person, with all their limbs attached. When asked in question 9, to write something interesting about the pictures, most of the learners opted for pure description. One said that the drawings were interesting because they were "realistic", a sophisticated word to use. One man thought the the boy was showing that it was important "to learn a brighter future", which was probably much of the intention of the designer of this image. I think that with more exposure to such images, the learners would soon manage the idea of cropping, which is often an aesthetic one.

Numbers 10 and 11 are both comic-format and speech-bubble examples. I wanted to look at two different examples, the drawn cartoonish one being very full and to my mind confusing, the other photographic, less busy and generally clearer. The text in both is in the learner's mother tongue, so that difficulties with text would not occur, the learners looking specifically at the visual text and trying to glean meaning from that.

Almost all the learners forgot what a speech-bubble was called. Only two of them got it right. All except three knew what the pictures were meant to show and how many there were, but they struggled to number them correctly, only two out of sixteen getting the progression right. This has to do with sequencing abilities, which develop with practice, and is more the fault of the advertisement designer than the viewers in this case. Even

though the pictures were numbered in the actual advertisement, the layout is so disjointed that I had trouble following the plot myself. It is interesting to note that all the learners except one chose number 11 as being clearer than number 10, and various reasons to do with clarity were given, such as “fewer pictures”, “because page 7 is cartoon and 8 is clear they are really human” (meaning photographic images). As Dondis states: “The photograph is the most technically dependable means of representing visual reality” (Dondis, 1973 : 69). Research seems to show that learners tend to prefer photographic representation in illustration (Potgieter, 1987 : 8; Basel, 1995 : 52; Fogg, 1997 : Reading_RecommendedArticles/TEACHINGVISUALLITERACY), although some researchers claim that simple line drawings are more effective as L2 teaching aids than complex, detailed photographs or drawings (Hirst, 1990; Maley, 1990).

For both sequences the participants said that the two people were the same because they were wearing the same clothes and had the same hair. The learners pored over this exercise, trying so hard with the sequencing, and becoming quite confused in the process. This just shows how wrong some advertisers can be. Although the drawings were numbered in the original, I propose that the way in which they are set out would cause difficulties in interpretation for adult readers at the level of my participants.

Number 12 involved looking at the same objects from different perspectives, in this case a zebra, a strong South African symbol. Twelve people answered this section. Eleven named it as a zebra and one as a leopard, but I am sure that was just a mistake with the second language. Most people knew that zebras are found in “Africa”, “South Africa”, “in a reserve”, “Above Pretoria”. Many respondents said “in the forest”, and when I asked

them about this word it came to light that 'forest' was their idea of the English word for 'bush', or 'bushveld'. There were some interesting answers to 12c), the image of the zebra and a lightning bolt which could have shown power, fast movement, and a number of other interpretations, no doubt, and it was very gratifying to note that everyone attempted most of the questions. There were not many occasions where the question was just left out. One learner thought it was a "donkey but different in colour". Another thought that it was influenced by the camera which crops things, "cuts things off", while one innovative interpretation was that it was a "young zebra which is growing", a perfectly feasible idea. Eleven learners out of the twelve respondents knew that 12d) was from a children's book. During the course we had looked at stylization, noting the difference between pictures for children's books and visuals for adult books. In 12e) most people identified the figure and ground quite easily, although only five knew that the 'stripes' were emphasized. One said "ears is emphasized" and when I studied the picture I saw that it can be seen like that.

Number 13 looks at picture angle. This was not a popular question, with answers ranging from "below man", to "fence". It is a strange perspective, as the fencepost that goes past the side of the child's head seems not to fit there. One expects the child to be behind it rather than in front of it. The learners also found it a bit confusing, and I struggled to explain it, not having seen that disparity before I put it in the questionnaire. There were not many answers to the question, "Why did the photographer choose this angle?" and I think that this has a lot to do with experience. It is quite difficult to know how to look at something from a different perspective if you haven't ever taken a photograph yourself. I would have liked to do that with them - take them out and let everyone take five photographs. It was planned but never came to fruition due to the

closure of the Centre. Photographs were the preferred illustrative device by most of the learners when asked individually. Perhaps the learners found photographic images easier to understand because they are supposedly a realistic representation of the world around us, whereas a drawing can require more interpretation by the viewer. John Berger describes how a drawing differs from a photograph:

A drawing is a translation. That is to say each mark on the paper is consciously related, not only to the real or imagined "model", but also to every mark and space already set out on the paper. Thus a drawn or painted image is woven together by the energy of countless judgements. ... In a drawing an apple is *made* round and spherical; in a photograph, the roundness and the light and shade of the apple are received as a given.

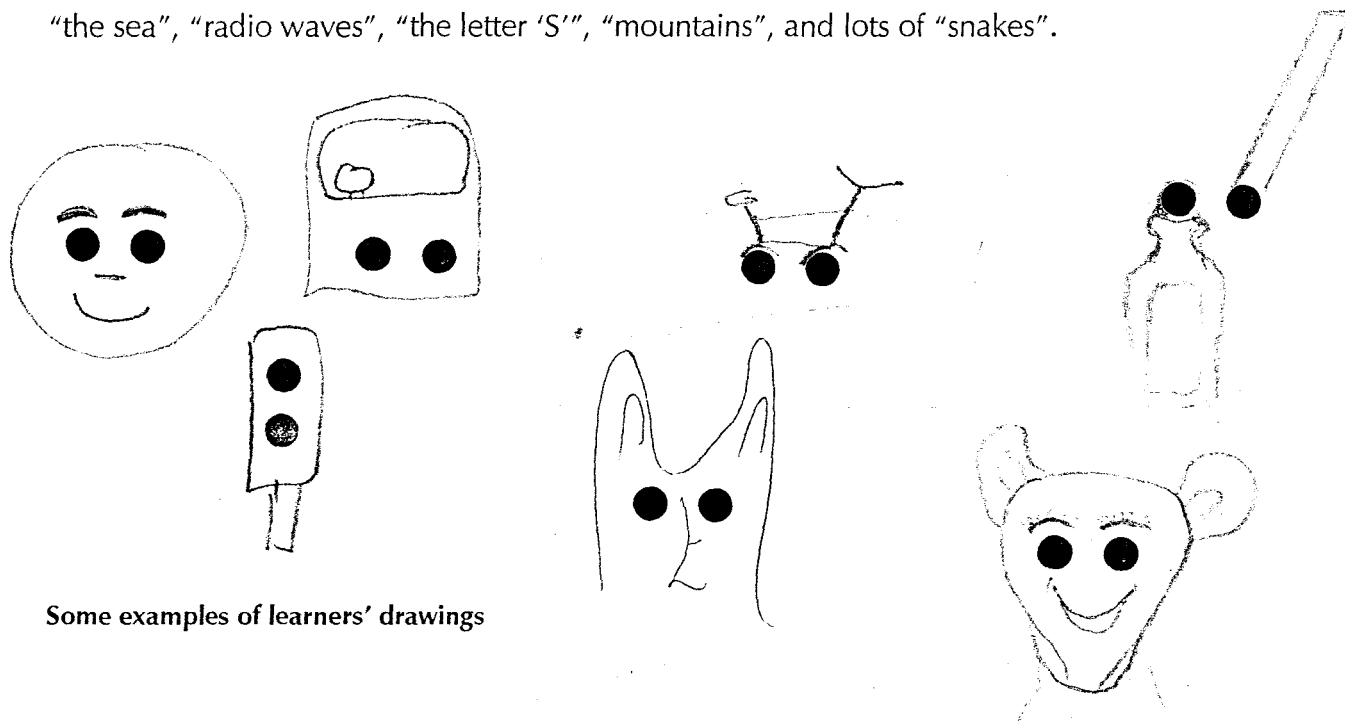
(Berger, 1982 : 95)

Five people thought the girl in number 14 was a giant. I'm not sure if they really believe that there are giants or if they thought that it might be an illustration for a book. Seven people chose (c), the correct one. We had done quite a lot of work on foreground and background and things looking smaller the further away they were, so this was a bit of an unfair trick picture, and it caught some of them out, or else they were 'taking the mickey'. It also proves the point that photographs are not unproblematic nor unfiltered reflections of the real world, something the learners struggled with, mostly taking pictures at face value, without knowledge of the technology behind contemporary photography which makes almost any photographic permutation possible.

Question 15, an exercise to encourage learners to look at something from a creative, different perspective was full of inventive drawings. 15 a) became: a traffic light, faces (most people drew faces, human and animal), a TV, a bicycle, flowers, cars, a bottle top, the end of a matchstick, a teddy bear, pencils and pens, a stove, and a triangle (adding a

dot). Two people just joined up all the dots with lines, perhaps from those childrens' exercises where you join the dots and it becomes a picture of something - a cat, a rose, and elephant. Most of the adult learners who had become literate at the Centre had experience of these exercises, as they are used with adult learners to teach basic letters.

15 b) brought out a lot of cord-like images in the learners' minds - "cotton", "string", "rope", "hair" and "wire". Others were "zulu huts", "a road", "a footpath", "a scale", "the sea", "radio waves", "the letter 'S'", "mountains", and lots of "snakes".



Some examples of learners' drawings

Question 16 was the image of the Indian woman walking in monsoon rain with a bucket of washing or vegetables on her head. It was identified as a woman coming from the river with water by four people out of eight. They obviously related to the image, many saying that it was an African picture, and that the river was far away. One learner wrote "This woman come from the garden. She come to fetch fruit and vegetables. When she arrived from the garden it was so dark so she was afraid" perhaps also recounting personal experience. Note the incorrect present tense "come" of the first two sentences, but the perfect tense formation of the last sentence. Lieskounig (1989 : 2, in Basel, 1995 : 58) is scathing regarding the merits of using pictures to hasten second language

acquisition. He suggests that while most textbooks have much pictorial material, very few offer “any explanation of the pedagogical and didactic aims or reasons for using visual material in L2 teaching” (Basel, 1995 : 58). I think that an image must lend itself to visual analysis in order to act as a language teaching aid. During the course there were many instances where learners struggled to produce intelligible English, but the very fact of striving is a huge plus for communication, and so too for development of competence in their second language. Most people enjoy looking at pictures, and therefore the course was something new and stimulating. The Visual Literacy course was accompanied by the pilot course in two learning areas with which the learners were unfamiliar, but which covered areas of exceeding interest to a few of them. On many occasions there was no interpreter so the learners had to make themselves understood by me, the English speaker. All these worked together to elicit improvement in learners’ second language communication.

Number 17 was added just to see how many icons of the 20th century (and a few from other centuries) were recognisable to the learners, and why certain of them were. Twelve people responded to this question, and all twelve knew Jesus Christ (a), in his typical long-haired bearded white male carrying-the-cross stance. Everyone knew Nelson Mandela (g) and Bishop Tutu (p), and surprisingly a few of the older members knew Ghandi (e). Helen Suzman (m) would be amused to hear that three learners thought she was Queen Elizabeth, while the bald-pated Picasso (d) transformed into F W de Klerk for five of the learners. The old man, Nati, with his great interest in Science, recognised Einstein (k), “Ainstain”. Nati was a quiet shy man, and I never discovered much about him, except for his prodigious thirst for scientific knowledge. I’m sure he uses science

without knowing it. Karl Marx (h) would turn in his grave to know that he was identified as Eugene Terblanche by some learners! I had expected the identifications of famous South Africans and Jesus, but quite a few people correctly identified Mother Theresa (i), saying that it was because she had died and they had seen a lot of footage of her on television. Although they have seen the Statue of Liberty on television fairly frequently, they had nothing to 'hang it on' within their schemata, the "elaborate networks of concepts, skills, and procedures that are used to make sense of new stimuli, events, and situations" (Neisser, 1976, in Vacca, Vacca & Bruneau, in Flood, Brice Heath and Lapp, 1997 : 447) , as they did with Mother Theresa, a fascinating person because of her selflessness and her image, a little wizened old white woman helping the sick, orphaned and dying of Calcutta.

Spike Lee (b) was identified by two learners as Lucky Dube. Karl Marx (h) by one person as Moses (western pictorial conventions of portraying biblical characters as bearded old white men coming into play again). Joan of Arc (f) was identified by only one respondent as an "ancient soldier", obviously someone who has seen pictures of antiquated armour before. Two older members of the group correctly identified Fidel Castro (r). Nati also identified "Chuchil" (j), the only learner to do so. Martin Luther King (n) was identified as Patrick Lekota by one participant and as Jacob Zuma by two others. No one identified Bill Gates (c); William Shakespeare (l); John Lennon (o) or Beethoven (q), obviously completely outside of their experience, although such icons of mine.

The image in the next question, number 18, was identified by nearly all the learners as "a map", or "the world". To the question "How do you know?", they answered variously:

“This is a world. It is round and has map”, “It is half the map of the world”, “I see some continents”, “There is land and mountains and sea all around”. I put this one in arbitrarily, it seems, just because of its size and cropping, but it fooled no one. It seemed as though maps and globes had been thoroughly assimilated. This is quite a skill to acquire, and once attained it appeared as though the learners could easily relate their knowledge to different map forms and representations, which they struggled to do in other instances.

The next three images are all evocative ones, one black and white misty roadscape, number 19; one cool blue, peaceful, lifegiving water, number 20; and the other, number 21, a warm orange flower scene. Learners were required to describe the image, to say how the colours made them feel, to take note of figure and ground, etc. A poetic description of number 19 was written by one woman: “It is winter time at night and the wind blew and makes me feel cold because the trees have no leaves”. As though the trees are cold because of their lack of leaves and this makes the viewer cold too. A male learner wrote: “The atmospher at that day of this picture was bad. The season it was winter. It makes me feel unhappy because I can’t drive in the weather like this. The wind blow much strong. It accompany by rain and the fog”. This learner has climbed right into the picture and imagined what it would be like on this road at night, when you can’t see very far and the weather is cold and unpleasant. A woman in her 20’s wrote, “It is winter time late about 5pm. It seem as if the rain can fall, and it is too cold. Its on the road away from houses there is only a tree near the road. Its almost dark you can see the white line just a bit on the road.” Saying that the weather is “too cold” or “too hot”, is a common error of Xhosa speakers of English, and has become part of the interlanguage of

most learners, one of those sayings which don't ever seem to leave the language, even when the learner becomes proficient. I was very impressed with these descriptions, as they showed a real understanding of the image, not only what it looked like but how it would feel to be in such a scene. They made use of descriptive, appropriate and yet fairly sophisticated language e.g. "atmosphere". The learners could all read the picture literally and figuratively, which relates to Dondis's 3 levels of visual information mentioned in chapter 2: physical, perceptual and conceptual.

The image of blue water is a favourite one of mine, but strangely did not stir so much descriptive language within the learners as the previous image had, I presume because I did not give them so many cues. Water's life-giving rejuvenating qualities are perceived by almost everyone - witness the annual pilgrimage from inland cities to the coast by holiday-makers. Blue is a cool colour, symbolic of "peace and contemplation, representing water and coolness, symbolizing the sky and infinity" (Fontana, 1994 : 66). I had taught the learners the colour wheel, as part of the language of art, so they knew about cool colours and warm colours, and this was mentioned by a couple of respondents: "They make me feel cool and happy. They are the pictures of water"; "It make me feel to be happy because I love to play in the water. I look so nice the blue picture of the water" (this man put "I" for "It" more often than not, perhaps just carelessness?); "Cool, because it is fresh water that you can wash your body".

The warm picture came next, and was described by most as a "sunflower". It made them feel "happy" or "joyful", words I had provided. No one came up with an alternative descriptive word for their feelings, and most of them didn't understand (b), where they

had to describe the physical sensation (which was translated into Xhosa) they would feel if they touched the flower. One learner, Nomboniso, said it would “smell nice” which I thought was wonderful. I hadn’t even thought about scent, only the tactile sense of feeling the petals. When I compared Nomboniso’s earlier responses, it was clear that she developed skills along the way. At the beginning of the course she struggled to describe the pictures, getting stuck on one idea, like the person in the picture, and ignoring the background. Towards the end it appeared that she was observing much more carefully. She was a particularly dedicated learner, a single mother with a nine-year-old daughter, who strode in punctually each day, and then walked fearlessly home to her shack through the dark night.

The next page had to do with identifying images we had spoken about briefly. The majority identified the volcano correctly, even though it is from a stylized Japanese print. Only about half the respondents realised that an earthquake had happened in number 30. The others saw it purely as a road accident: “There is a road and streets that across the bridge, in the second road there is the accident”; “It is a big mount and you see big trucks and road is narrow”. Others saw an “Earthquake”; “collision of cars/earthquake”; “the bridge is broken because of earthquake”. This is also to do with personal experience, ignoring the sight of the broken bridge but focusing on the pile-up, which is a common occurrence in South Africa. The computer card was seen as a “machine”, a “radio station” and left out by everyone else! They had obviously never seen such a thing before.

The photograph of the man with all his eager chickens came next. 25 (a) asked why the

chickens were blurred, and although learners had talked about this before, they found it difficult to recognise the movement conventions of photography. Most said that it was because they wanted some food, which probably presumes movement. To the second question, "What does the blurring show us about the chickens?", one woman answered, "How they communicate each other or to us. It show us when are alive", a good interpretation - when you are alive you move, and the learner has correctly observed that chickens communicate with one another and with their owners. All the respondents ringed the correct answer of the camera-angle. I think that this was due to the different way in which the question was asked from number 13. Nothing was mentioned of angle, just where the photographer was standing. Most people chose (d) iii) "in a book on chicken farming", when asked where they would find this picture. In fact any of the possible answers would be correct here, although it did actually come from a newspaper article on reconstruction and development. Most learners didn't like the picture, didn't think it was a good photograph because "I don't see clear it is chickens"; a vehement dislike: "No! because the chicken are not look like a chicken it looks like a shadow of a chickens"; "No, the chicken are not shown clearly". It can be noted that most learners have consistent trouble with tenses and agreement. It is however, unlike the chicken image appeared to them, perfectly clear what they are trying to say, and although I don't advocate the indiscriminate acceptance of 'communicative English' at the expense of correct language usage, I had no trouble understanding them and found their sentences quite eloquent at times.

Most of the learners enjoyed drawing the woman in the description, and having a small plan helped them develop the image. It was heartening to note that most of them filled

the page with their drawings, after the tiny little apple drawings they had started with at the beginning of the course. There was much giggling when they saw the actual picture which had been described to them. Some of the drawings are reproduced in Appendix D.

Number 27 comes from an advertisement appealing to a worldly intellectual, and while the learners all knew the “cellula”, the chess pieces were unknown to all but one learner, being described as, for example, a “brown stand” and a “black stand”. The woman in the picture in Question 28 is from Namibia, notable for her headdress. A couple of learners knew she came from the “North”, some thought from Zimbabwe, and all mentioned her colourful clothing, the “yellow hat”, “red necklys in she neck and black ring in her finger”, “She has a green dress over blue with zig-zag in the neck in the dress and a jersy brown one”. This last sentence sounds as though she was thinking as she wrote, with no thought for structure, just getting down the description as she saw it.

The Gaudi cathedral in Barcelona of number 29 was described as a “tall four building”, a “big church”, “stone building”, and “the cartherdrall in Grahamstown”. This is a common thread which runs through learner’s descriptions of objects. They constantly relate what they see to what they know and sometimes confuse the two, as in this case and in the case of the Statue of Liberty, seen as the Angel statue at the bottom end of High Street in Grahamstown, the only such statue with which the learners are familiar. Again, most of the learners understood the camera angle because the terminology was not mentioned. They all noted that the photographer stood at the bottom of the building. Only one person said that the building was “overseas”, recognising it as foreign to our

usual architectural styles.

The last two questions focused on advertisements, which we had looked at with regard to their persuasiveness, the slickness of the style and colour, their cleverness (or not) and their sometime misappropriation of images. This was a difficult question for the learners and most focused on describing the image as they had had to do with previous pictures, e.g. "This picture is a China baby held by white hand and black hand the baby is a boy. The girl not put clothes on top and black girl not put clothes on top and all people put the blue and green blanket". Perhaps the way in which this advert was devised was too sophisticated for the level of English comprehension displayed by the learners. The advert very cleverly uses colour and links between verbal and visual text - The *United* colours of Benetton.

The Statue of Liberty was re-visited, to see whether the humour was culturally related or not. Only one person saw the hair under the arm as a possible source of humour. One woman wrote: "This statue is not right, it is not finished drawing. The face is funny because not eyes." The learners had never heard of shaving under your arms, so of course it would not occur to them that a hairy armpit would be amusing to some western viewers. Humour is definitely culturally and area-related, witness the 'Castrol Can of the Best' adverts, used in an exercise on advertising analysis by Keith James, HOD of English at Kingswood College in Grahamstown, a school which has a wide diversity of cultures and nationalities. He was astonished that students from Johannesburg could not really relate to the narrative, while the Eastern Cape children were 'rolling in the aisles' with laughter.

Number 32 was a heavily cropped image of an elephant's eye, and was identified as such correctly by everyone. I then asked some questions around the infamous "elephants hatching" advert of a few years ago, and proved what a confusing advert it actually is, as no one knew what the page was actually advertising, it is too busy, has too many words and images mixed up together. Five of the respondents thought that elephants really did hatch out of eggs. Most of them knew that you found these elephants in Africa. Even though my learners were probably not the target market of this particular magazine version of the advertisement, there was also a television rendering of the advertisement seen by millions of viewers, which confused many with its portrayal of elephants hatching out of eggs.

Looking at the data, the fact that the learners liked the storytelling aspect of photographic realism the best, leads me to believe that many of my learners are still at Housen's Level 1, referred to in Chapter 2, but that by the end of the course a few had progressed to Level 2 and some slightly beyond that.

I had developed final evaluation forms but only five learners were present at the end of the course. An example of the evaluation form can be seen in Appendix E. The learners who did fill in the forms seemed to believe they had gained from the course. Under a list of *New knowledge* learned in class, one learner wrote: "Write letters in English, understanding to read even the newspaper, even local news and world all over. I can see headings and read newspapers or magazines and its good for my English". Talking about *New attitudes*, Agnes wrote: "Respect other people. I like my books (textbooks they were given for the pilot project) and I like the people when they are talking or my

teacher". When asked how coming to the centre had changed them as people, in the eyes of their families, Gladys wrote: "My family are very interested they say I must go forward they encourage me too much". And asked if they had any advice for the tutors, Gladys touchingly wrote: "I will say to them they must go forward they will get problems sometimes because we are old they will tell us this today, tomorrow we forgot and other problems sometimes. They must keep us please". Which made it even more heartbreaking to have to close down the centre. Generally the learners were very responsive and willing to engage with all they were exposed to. There was a big problem with attendance near the end, when they heard about the closure. It was as though they just gave up instantly.

Tutor/observer's responses

Although the tutor/observer had left by the end of the course and so was unable to fill in the tutor's evaluation form (Appendix F), both the other tutors, who had kindly acted as interpreters and observers at various stages when I needed them, and who had also given watered-down versions of some of the exercises from the Visual Literacy course and the Pilot Project courses to their Level 1 groups, completed their tutor's questionnaires. The tutor/observer, in a conversation early on in the course, said that she thought the major problem the learners experienced with such materials was one of language competence. My journal entries bear testament to this concern. All the materials in ABET Levels Two and Three are written in English by predominantly white middle-class women (French, 1990, in Hutton, 1992 : 23), and here was I, exactly fitting the mold, and teaching the learners to boot. I came to admire the tenacity of my participants, and of adult learners in general, for waging what is a battle against their age, their situations, sometimes their

families, and mostly against their own brains which have learnt things in various ways and want to stick with them. With all my education I have still not managed to learn isiXhosa, and understand the confusion of reading and writing in a strange language.

Answering number 7, as to the main things adult learners should be taught, Nomisa (the tutor of the Basic First class in the Centre) thought that learners should have a holistic education and be taught all the learning areas I had listed. Eric thought history was important because “one is bound to know what happened in the period between Apartheid and Democratic Regime. They also count their ages according to History events”. Both Nomisa and Eric complained about the lack of Xhosa books for adult learners: “Only history out of these four sciences did not give me problem. I needed to use the material written in mother tongue (XHOSA) instead of the one written in English. Then they slowly understood. Otherwise I guarantee your materials for other Levels, but not Level one” (Eric). Nomisa wrote: “I think when you are piloting material (books) there should be Xhosa books, because its time consuming to translate or to interpret one language to another while you teach. If teach Xhosa teach, and if you teach do English”. This last sentence is unintelligible, unfortunately. Both mentioned the importance of English as an international language, but not for neo-literates. In conversations with Eric I tried to find out if the learners actually enjoyed the sessions we had, and he warmly encouraged me to believe that they enjoyed the work. One learner only, I think, really didn’t enjoy the science, even though it was related to everyday life. She had a mental block against this subject that was “too much difficult, ma’am”. Eric also mentioned the problem with the language, but thought it good for the learners to have to deal with an English-speaker. He said that you only learn the language when you have to speak it, like

he had done when he worked for St John's Ambulance.

Reflective practice journal

Holly, in her 1989 book, *Writing to Grow: Keeping a Personal-Professional Journal*, discusses the use of logs, diaries and journals by educators "to explore and grow from experience and reflection on practice" (Holly, 1989 : 5, in Vacca, Vacca & Bruneau, in Flood, Brice Heath and Lapp, 1997 : 448). Holly describes a long-term research project with seven teachers who "learned to wonder on paper about themselves, their students, and their profession..." (Holly, 1989 : 5, in Vacca, Vacca & Bruneau, in Flood, Brice Heath and Lapp, 1997 : 448). When you begin writing a journal you find yourself peeling off layers of ideas, values and beliefs you sometimes didn't even know you had. Van Manen (1977, in Vacca, Vacca & Bruneau, in Flood, Brice Heath and Lapp, 1997 : 446)) identified three levels of reflection: technical, practical, and critical. Technical reflection allows teachers to consider the things that work in their classrooms as they attempt to solve day-to-day problems. Practical reflection includes the consideration of educational goals, methodology and alternative ways of teaching. Critical reflection examines the ethical and political issues of teaching. Again and again I mention wishing that I could speak Xhosa, that it would solve so many of our problems, most notably communication.

We use words to represent our innermost thoughts, emotions, beliefs, and what we know about the world. They represent our private thoughts and what we choose to make public. Our choice of words, how we put them together, and the intonations we use to express them create images allowing others to interpret our messages and come to know us.

(Peyton-Young, 1997, in Flood, Brice Heath and Lapp, 1997 : 847)

If we consider how words are interpreted in such different ways, even when people

speak the same language, as mentioned previously, how much more confusion can arise from people speaking from the 'data-base' of different mother tongues? As Gumperz, (1982); Malinowski, (1923); and Sapir, (1949) maintain, from a discourse or anthropological perspective, linguistic structures, as they are used in communicative situations, are inlaid in the whole social and historical context of culture (Kramsch and Andersen, 1999 : <http://polyglot.cal.msu.edu/llt/vol2num2/article1/index.htm>) and this complicates matters further.

In my journal I wrote about the practical things: many love/hate feelings about the Centre, the fact that almost every day I hated actually going there, away from my family yet again (I was holding down two jobs at that stage), hating being let down by the tutor/observer, loved/hated the rain and cold, which kept the learners away, but when I got to know each individual's quirks and idiosyncrasies, their distinctive personality traits, world views and preoccupations of the moment, and their sometimes unintelligible stories or explanations related to my wondering ears, how I grew to love and appreciate them. I wrote about how each learner comprehends images differently because each one brings unique contributions to the 'reading' of the 'text'. I wrote about the fact that not one of the learners was ever punctual. Having always thought of myself as unpunctual, the learners took unpunctuality to new heights!

The high dropout rate at adult literacy centres, not least in our case largely a consequence of the imminent closure of the Centre, needs to be observed more closely, needs to be addressed in a positive way. As Peirce (1995) points out, the notion of motivation needs to be problematized, as it inadequately captures the "complex relationship between

power, identity, and language learning" (Peirce, 1995 : 17; in McKay and Wong, 1996 : harvard96/1996/fa96/f96mckay.htm). She proposes the concept of investment instead of motivation, which conceives the language learner as having a complex social identity and multiple desires. This suggests that when language learners speak, they are not only exchanging information with target language speakers, but they are constantly organizing and reorganizing a sense of who they are and how they relate to the social world. Thus an investment in the target language is also an investment in a learner's own social identity, an identity that is constantly changing across time and space (Peirce, 1995, pp. 17-18 in McKay and Wong, 1996 : harvard96/1996/fa96/f96mckay.htm). Almost all the learners mentioned how much they liked being able to speak English to their employers, to shop assistants and so on and that it was important to learn the "International Language". They have all bought into the prevalent English dominance in South Africa mentioned earlier in the study.

Conclusion

If I look back to the goals of my research set out in Chapter 1, I can't state that I have accomplished all of them, but I believe that I have begun a process of understanding and appreciation of the notion of Visual Literacy and its link with multiliteracies and second language acquisition. I have examined adult learners' perceptions of visual images in books, newspapers and magazines, discovering that visual literacy is something which probably takes years to learn, like the basics of literacy itself, reading and writing. Concepts which had a lot of repetition within the Visual Literacy course and the Pilot Project, like plans, maps and globes, were grasped much more easily by the learners than those they had encountered only once or twice. I found that if they could 'hang' a

concept within their frame of reference they found it easier to retain. Teacher/tutors should therefore be constantly aware of this fact and work to broaden learners' frames of reference.

Learners enjoy looking at pictures, but whether they detract from or add to understanding of verbal text seems to depend a lot on the illustrations themselves. As learners become more able to analyse images they should find it easier to comprehend different, more complex types of illustration. However, a lot more practice and teaching is required for this to happen.

With regard to the goal of engaging in dialogue with the participants in order to find ways to better understanding of visual images, I think I have much more insight into the field of visual literacy amongst adult learners than I did before I started, which will help me if I do any further illustration for adult workbooks. Most of the learners seem to believe that they have benefited from the experience, but this is not a quantifiable issue. I think that we all gained more intercultural competence within the process, not just in terms of visual literacy and English as a second language, but in terms of multiliteracies. I salute my group of learners.

Chapter 5

So we are left with the question: what sense does it make to say that appearances may constitute a language?

Appearances cohere. At the first degree they cohere because of common laws of structure and growth which establish visual affinities. A chip of rock can resemble a mountain; grass grows like hair; waves have the form of valleys; snow is crystalline; the growth of walnuts is constrained in their shells somewhat like the growth of brains in their skulls;...

(Berger, 1982 : 112).

Conclusion and Recommendations

Evaluation of the Findings

The findings of the data analysis highlight the need for further interaction by the learners with Visual Literacy, and the fact that Visual Literacy, like literacy itself, cannot be taught in a short 3 month course. However, with regard to second language learning, there is evidence that using pictures can be a powerful teaching aid to promote second language usage. Basel (1995 : 86) mentions that the literature around the subject offers conclusive proof that pictures have unlimited potential when used communicatively, citing Potgieter, (1987), Wright, (1989) and Blacquiere, (1985). Wright states that the greatest strength of using pictures lies in the fact that "there is no right or wrong way of interpreting a picture" (Wright, 1989, in Basel, 1995 : 86).

Pictures help L2 learners to lose their inhibitions and motivate them to attempt varied and demanding tasks (Spencer, 1989 : 1) and are versatile enough to be used for tasks involving learners of varying ages and linguistic competence.

(Basel, 1995 : 86)

From my study, I am led to conclude that pictures can both help and hinder learners in their interpretation of written discourse. They provide both contextual and cultural information which activates learners to strive for their own meanings and also provides

them with an important learning strategy, that of implied meanings, insight into the characters in the images (Wright, 1989, in Basel, 1995 : 87). Wigfield (1987, quoted in Basel, 1995 : 87) said that pictures can denote general and specific meanings simultaneously and that unless the receiver of the 'message' has a thorough knowledge of western pictorial conventions, things are likely to be misunderstood. This is a very narrow view of visual aids, and after teaching this course I would advocate the teaching of Visual Literacy and wholeheartedly support Linney's (1995) call for the development of learner-made teaching aids. The learners in the study had a marked preference for human beings in pictures, a common trend in such research (Cook, 1984, quoted in Linney, 1995 : 26; Fuglesang, 1982; Bradley, 1995). Linney sets out a method to teach people how to draw recognisable human figures, believing, like Dondis (1973) and Gardner (1999), in the universal potential for dynamic artistic expression. Relating learning to what people know is of prime importance, and what better way to do it than teach people the 'language' with which to do that. Walker (1979), writing of his experiences in Zambia, states that:

In oral societies people appear to be more used to verbalising "what they do, not what they see" and they expect pictures to "contain what they know about objects, not just what they see". "Memory pictures" which, for example, show all four wheels of a car through twisting the picture in space, are one way of meeting peoples' visual expectations.

(Walker, 1979 : <http://ntl.ids.ac.uk/cgi-bin/dtbcgi.exe>)

It was a frequent occurrence that learners, seeing something utterly foreign, related it to their experiences and made it become part of their world, e.g. the Barcelona cathedral became the Cathedral of St Michael and St George in Grahamstown, the only cathedral the learners have ever seen in real life.

However, learning language is a social phenomenon (Larsen-Freeman and Long, 1991). The learners in my group spoke a lot of English during the course, which could only aid in their proficiency. They spoke to me as the English-speaker, they spoke to try to explain concepts, to describe images, to ask questions and also just to make conversation, probably the best way to learn a language (Allwright, 1988). Their own self-confidence in the ability to use English definitely improved according to the learners who completed the evaluation forms: "I am happy to speak better English now", "We can talk English now to anyone".

What kind of pictures are best?

Most researchers agree that the greater the learners' level of visual literacy the easier they will find it to interpret complex pictorial images but feel that challenging images are likely to achieve better results than overly simple self-explanatory ones (Lieskounig, 1987; Wright, 1989; in Basel, 1995 : 87, 88). This would go with my idea of teaching visual literacy skills, and challenging the learners with interesting photographs, drawings etc. Some researchers (Shepherd, 1992 : 4, and Eden, 1988, in Basel, 1995 : 88) recommend large black and white realistic drawings depicting situations from the learners' own lifeworld. However, I agree with French, (1990, in Hutton, 1992 : 26) who advocates the use of the unlimited potential of pictorial images to expand the learners' lifeworlds. The aim of adult literacy educators should be to enlighten and empower learners, in the words of Ira Shor, 'teaching should offer an illumination of reality' (Shor:1987:26), to give learners a sense of the world we all inhabit, to help to build a critical awareness of the society in which we find ourselves.

Limitations of the study

Street (1990 : 68); Linney (1995) and Rogers (1986) emphasize that designers of literacy programmes cannot assume that their definition of literacy matches the definitions and meanings of literacy held by the target population. Planners must first investigate the literacy events and practices within the target group of learners. After “conducting participatory needs analysis and ethnographic assessment of existing literacy practices” (Street, 1990 : 69), planners should negotiate, with the people concerned, an appropriate curriculum and system of assessment. Over time, Street believes, programs developed in this conceptual framework will be more cost-effective because of higher retention rates. If learners are involved in all sectors of their learning programmes, there will probably be less of a dropout rate than there is now. From my study I have come to agree with Street’s assertion that any literacy programme should balance local literacies and languages with mainstream literacies and languages of power, and negotiate programme content with facilitators, potential students and local people. I feel that both the Visual Literacy course and the Pilot project would have been more successful had the learners been more fully consulted in the initial planning stages. Adult Literacy Projects are more often than not guilty of foisting programmes on to learners. There are some memorable and exemplary accounts of such ‘learner-driven’ approaches, notably with aborigine groups in Australia (Rogers 1992) and community-run literacy groups in India (Linney, 1995). I am very attracted to this way of doing things, and wish that my learners could be part of such an enriching experience.

This study, involving a small group of Xhosa-speaking adult learners in a small town in the Eastern Cape obviously does not constitute a representation of all the disadvantaged adult

learners in South Africa. Therefore the localised and small sample size could be considered to be a limitation of the study. It can however, be used as a guide to what is happening with other small groups in the Eastern Cape and all over the country, although many literacy projects in South Africa are dying. The examples of visual text which were used in this study came from a wide variety of images, but were limited in the sense that they came out of the Visual Literacy course, and investigated participants' knowledge and retention of, for example, western pictorial conventions and subject matter. The participants were called upon to produce second language conversation in their interpretation of photographs and drawings found in textbooks, magazines and newspapers from their daily lives. Although the course was devised according to a methodology, the images chosen were fairly arbitrary, which could also be seen as a limitation on the study.

Another limitation was the fact that I lost my tutor/observer colleague, who had known and worked with the learners for about 18 months prior to the course. The triangulation was not as rigorous as it could have been with her presence and criticism, although the other tutors did their best, but were not that keen on criticising me, seeing me as an authority, whereas the tutor/observer, who saw me as a colleague and an equal, would have offered more valid criticisms.

Suggestions for Further Research

I believe that this study suggests that teaching visual literacy helps learners to better interpret text, both visual and verbal, and that talking about pictures adds to learners' thinking skills and leads to more productive second language development. Some

possible implications of this research are in the fields of ABET educational publishing, curriculum writing and tutor education. I would recommend that comparative studies which focus on visual literacy skills and second language production of adult learners in different areas take place. A study which I would love to do, is on learner-centred production of visual aids for Literacy teaching, inspired by Bob Linney. Unfortunately, any recommendations are unlikely to be implemented in the current ABET climate.

Conclusion

The knowledge I have gained from this research has been informative in many ways, with regard to visual literacy, adult literacy in general, and also on a very human level. I hope that it also informed the educational development of the participants. I believe, like Bartolome (1994) that:

Educators need to reject the present methods fetish so as to create learning environments informed by both action and reflection. ... teachers can begin the reflective process, which allows them to recreate and reinvent teaching methods and materials by always taking into consideration the sociocultural realities that can either limit or expand the possibilities to humanise education.

(Bartolome, 1994: harvard94/1994/su94/s94bart.htm)

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Appendix A

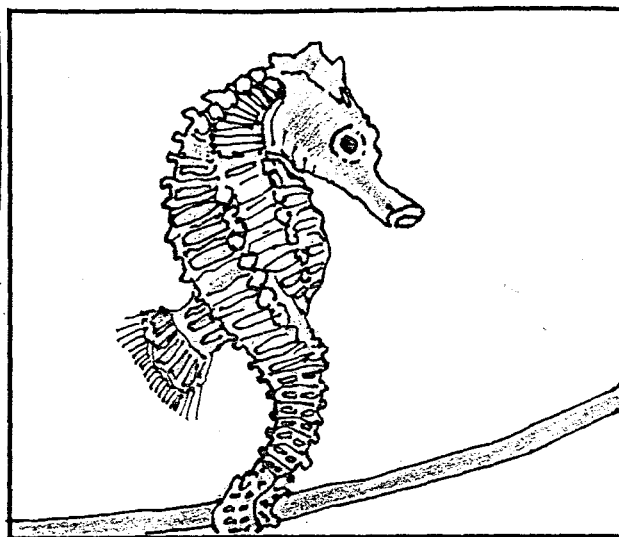
Looking at pictures

Your tutor will describe an object to you. You must try to draw what you imagine he is describing.

Draw in
this space 

Now compare your pictures to see how different they are and also to see whether anyone actually drew the object described!

Seahorse.



See if you can think of other words with almost the same meaning as the word: **look**

Think of all the different kinds of pictures that you see every day.
Discuss with your partner and then write down your ideas.

Look really means to see what is there.

To find out about things, we look carefully at them. In this way we get information about them which can lead to understanding.

Looking at

pictures

- 😊😊 Choose one of the pictures on the following page.
- 😊😊 Work in pairs to study the picture.
- 😊😊 One person should describe the *people* in the picture to the partner.
- 😊😊 When he/she is finished, the partner should carry on describing the *people* by adding to what the first person has already said.



Now do the same pair-exercise but describe the *place* you see in the picture.

If you have difficulty, follow these steps:

Tips on how to look at pictures

- ❑ **Choose what to look at in the picture, e.g. people, places, things.**
- ❑ **Look closely to see all you can about the particular thing you have chosen, e.g. a person, a tree, a house.**
- ❑ **Tell your partner all you can about what you saw.**

When you have finished working, as a group name all the things you found in the picture. The tutor will list everything on the board under the headings **People, Places and Things**.

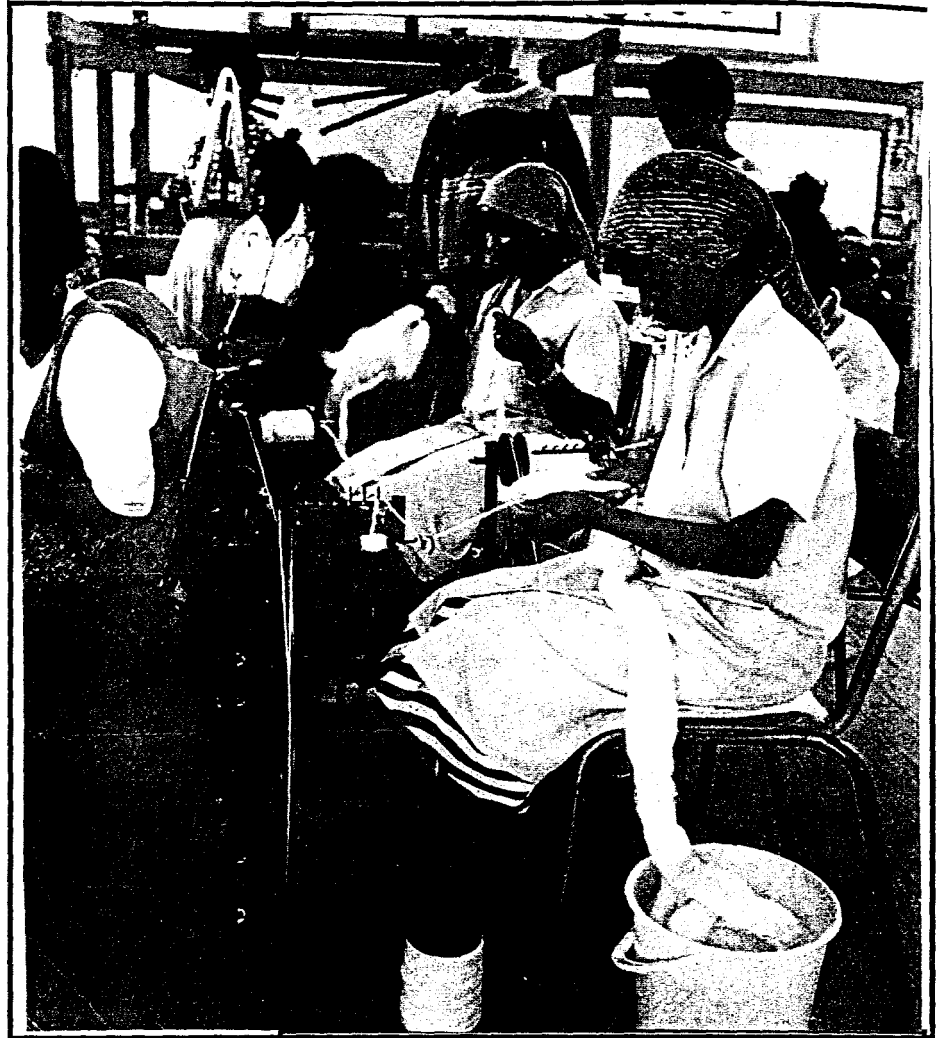
One person can then volunteer to explain why studying one thing at a time is a good way to learn about looking at pictures.

Each group should select one of the pictures on pages 4 and 5, or cut out a picture from a magazine to study. *(It is interesting to look at magazine pictures because then you can include colour in your analysis of the picture.)*

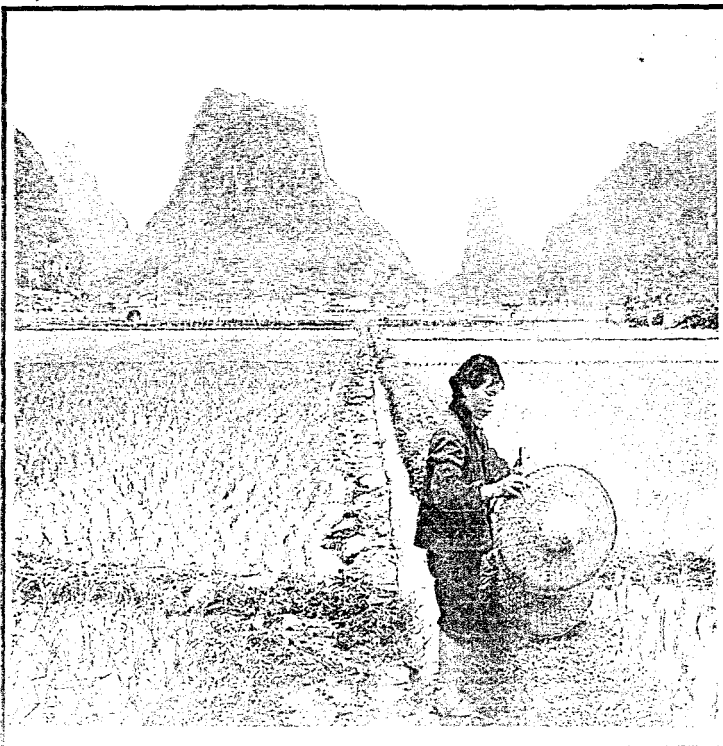
Now list all the things in the picture under these headings. Try to be very **specific**, e.g. "a woman wearing a long dress and a red scarf around her head."

PEOPLE	PLACES	THINGS

a)



b)



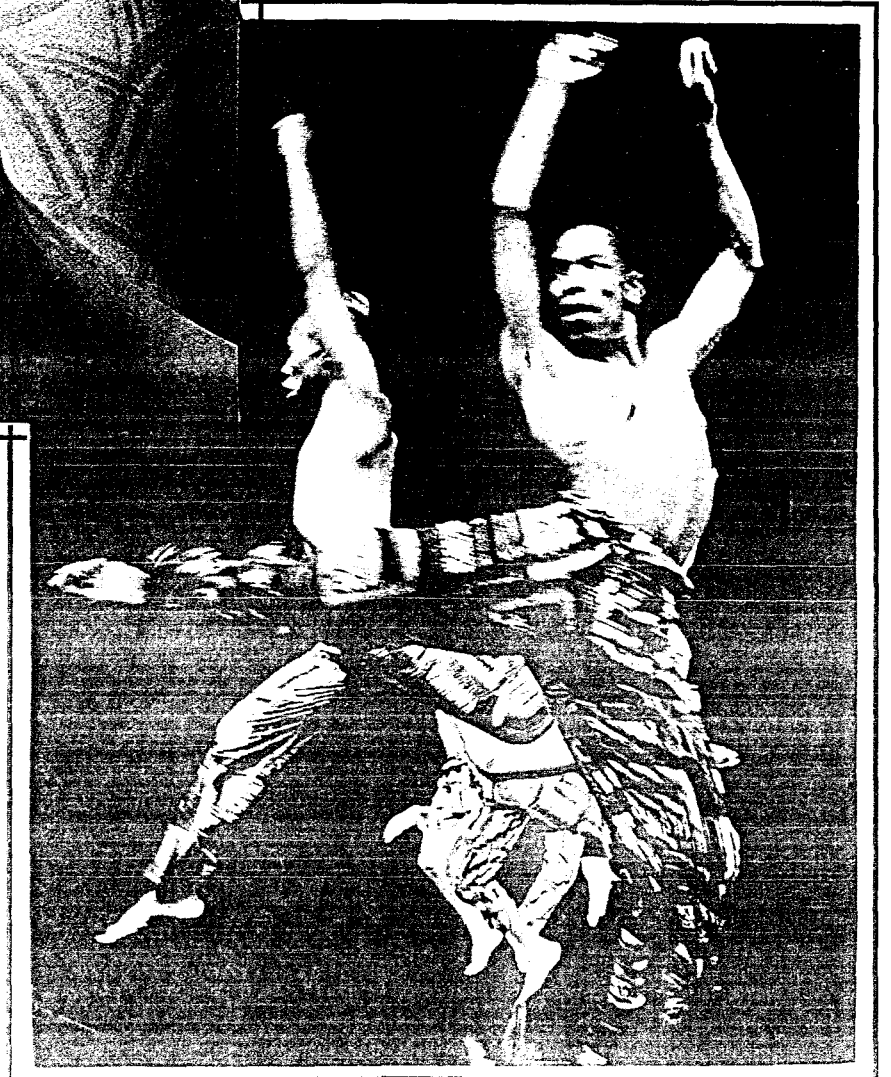
c)





d)

e)



When you look at a picture you often have some idea as to what is happening. Write a sentence about what you think is happening in each picture and then compare it with your partner's.

a _____

b _____

c _____

d _____

e _____

Looking at

texts (pieces of writing)

You can also find out things like the meanings of words in texts by studying the text itself carefully.

Guess the meaning

A good police detective uses as many clues as possible to try to solve a crime. When you use word clues to guess at the meaning of an unknown word, you are using the context to help you. (*Context* means the words nearby.)

For example, if your tutor asked you to do an exercise using *periodicals*, someone might ask, "What's a **periodical**?" Then your tutor might reply, "Well, you should use something like *Bona* or *Huisgenoot* for this exercise. Now you can work out that a periodical is a magazine.

Read this extract from an article on the wedding of Nelson Mandela and Graca Machel, written by Jon Qwelane. It was published in a periodical called **Sawubona** dated September 1998: 🐾

... As I said earlier, it is his humanity. And his forthright honesty. And his boundless **humility**. And his complete simplicity. Nothing pretentious about Mandela - what you see is what you get. Nothing ostentatious about him either. And certainly none of the airs and graces one would normally, even if wrongly, associate with a man and leader of his immense **stature**.

Indeed, Mandela walks alone, and I suspect what makes him even larger than life is that he never sees himself as a great man.

Few people are blessed with that indescribable quality. In recent memory possibly only three other people had it - Pope John XXIII, Diana Princess of Wales, and Mother Teresa of Calcutta - that effortless quality to make **paupers** feel like kings, and kings very ordinary without losing their regal appeal.

Some call it 'class', others 'charisma'. Whatever it is, Mandela has it in bucketfuls and more - that rare ability to change the atmosphere with his sheer presence by merely walking into a room.

Here is a newspaper report from the *Sunday Independent* of February 8 1998.

Reds, whites and blacks alike put their shoulders to the wheel of fortune

Communists, widows, motor mechanics... many of the scratchers picked for the weekly Win 'n Spin TV show have never been to Johannesburg, let alone flown on a plane

... *Win 'n Spin*'s five-year history is filled with rags-to-riches stories that would send a Hollywood producer into fits of rapture. There is the story of the shack dweller in a squatter camp near Welkom who won R1,4 million. Or the story of the ex-railway worker who needed R50 000 for new **prostheses** on both of

his legs. When he won that exact amount tears flowed in the studio.

... Presenter Mike Mills' attempts to whip up enthusiasm from contestants fail for the most part. The near-hysteria of American game-show participants seems **anathema** to most South

Africans.

"We want people to show more **exuberance** but nerves stop them," says Mills. "Afrikaners especially have this thing that they can't jump up and down on TV. They think they'll make fools of themselves."

Groupwork

Divide into groups of four or five and choose one of the extracts from Newspaper reports to work with. Choose one person to be the scribe (writer).

Try to work out the meanings of the three words in bold lettering. Look at the words all around the word you are trying to work out, to try to find out the meaning of the sentence. This can also help you find out the meanings of individual word. Look at the word in relation to the whole report as well.

Report back: Each group should send a volunteer to write up their definition of each word. Compare the different ideas which each group came up with and how they reached that meaning. Now look up the dictionary meaning of each of these words.

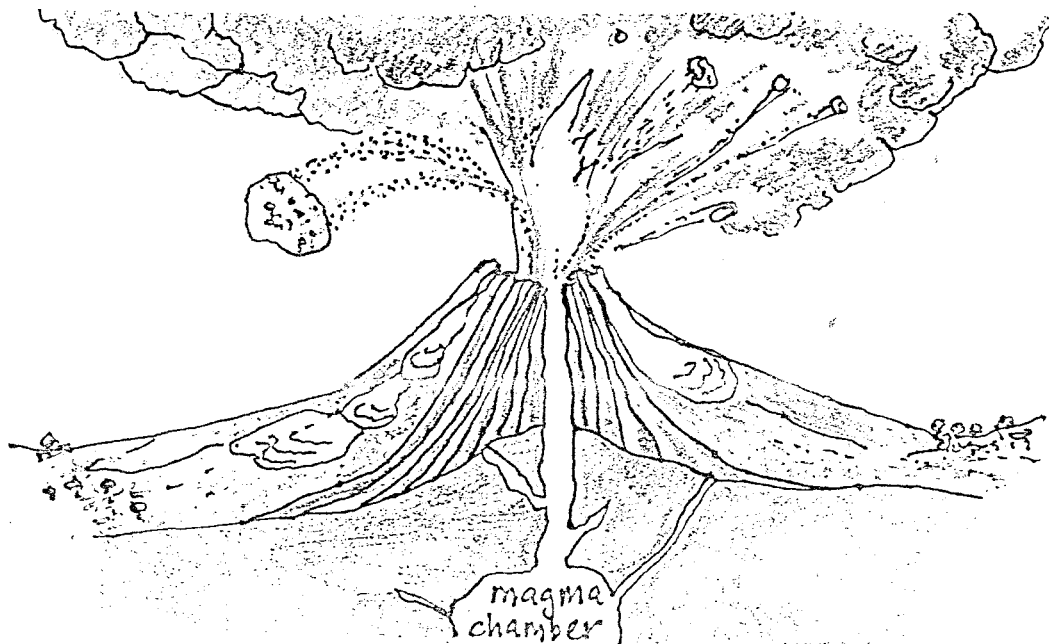
Finding out about

Just as you found out about things in pictures and words in texts, so do scientists, geologists, archaeologists etc. find out things about the history of the earth and how things happen today.

Looking carefully is the first thing most people do when they want to find out about something.

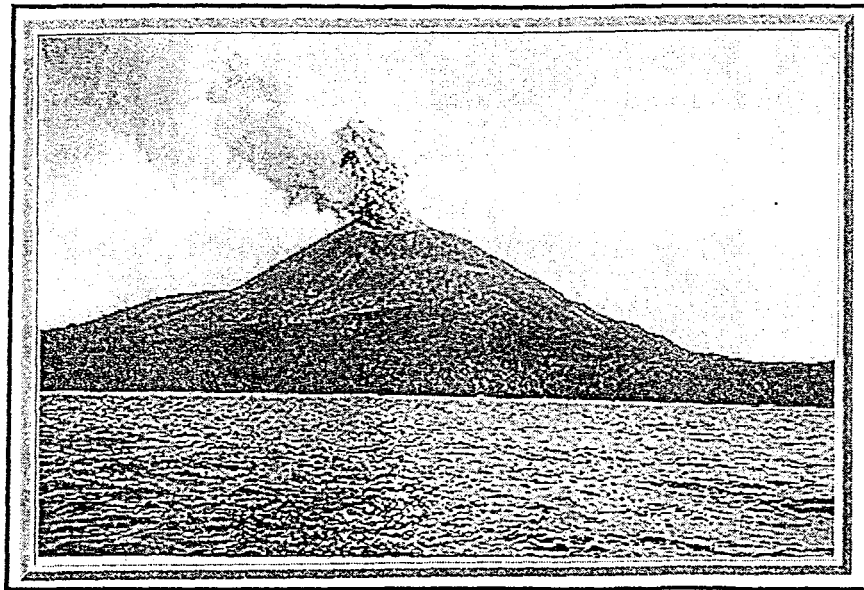
Cross sections

When people want to explain things in Natural Sciences, they are often illustrated with a diagram which is often a cut away picture of the object. Below is an example of a section through a volcano. It is as though the layers of rock and earth have been cut away to show what happens inside the volcano.

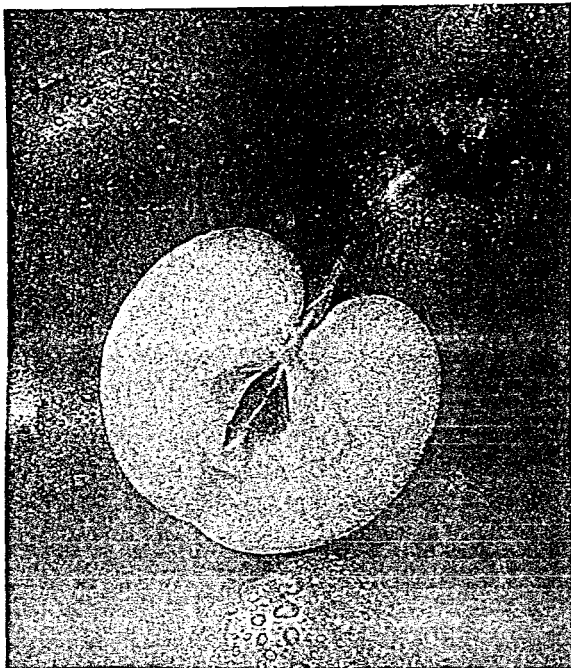


Cut away volcano showing the different activities which take place in a volcanic eruption

Below is a photograph of a volcano. You can compare the two and see that the drawing is how the artist imagined the inside of the real volcano.

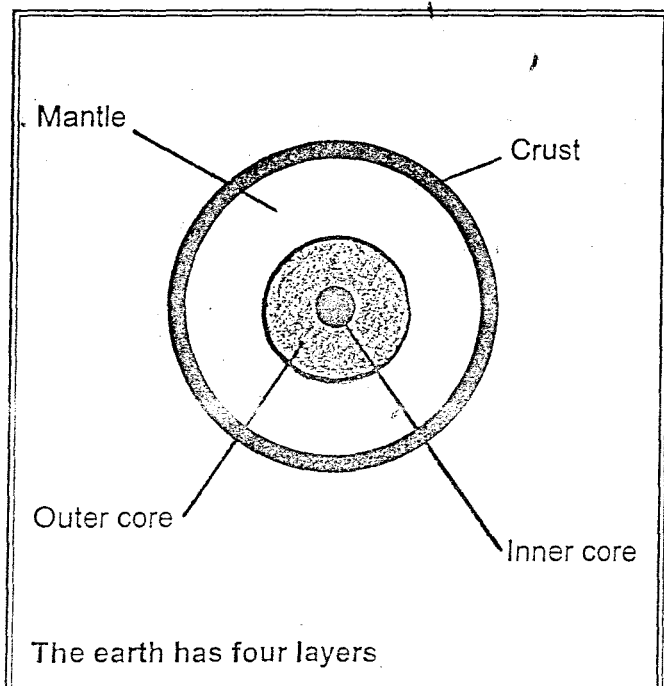


The island of Anak Krakatau today with its smoking crater



If we cut an apple in half, we see a thin outer skin, an inner fleshy white part, and a hard core with pips in the middle.

If we could cut the earth in half, just like an apple, we would see something like this.

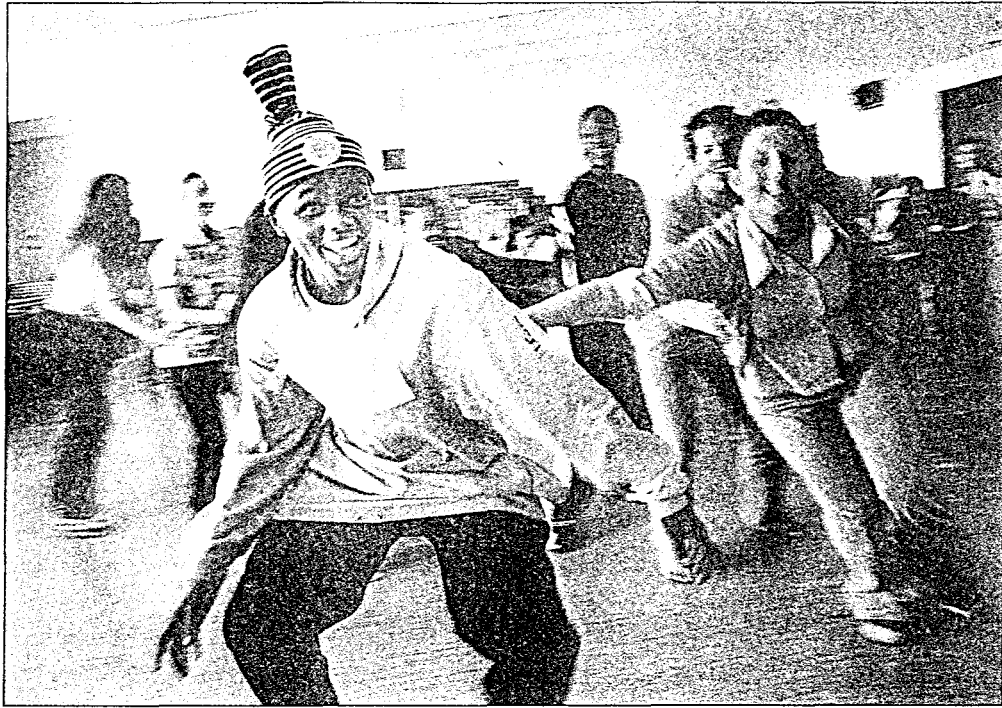


We think of the earth under our feet as a solid unchanging substance. In reality the earth is not completely solid and it changes a great deal.

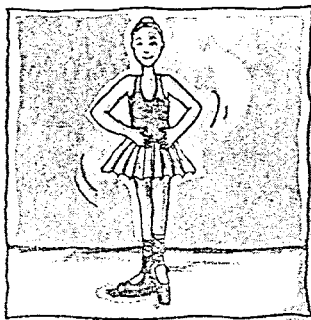
The earth has four layers

Now draw your own cross-section. Your tutor will show you what to do.

Things like cross sections are called conventions of drawing. A convention is when something is done a particular way and everyone understands it in more or less the same way. Look at the photograph below. What do you see? What are the children doing? How do you know?



In photographs you can often see movement because the person or animal is blurred (fuzzy, not clear). Look at the following drawings and discuss with your partner how movement is shown. This is a drawing convention to show movement.



Appendix B

People	Places	Things
Picture of Korean/Chinese person with child and vegetables		
Woman Man in blue apron woman with hat and black clothes strong woman small child toddler child hanging in basket boy holding on to basket boy in red clothes girl with pink doek little girl in basket man walking down street	street road path forest town school country place farm tar road dirt path	trees vegetables baskets houses people grass stones sticks straw pole mealies
Picture of people in boat		
Indians people standing and sitting in a boat man with a pole people sinking 31 people in a boat 16 men standing 9 women sitting 3 children Africans people crossing a river people in a dam a man is smiling blue and white clothes green clothes reflection in the water	dam river sea blue water boat	pole pattern

Table 3: Notes on People/Places/Things

Appendix C

Questionnaire on **Visual Literacy**

June 1999

Visual Literacy is one of the literacies you probably know a lot about even before you become literate in terms of reading and writing. Pictures are everywhere around us, on advertising billboards, in magazines and newspapers, in books, on television and even in the books you work with at the Community Learning Centre.

This questionnaire is to find out how people see things, because we all see things differently. It is not a test of people's abilities. Rather it asks questions about how we all see the world.

Please go through the questionnaire and answer all the questions. There are no right or wrong answers. Each person will probably have a whole lot of very different answers.

Where there are a number of possible answers, put a ring around your choice.

Learner's Name: _____

Address: _____

Age: _____

How long have you been studying at the CLC?: _____

What standard did you reach at school? _____

How often do you watch television? a) Never
b) Once a week
c) Twice a week
d) Every day

Do you read the newspaper? Yes / No

Which one(s) _____

How often? a) Never
b) Once a week
c) Twice a week
d) Every day

Do you read any other books or magazines? Yes / No

Which one(s) _____

Do you think it is important to read? _____

Why/Why not? _____

1 What is this picture of?

Where in the world do you find it?

Do you know anything else about it?

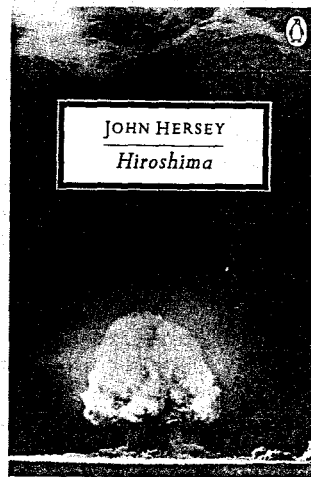


2 What is this picture of?

- Is it
- a) a book cover?
 - b) a photograph?
 - c) a scientific experiment?

- Is the picture
- a) frightening?
 - b) interesting?
 - c) soothing?
 - d) light-hearted?

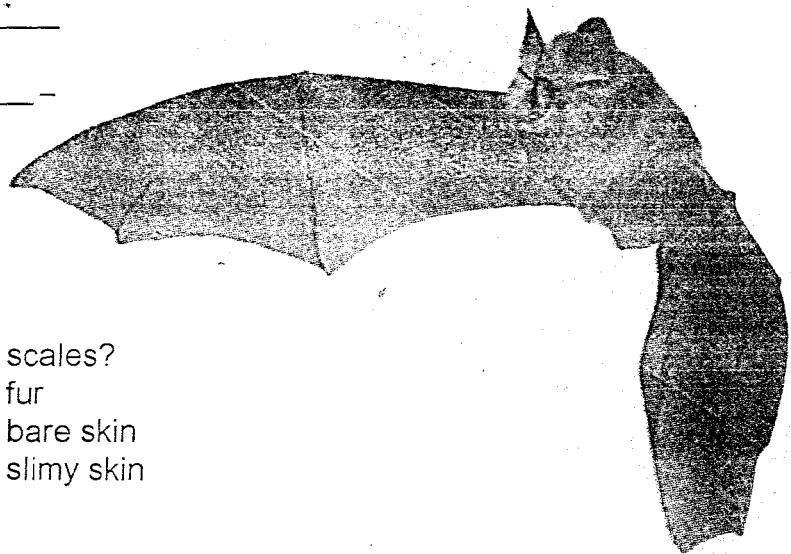
What is Hiroshima?



3 What animal is this?

- Is this animal
- a) a mammal?
 - b) an insect?
 - c) a rodent?
 - d) a bird?

- Does this animal have
- a) scales?
 - b) fur
 - c) bare skin
 - d) slimy skin

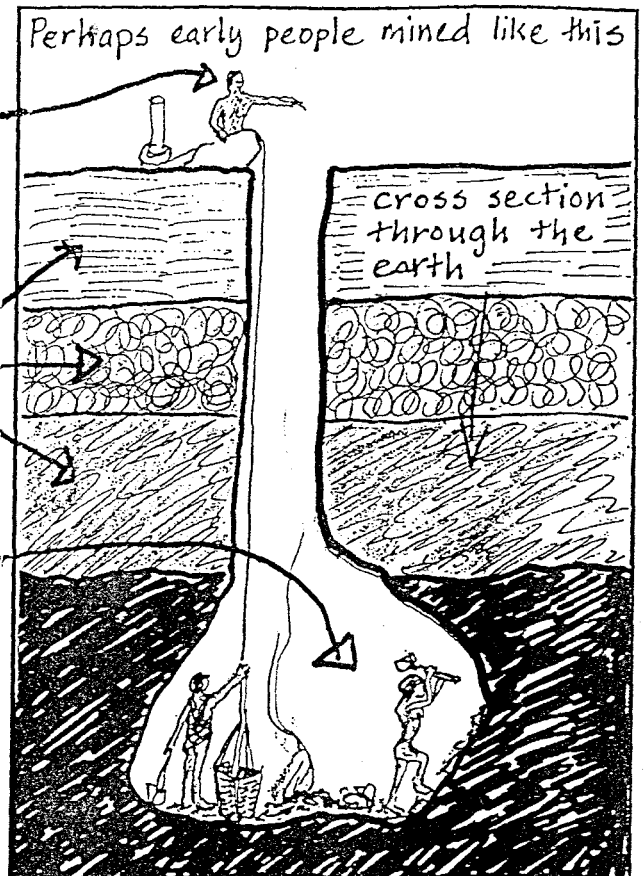


4 This illustration comes from a textbook

a) What is this?

b) What are these?

c) What is this?



5 Please read the following four pages. The first page deals with the four types of states which Late Iron Age people developed.

a) Do you like the picture? Why?

b) Which state does the picture illustrate? (Which state does the picture belong to?)

c) Do you think there is too much writing (information) on pages 34 and 35?

d) Ring the answer that suits you:
The pictures in this section are

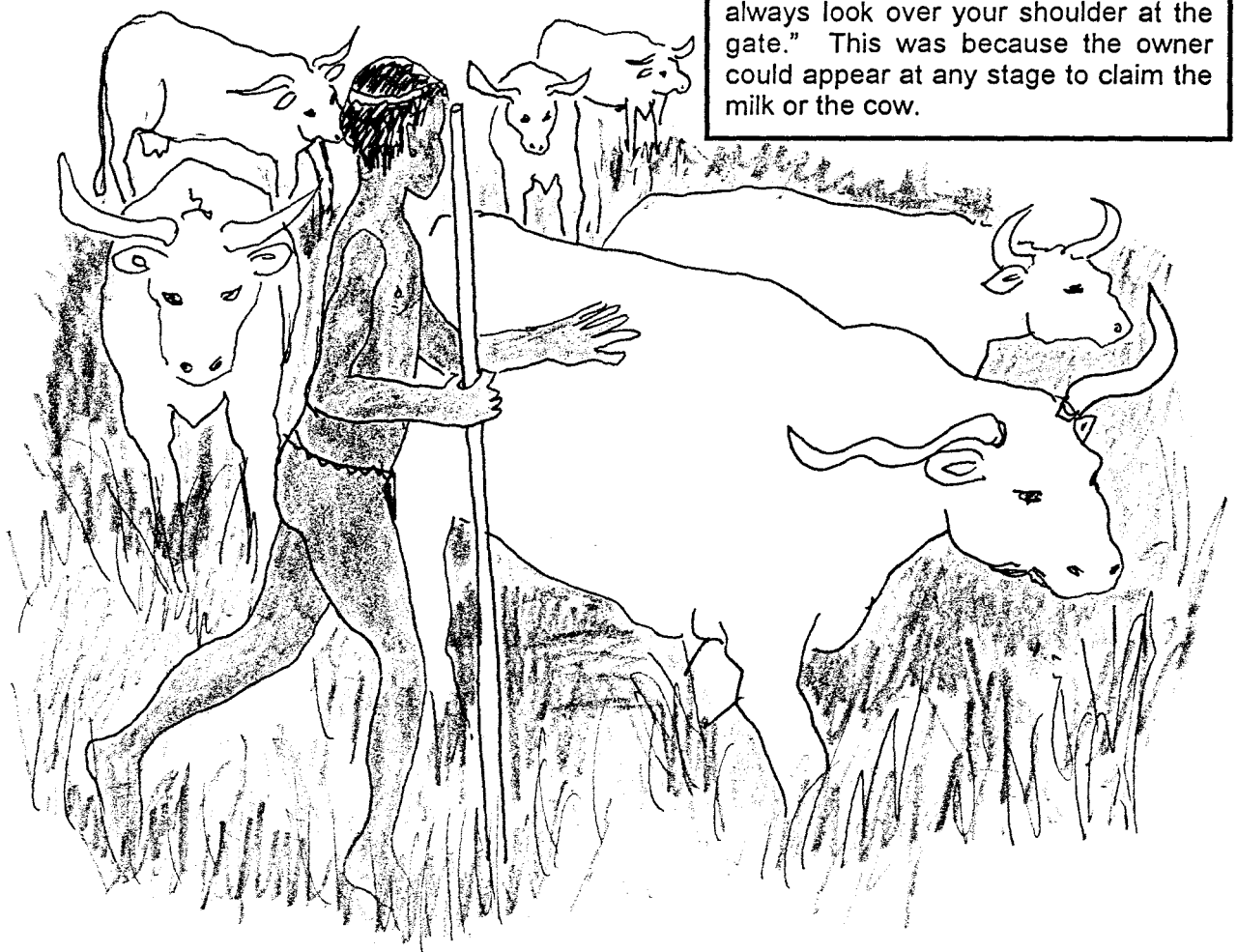
- a) enough
- b) too few
- c) too many
- d) I can't understand the pictures

Late Iron Age states

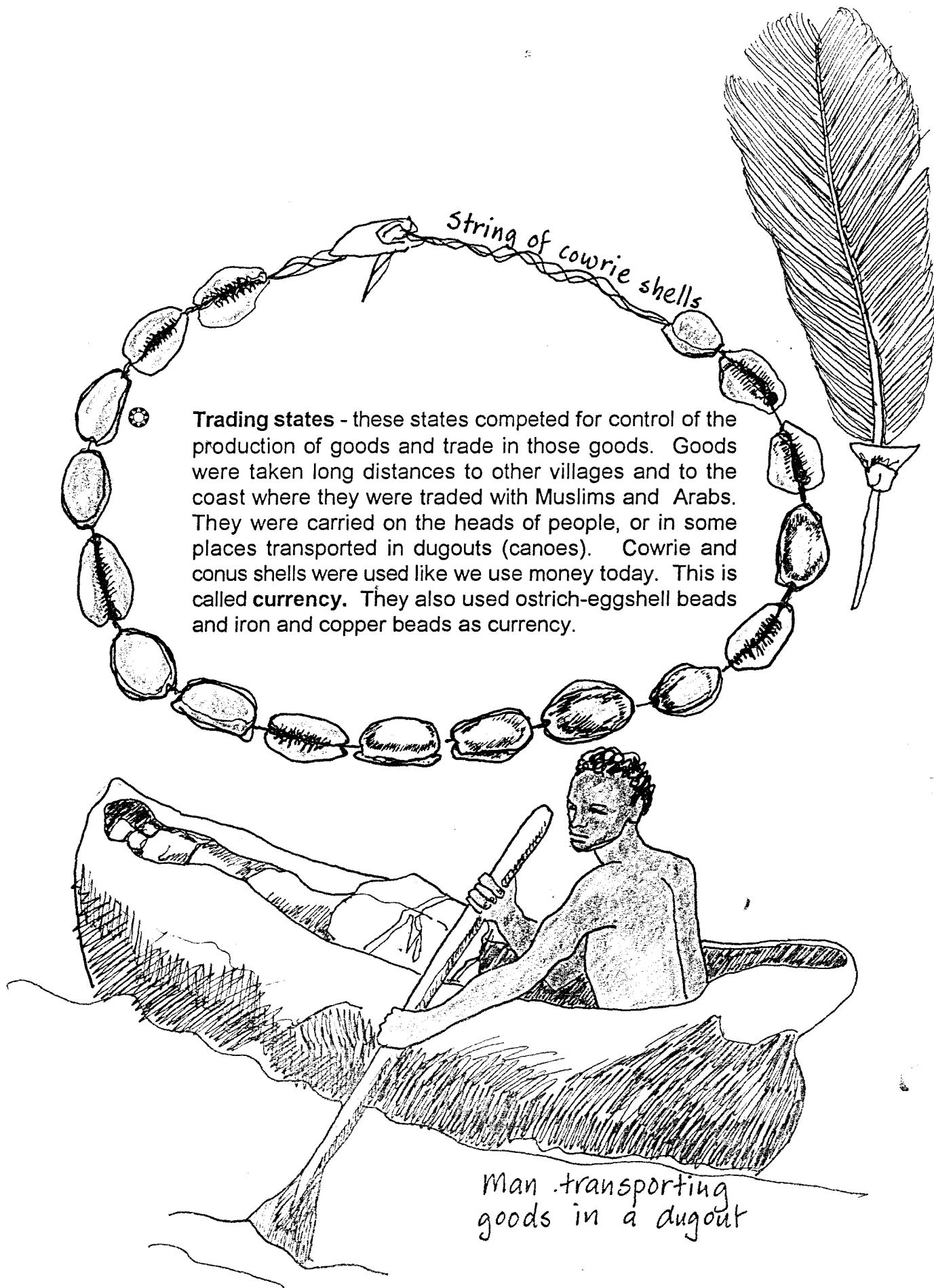
Do you remember the Lydenburg state which was mentioned in the last workbook? In the Late Iron Age people were organised into villages. Some villages joined with others and these organisations can be called states. There were basically four types of states.

- ❁ **Cattle-based confederations** - different cattle-farming groups who lived with a king as a ruler. Each group had its own chief, but the senior chief was the king of all the groups. The king and the chiefs owned vast numbers of cattle which they 'loaned' to their followers on the *mafisa* system.

Mafisa refers to cattle which the chiefs lent out. The person who borrowed the cattle was loyal to the owner. There is a saying, "When milking a *mafisa* cow, always look over your shoulder at the gate." This was because the owner could appear at any stage to claim the milk or the cow.



- ❁ **Divine kingships** - these were states where the people believed that the king was a god or the son of a god. These kings led the people in annual planting and harvesting ceremonies. They were often also the chief rain-makers.
- ❁ **Military states** - these states were very strictly ruled by kings or chiefs who were battle leaders.



Trading states - these states competed for control of the production of goods and trade in those goods. Goods were taken long distances to other villages and to the coast where they were traded with Muslims and Arabs. They were carried on the heads of people, or in some places transported in dugouts (canoes). Cowrie and conus shells were used like we use money today. This is called **currency**. They also used ostrich-eggshell beads and iron and copper beads as currency.

Man transporting goods in a dugout

Late Iron Age Religion and Ideas

✿ Divine kingship

People believed that their rulers were related to the gods. In this way, the rulers had more control over them, because no one dared disobey someone who was in close contact with the gods!

✿ Nature spirits and ancestors

People praised and worshipped the nature spirits of land and water. They also respected the spirits of their own ancestors and the spirits of previous peoples of the land, like the spirits of the hunter-gatherer San.



✿ One god higher than the others

In many cultures there was belief in a single higher god.

Nkulunkulu was the most important original ancestor figure of the Nguni people.

Modimo was the greatest nature spirit among the Sotho and Tswana people.

✿ Contact with the Spirit world

There were **rituals** for everything which maintained contact with the ancestors and nature spirits which are all around us. There were different rituals for important occasions like birth, death and marriage. Even ordinary things like eating and drinking had their own rituals..

A ritual is a set of fixed actions and/or words or songs which are performed regularly in a ceremony.

Men and women **diviners** and **mediums** spoke to the spirits. They also told people what the spirits advised and said to them.

❁ **Origin of the Universe**

Religion explained things like the origin of the universe and mysteries of the natural world to people through dancing, music and rituals.

❁ **Scientific knowledge**

Mining

Groups which knew how to smelt metal had a lot of scientific knowledge. They knew how to build and dig mines, how to smelt the metals from the ore, how to heat and hammer the metals into useful articles.

There was a mixture of magic and ritual in every act, even in the smelting of iron, which was only done by a few people.

Farming

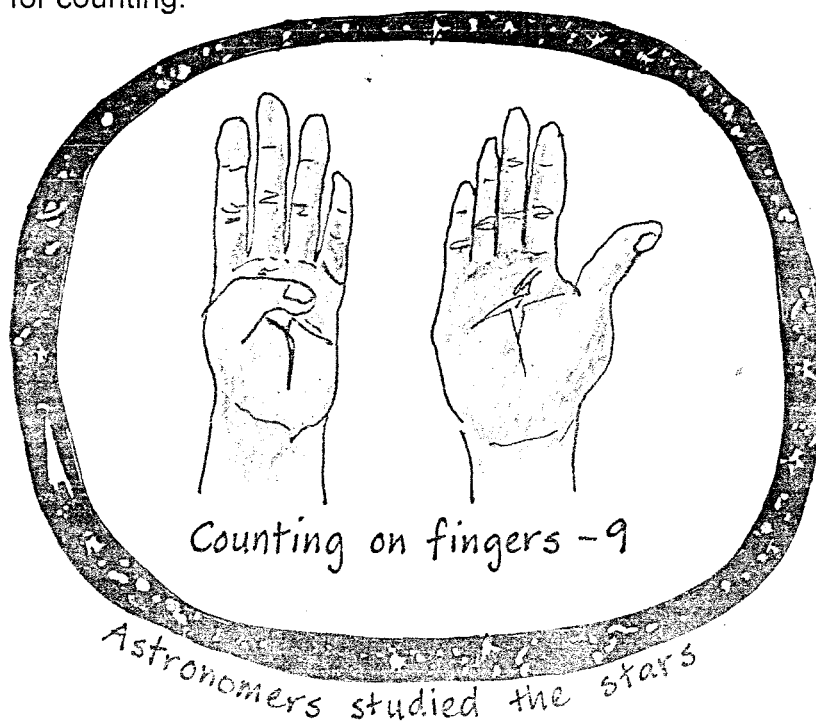
Archaeologists think that communities used scientific ideas in their farming methods. These scientific ideas grew out of looking carefully at natural things such as the weather, seasons and soil.

Astronomy and counting

Various groups studied the stars and used simple arithmetic using their ten fingers for counting.

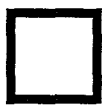


Religion explained things through dancing and music



6 Name these forms:







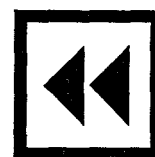










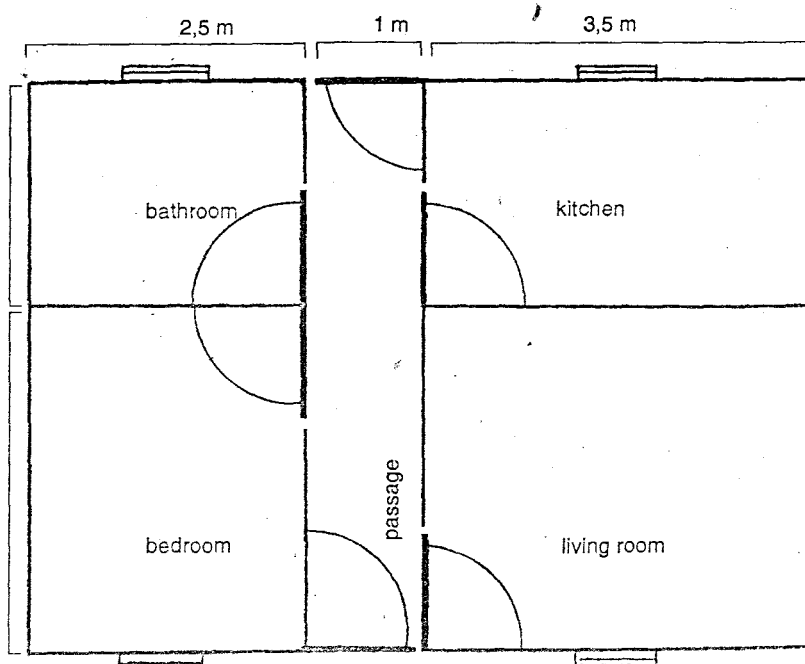


7 What is this?

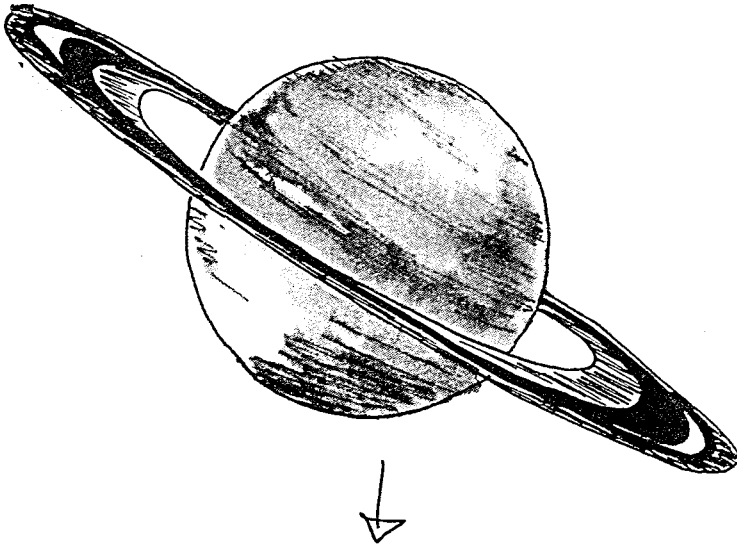
a)

_____ 2 m

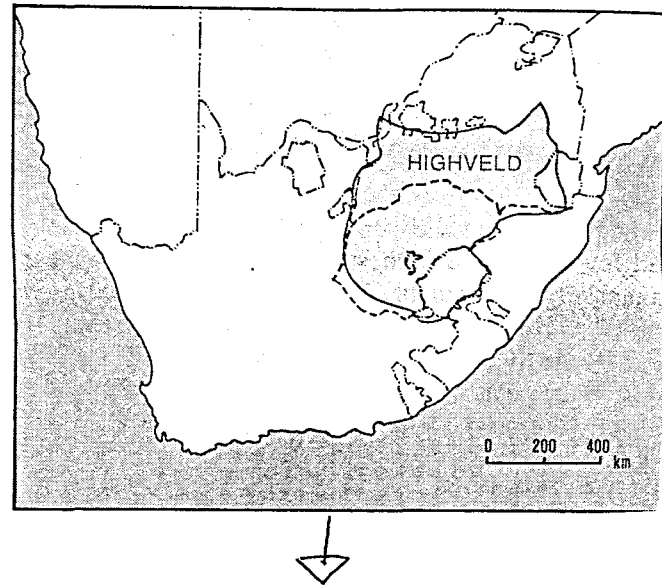
3 m



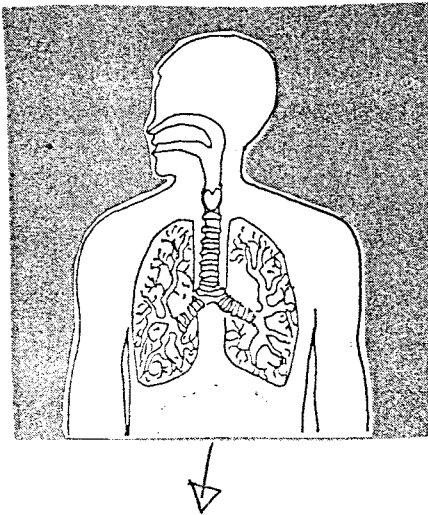
b)



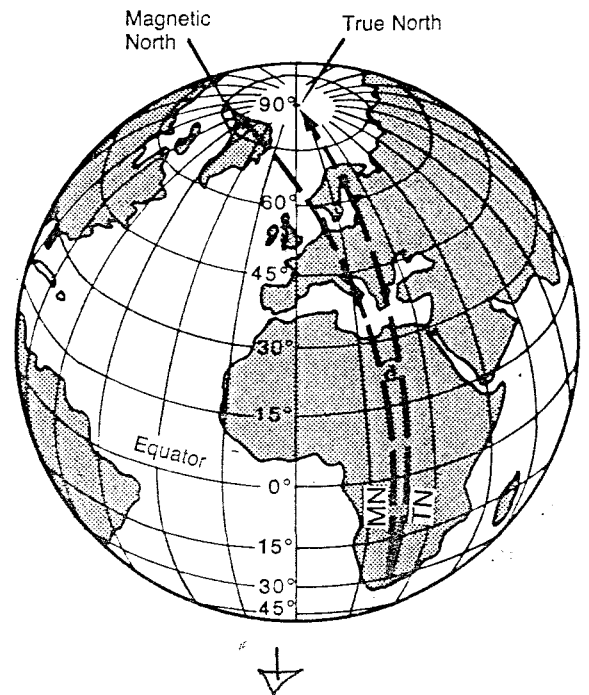
c)



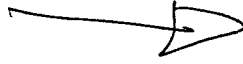
d)



e)

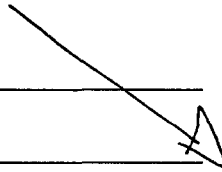


8a) What is this picture of?



Where are the feet?

b) What is this picture of?



Where are the arms?

Where are the legs?

9 Observations: Write anything else that you think or find interesting about these two pictures.

10 Look at the next page and then answer the questions which follow:

a) What is this? _____

b) What is this? _____

c) What do these pictures show you? _____

- d) How many pictures are there here? _____
- e) Number the pictures. _____
- f) Is this the same person? How do you know? _____

a) b)

UKUVASA NGEOMO

Ndisoloko ndisebenzisa iOMO MICRO kwivasi yam ngoku iOMO MICRO ayisafani neyokuqala kuba iNogwebu Olunamandla Aphindwe Kabini kwanesishenxisi-mafutha esiphuculiweyo.

Soloko ndisebenzisa isepha engumgubo esemgangathweni kuba inamandla awaneleyo okucocisisa ivasi yam, ayizonakalisa iimpahla zam.

OMO MICRO yamandla ahlukileyo Enywevu Olunamandla Aphindwe Kabini ayabonisa ukuba iyasebenza!

Hlamba iimpahla ezimhlophe kuqala kuze kamva ibe zezinemibala, khumbula ukuzihlola iimpahla ezintsha xa uza kuzihlamba ukuqiniseka ukuba idayi ayiphumi - ukuba iyaphuma zihlambe zodwa.

Iimpahla zibeke ngokwahlukana - zibe zodwa ezimhlophe, ezinemibala nezelaphu elahlukileyo njengewulu. Iimpahla ezingcole kakhulu zibeke zodwa.

Imiyalelo esebhokisini ikuchazela cacileyo ngesixa omawusisebenzise.

Xa usebenzisa imivana yesepha engumgubo loyenzeka iziphumo zevasi zingabi zezihle.

Ukuziyeka emanzini iimpahla ezingcolileyo okwethutyana kugutyula ukungcola kuze kukubangele kube lula ukuzixikixa.

Galeke iOMO MICRO emantlathu emanzini zizeke emanzini iimpahla malunga neyona mibala zangcolileyo zize emanzini ubusuku bonke.

IOMO MICRO ishenxisa amabala lula, dyobha intlama yeOMO MICRO kwizizihla ezinjengezemayonaise, umhluzi neoyile yokupheka, ziyeke emanzini okwethutyana phambi kokuzihlamba.

Lindawo ezingcolileyo okanye izisihla kufanele zidoyjwe intlama yeOMO MICRO, emva koko zihlambe ngokuqhelekileyo.

Zihlambulule ebuncinaneni kabini emanzini acocelileyo ukuze kuphume konke ukungcola nogwebu lwesepha.

Ukuzihlambulisisa kuqinisekisa ukuba iimpahla yakho icocakile, inemibala elinuka kakuhle.

Iimpahla yaneke kwindawo enomthunzi kuba ukuyaneke elangeni kunokubangela iimpahla ezinemibala zimbatshe zize ezimhlophe zitshintsha zibe bumthubi.

Ukuba kukho imibuzo onayo ngelasi sibalele, nani ilise: OMO Mailbag, P.O. Box 1000, Durban 4000. Ukuba sikufaka impendulo.

The OMO Mailbag
P.O. Box 1000
Durban
4000

11

Look at and read the following picture essay.

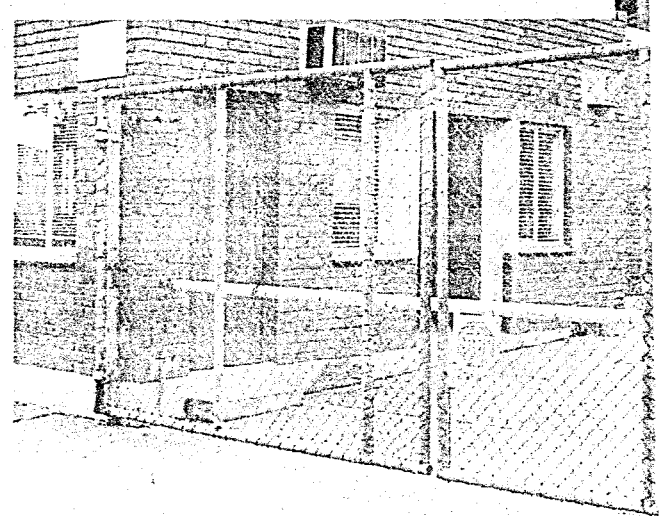
a) Which one was easier for you to see the different pictures in, the first one on page 7, or this one on page 8. _____

b) Why do you think this is so? _____

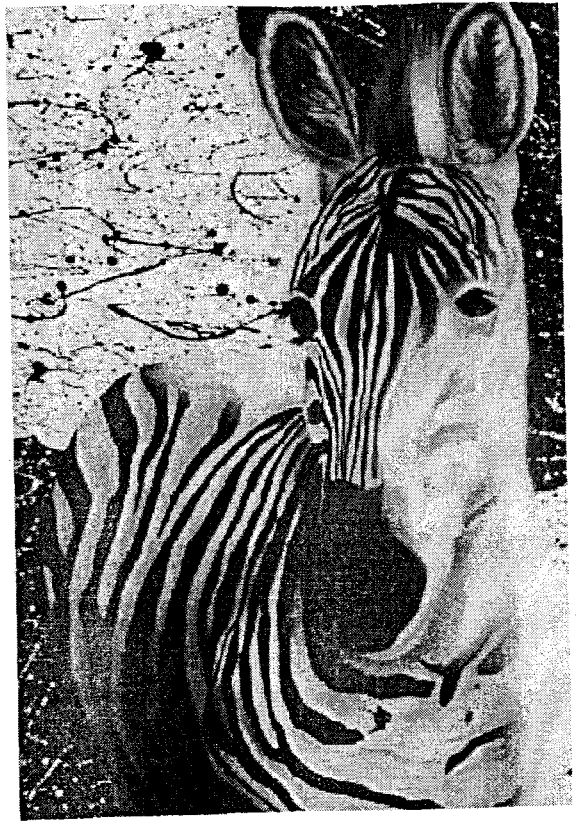
c) Is this the same person? How do you know? _____



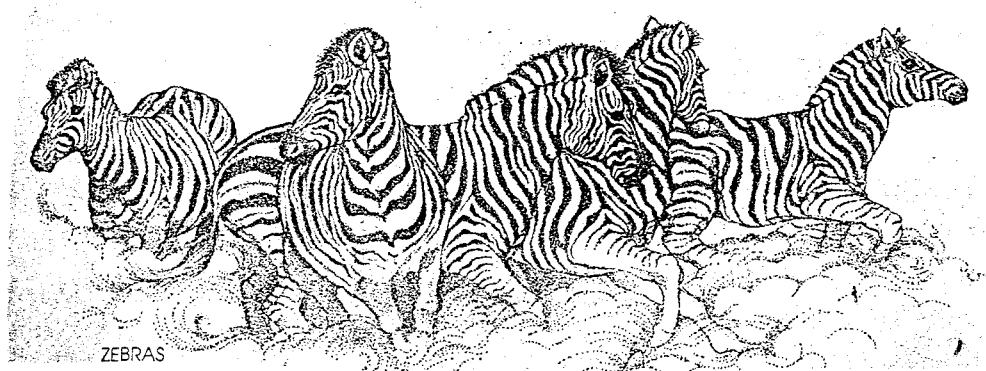
OKWANGOKU IMIBUZO AYIBUZWAYO WAMBILISA. IGQWETHA LAKHE UGERRY LATOBA NAYE UNXUNGUPHELE.



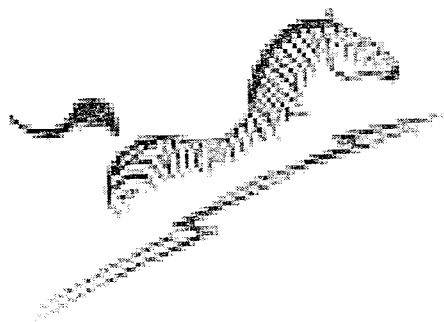
12 a) What kind of animal is this?



b) Where in the world do you find these animals? _____



c) Why is only half the animal shown here? What does this image try to show you?



d) In what kind of book would you find this picture? _____



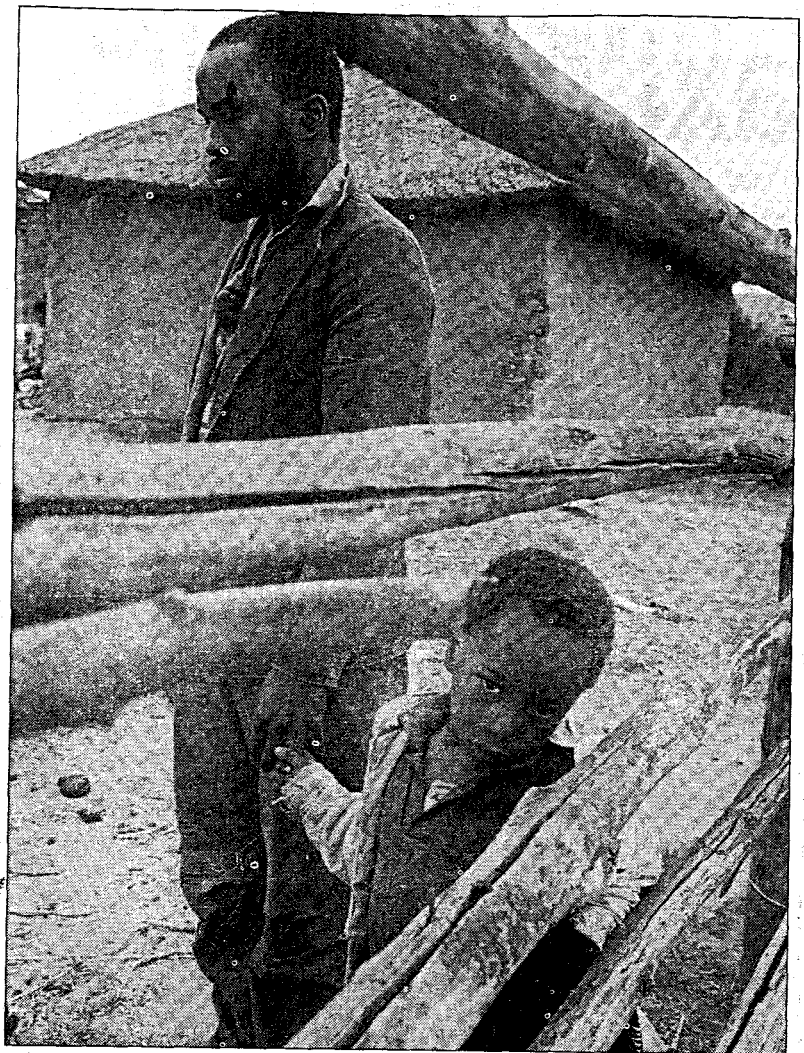
e)
What is the 'figure' in this picture?

What is the 'ground'?

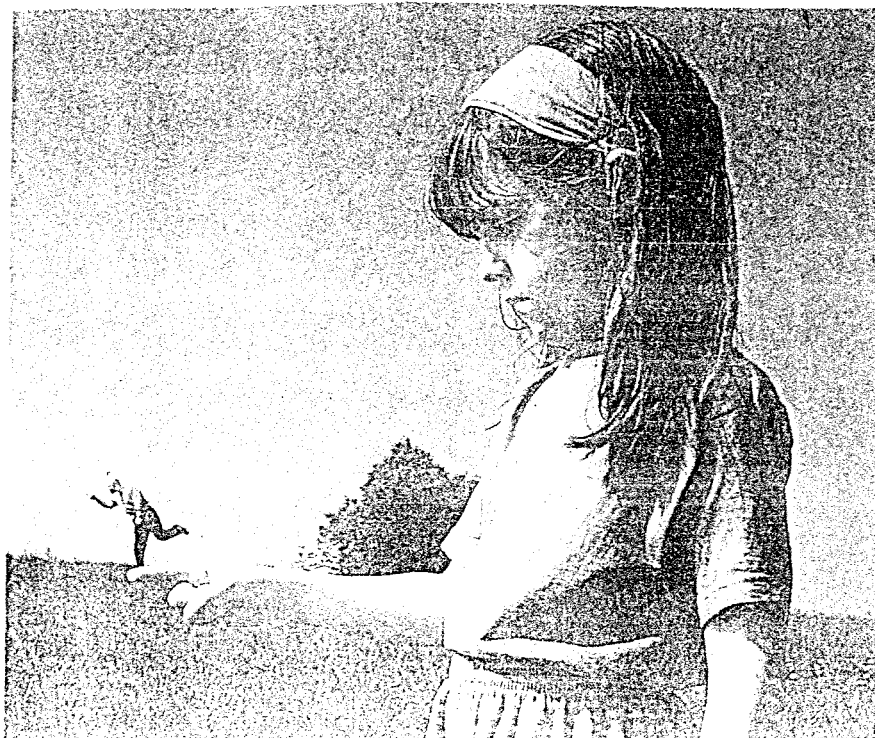
What is emphasized here?

- 13 What angle is this photograph taken from?

Why did the photographer choose this angle?



- 14 Choose the correct answer: This picture shows
- a) a girl holding a fairy
 - b) a giant girl balancing a human on the end of her finger
 - c) a girl standing in the foreground and a man balancing in the background



15a) ● ● What do these two dots remind you of? Draw as many things as you can think of.

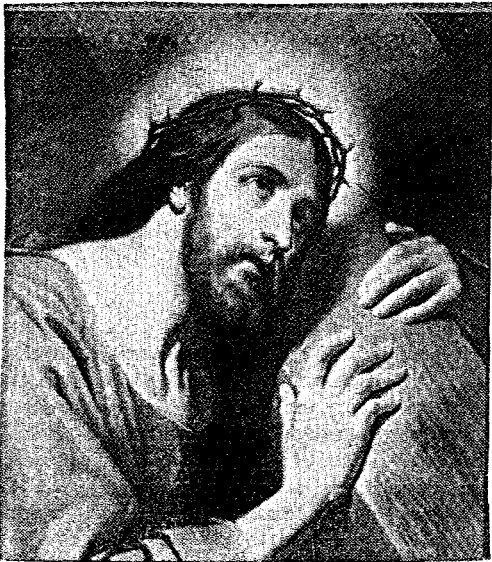


b) What does this line remind you of? Write down as many things as you can.



This image shows a single page of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.





a) _____



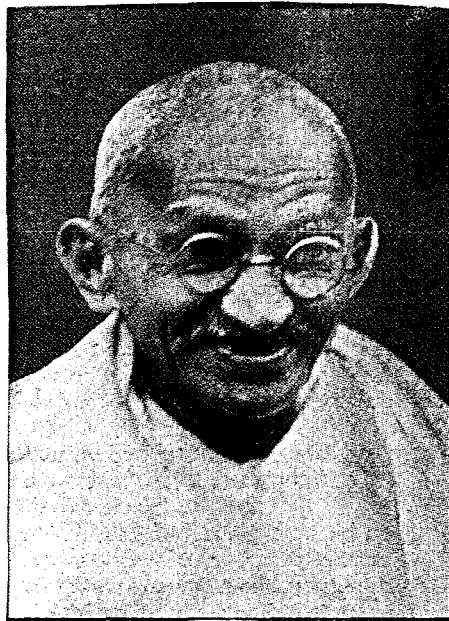
d) _____



b) _____



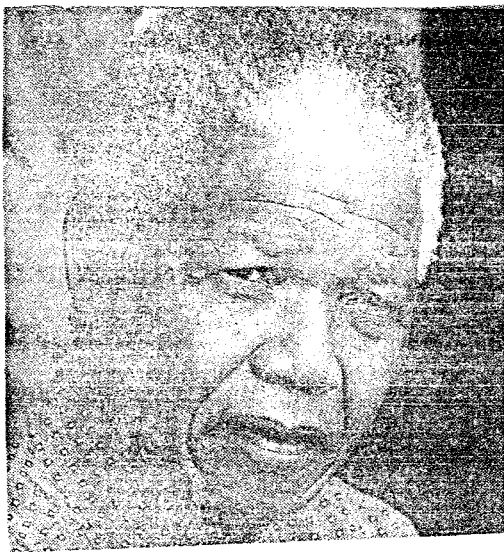
c) _____



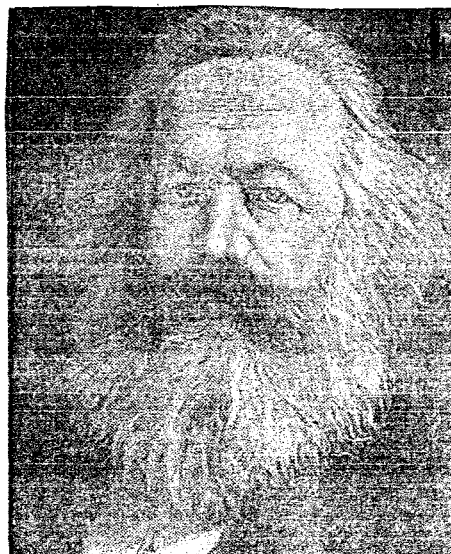
e) _____



f) _____



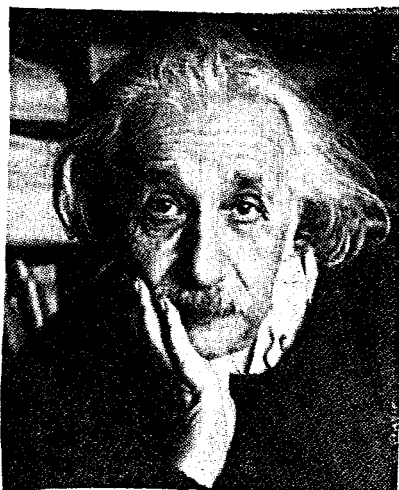
g) _____



h) _____



i) _____



j) _____

k) _____

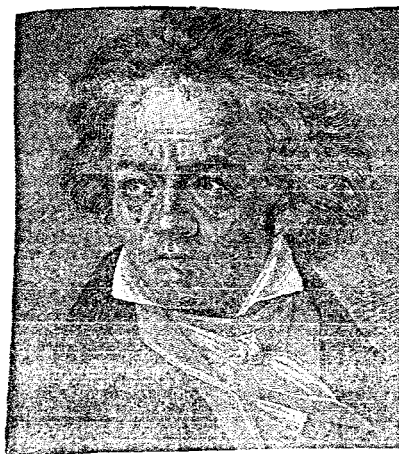
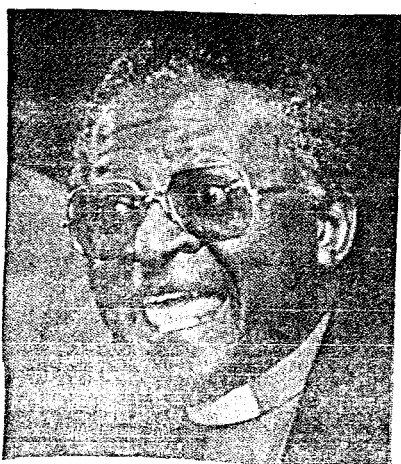
l) _____



m) _____

n) _____

o) _____



p) _____

q) _____

r) _____

18 What is this? _____

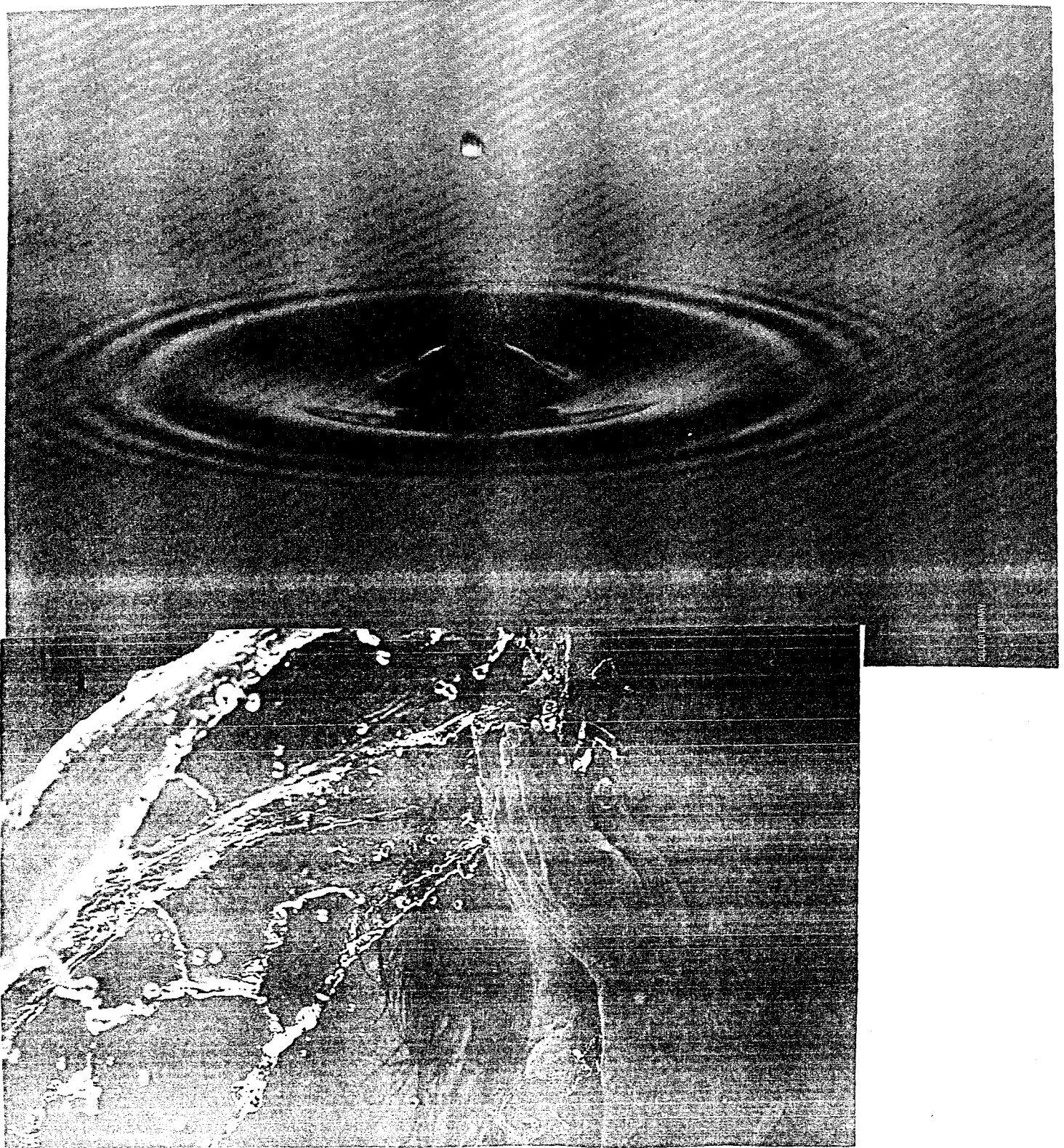
How do you know? _____



- 19 Describe this picture as well as you can, so that someone who is not actually looking at it would recognise it later from your description. (Think about the atmosphere, the season, how it makes you feel, the diagonal lines etc.)



20 Study these pictures. How do they make you feel? Why?



21 Look at the picture below.

a) What aspects of this image appear dominant or larger than other objects?

b) What would the physical sensation be if you were able to touch the objects in this image?

c) How does this picture make you feel? E.g. happy, sad, joyful, weepy etc.



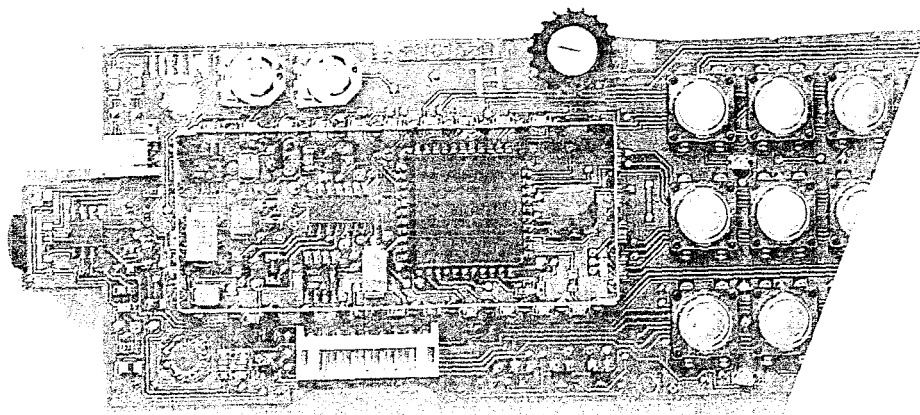
22 What is this?

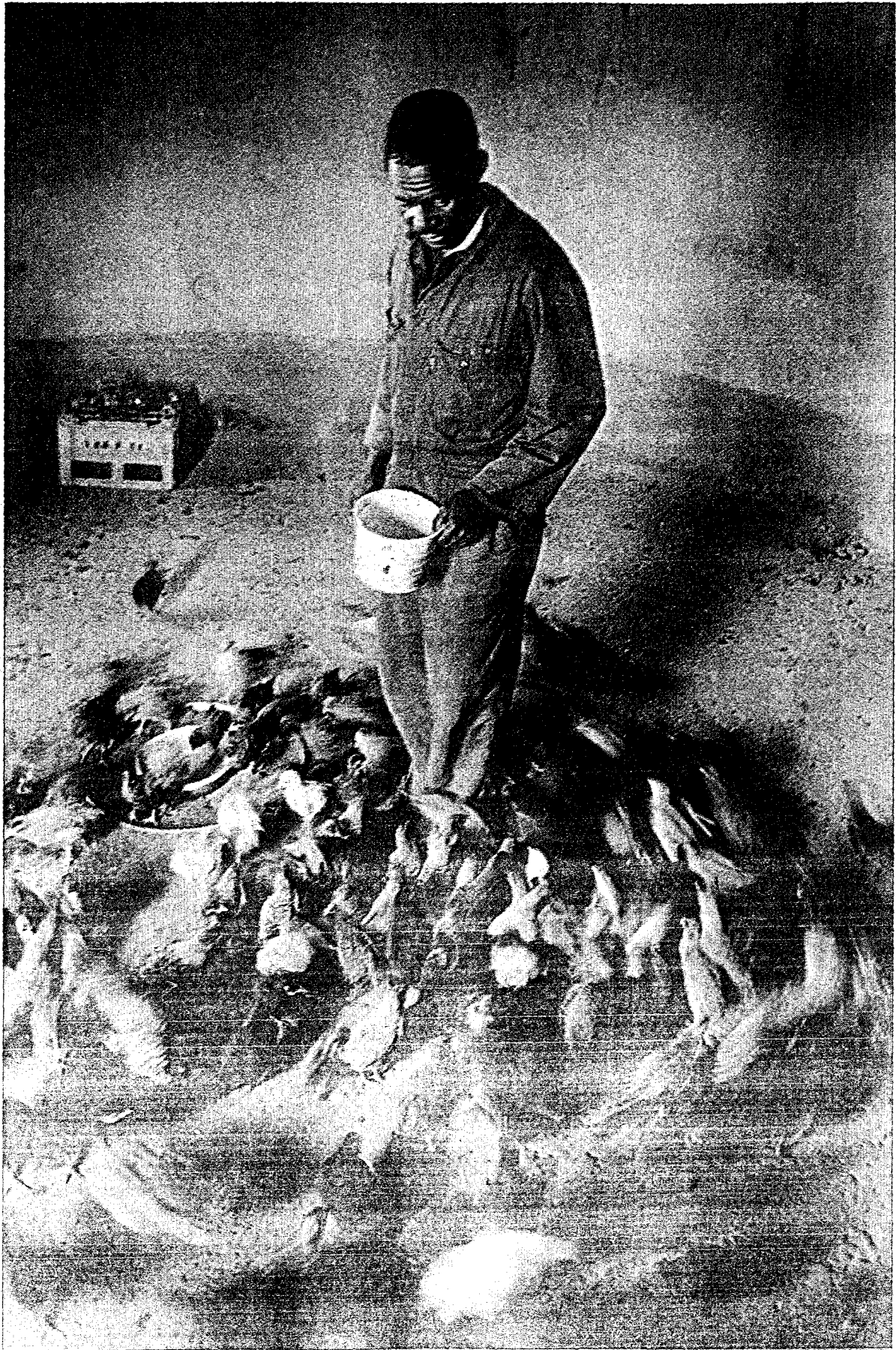


23 What has happened here?



24 What is this?





Empowerment, confined to boardrooms, has had little trickle-down effect and some are beginning to ask: Which comes first – the chicken, or the egg?

PHOTOGRAPH: GUY TILLIM / SOUTH PHOTOGRAPHS

a) Why are the chickens blurred?

b) What does this blurring show us about the chickens?

c) Where is the photographer standing? Ring the correct answer:

- i) above the man
- ii) below the man
- iii) eye-level with the man
- iv) eye-level with the chickens

d) Where do you think you would find this picture? Ring the correct answer:

- i) in a farmer's magazine
- ii) in a newspaper article on reconstruction and development
- iii) in a book on chicken farming
- iv) in a book on photography

e) Do you think this is a good picture? Give a reason for your answer.

26 Use the next page to draw a picture. Read the following description of a photograph. Then try to draw it exactly as you imagine it from the description.

Description

A middle-aged plump woman in a country area of South Africa is walking down a dirt road away from you. The woman takes up most of the page. The road surrounds her figure, with the furthest point ending just above her head. (Look at the plan for an idea. Use the whole page, not just a tiny piece of it.) You can see only her back. In her left hand she is holding a pair of smart shoes, in her right a stick and a black leather bag and a plastic packet. She is dressed smartly with a doek on her head and a bright scarf around her shoulders.

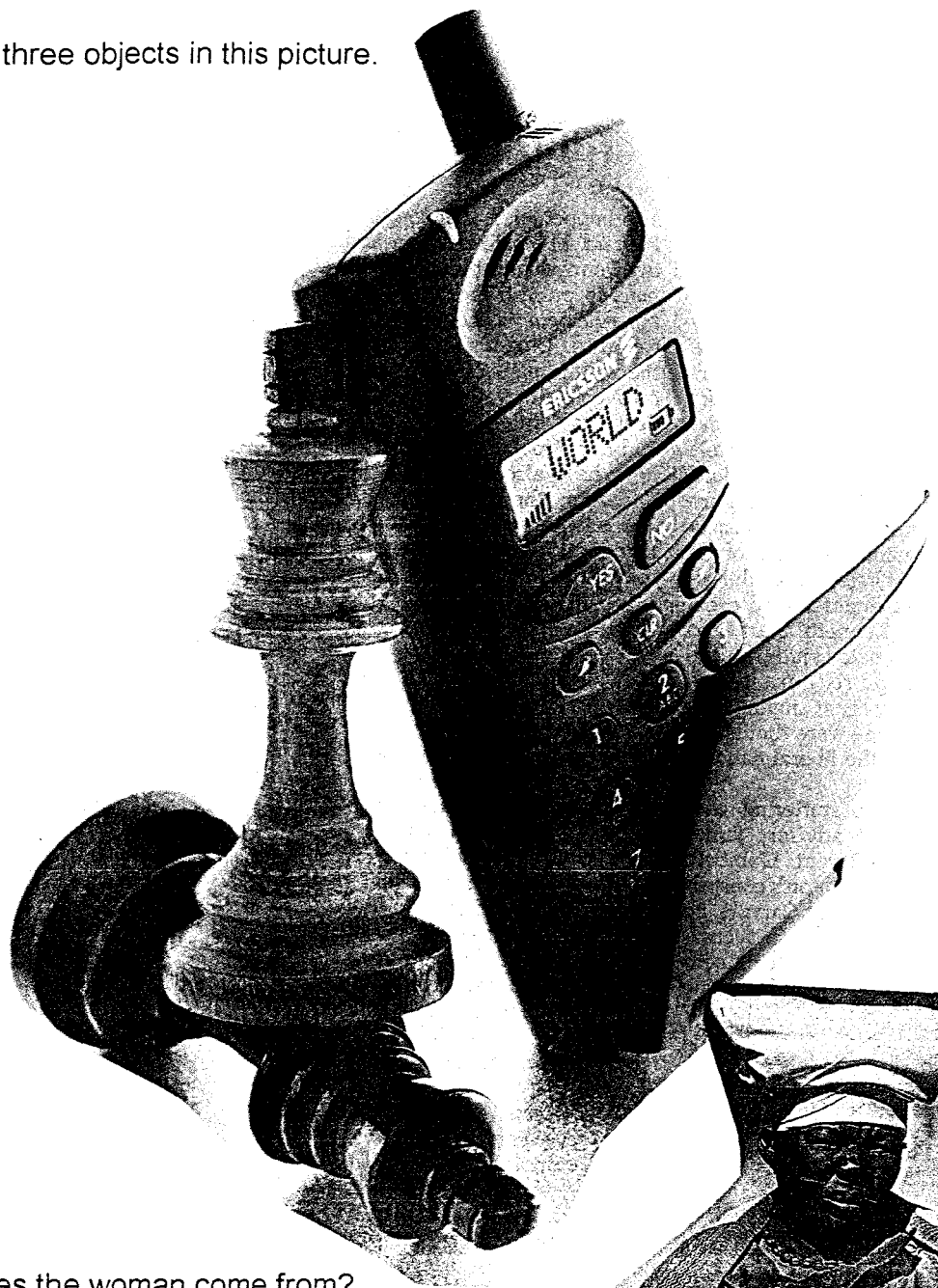
There is a deciduous tree on the left hand side of the road, a little way ahead of her. Her shadow is behind her, shortened and coming out at the back of her feet and pointing to the right slightly. At the end of the road a mountain can be seen.



The learners were shown this picture, to much mirth on their part, after they had completed their drawings.



27 Name the three objects in this picture.



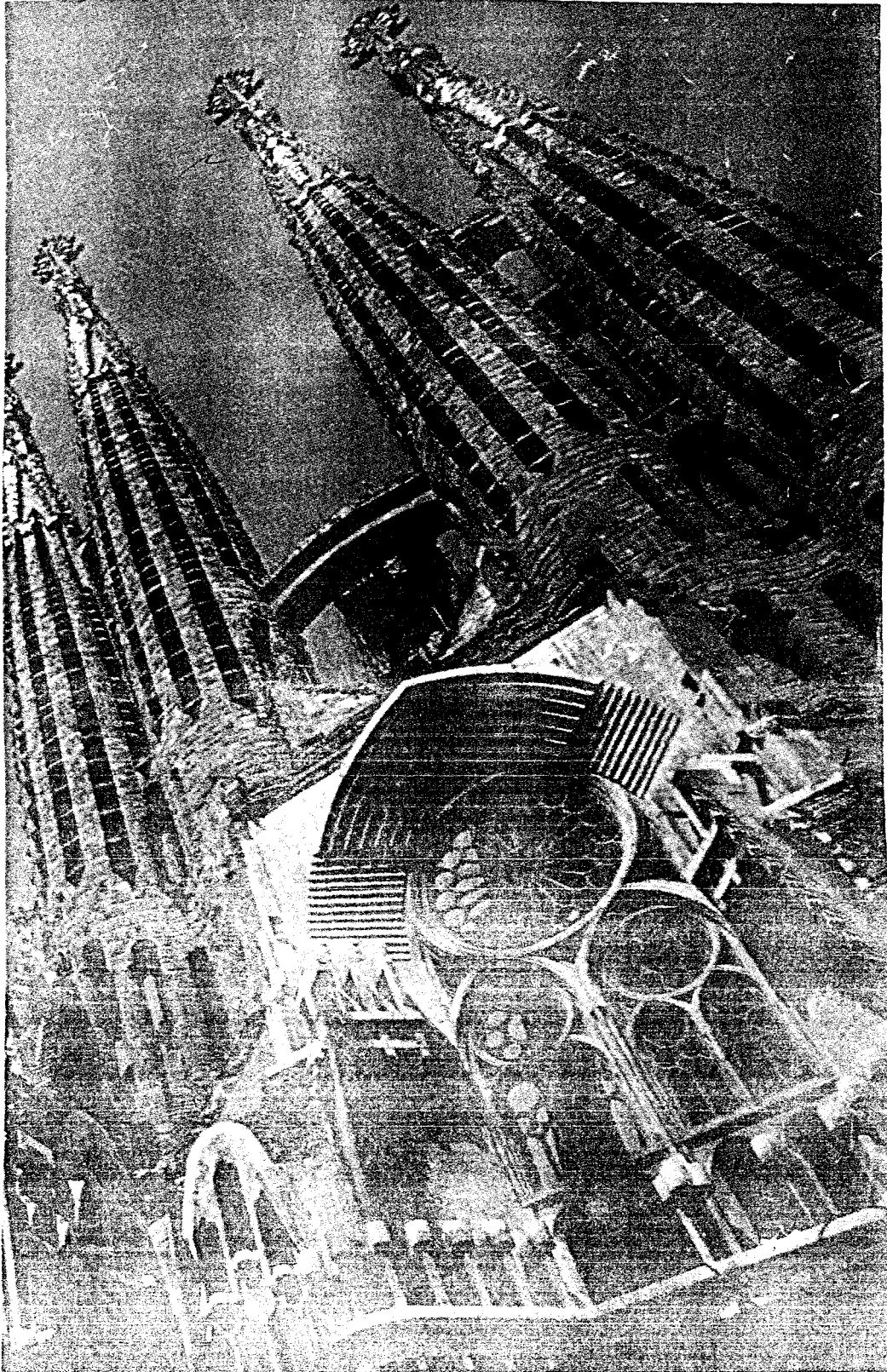
28 Where does the woman come from?
Write three sentences about this picture.



29 a) What is this?

b) Is the person who is taking the photograph standing outside the bottom, middle or top of the building?

c) Where do you think this building is? In which country?



30 This is an advert for Benetton clothing, and the caption is always:
UNITED COLOURS OF BENETTON.

Do you think it is a good advert?

Why?

Why not?

Write three sentences about the advert/picture.

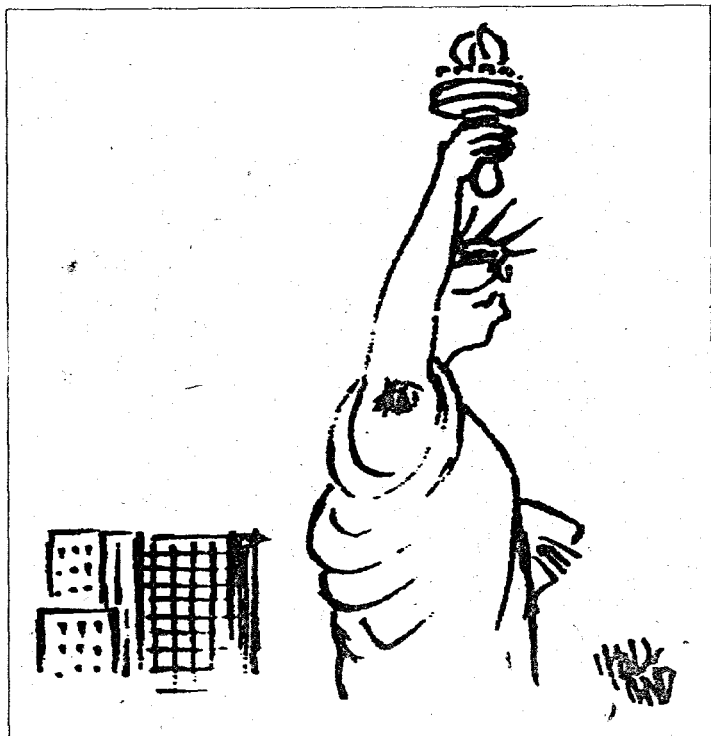


- 31 Remember that we talked about this statue in America. It is called the Statue of Liberty. Look at the different versions of it.

a)



b)



Look at the second picture. It is a cartoon found in a newspaper. What is funny about it?



33 Look at the advert on the next page and then answer the questions below:

- a) What does this page advertise? _____
- b) Do baby elephants really hatch out of eggs? _____
- c) Where are they walking off to? _____
- d) What kind of bird is in the picture? (You can use the Xhosa word if you want.) _____
- e) Where in the world do you find such elephants?

Thank you so much for filling in this questionnaire!

THE CREATION OF A NEW COMPUTER GROUP

What's in it for you.

Recently South Africa witnessed the formation of a remarkable computer group. South Africa's largest computer company gave birth to 25 smaller ones. Each born of a different need, each with a common mission.

To serve you better. To go further. To move faster. But always to be at your side.

INFORMATION SERVICES GROUP

ISG, the largest and most successful general purpose computer company in the country has been reorganised into a specialised family of companies that cover the full spectrum of information technology and services.

Independent, flexible and dedicated to providing the highest level of customer service, each of the companies guarantees unmatched levels of customer service through the integration of world class hardware, application software and services.

In addition to the accepted reliability of the IBM brand, products available range from the fastest commercial mainframes to sophisticated Personal Computers designed for home use.

These products are further supported by companies offering the full range of application software and services necessary to deliver working systems.

With ISG's formidable technological resource come the finest skills in the country.

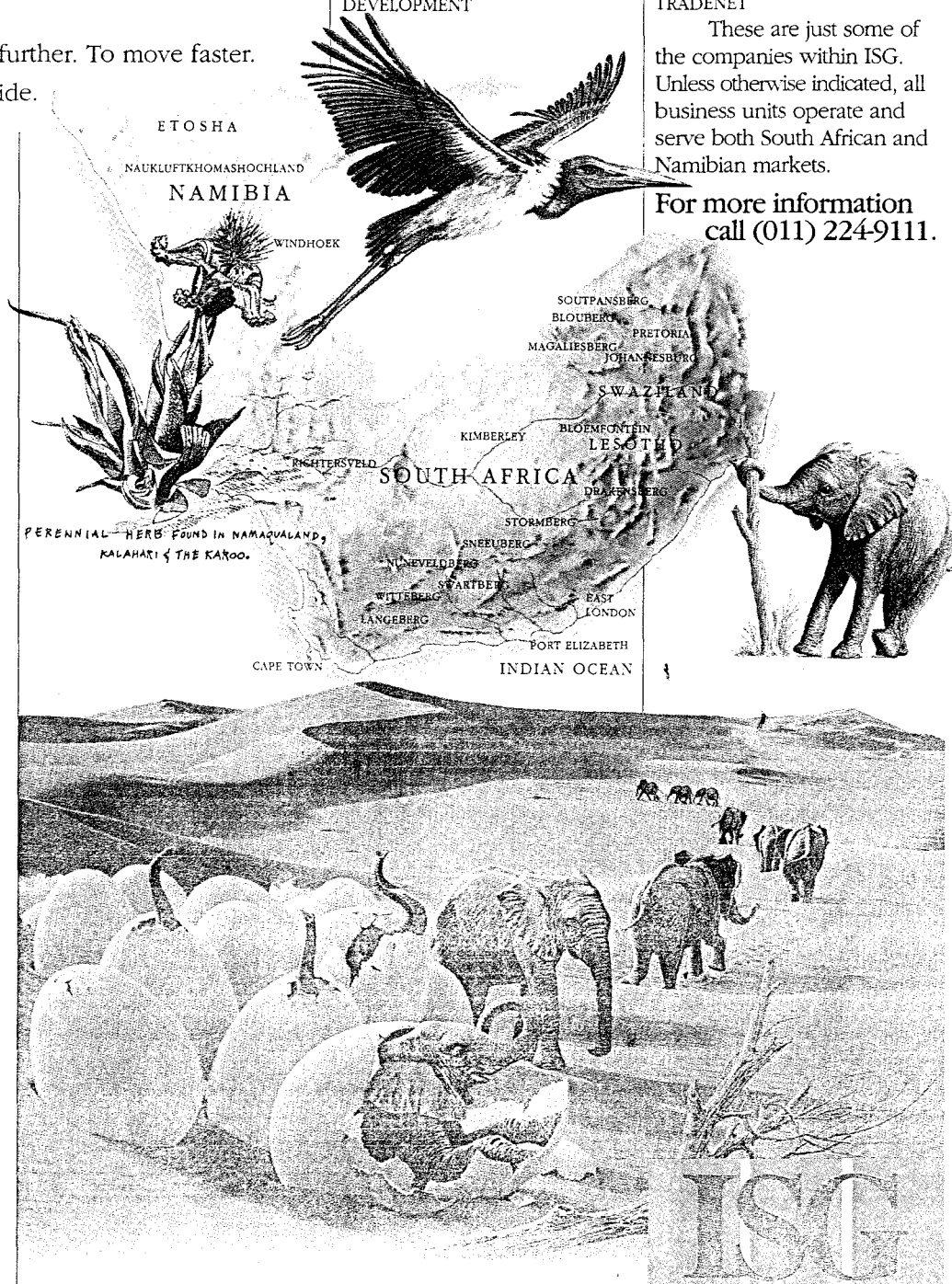
Years of experience and international expertise are immediately available from each of these companies, dedicated to providing solutions in their chosen niche markets.

ISG CORPORATE BUSINESS DIVISION
ISM ENTERPRISE SYSTEMS
ISM APPLICATION BUSINESS SYSTEMS
ISM RISC SYSTEMS
ISM GENERAL BUSINESS MARKETING
ISM WORKSTATIONS, PRINTERS AND MEDIA
ISG CUSTOMER SERVICES
SIGNATURE COMPUTER PRODUCTS
ISG TECHLAB
ISM EDUCATION SERVICES
EDUCATION MARKET DEVELOPMENT

ISM FACILITIES MANAGEMENT SERVICES
ISG SYSTEMS INTEGRATION
ISM NETWORK SOLUTIONS
ISM PERSONAL SYSTEMS
TRAFEX
BUSINESS FUTURES GROUP
INFOMET
ISG APPLICATION SOFTWARE
ENGINEERING
RESOLVE TECHNOLOGIES
DATA TECHNOLOGIES
POLYGON SYSTEMS
TECHNOLOGY SYSTEMS
EDUCATION
SOLUTIONS 2000
TRADENET

These are just some of the companies within ISG. Unless otherwise indicated, all business units operate and serve both South African and Namibian markets.

For more information call (011) 224-9111.

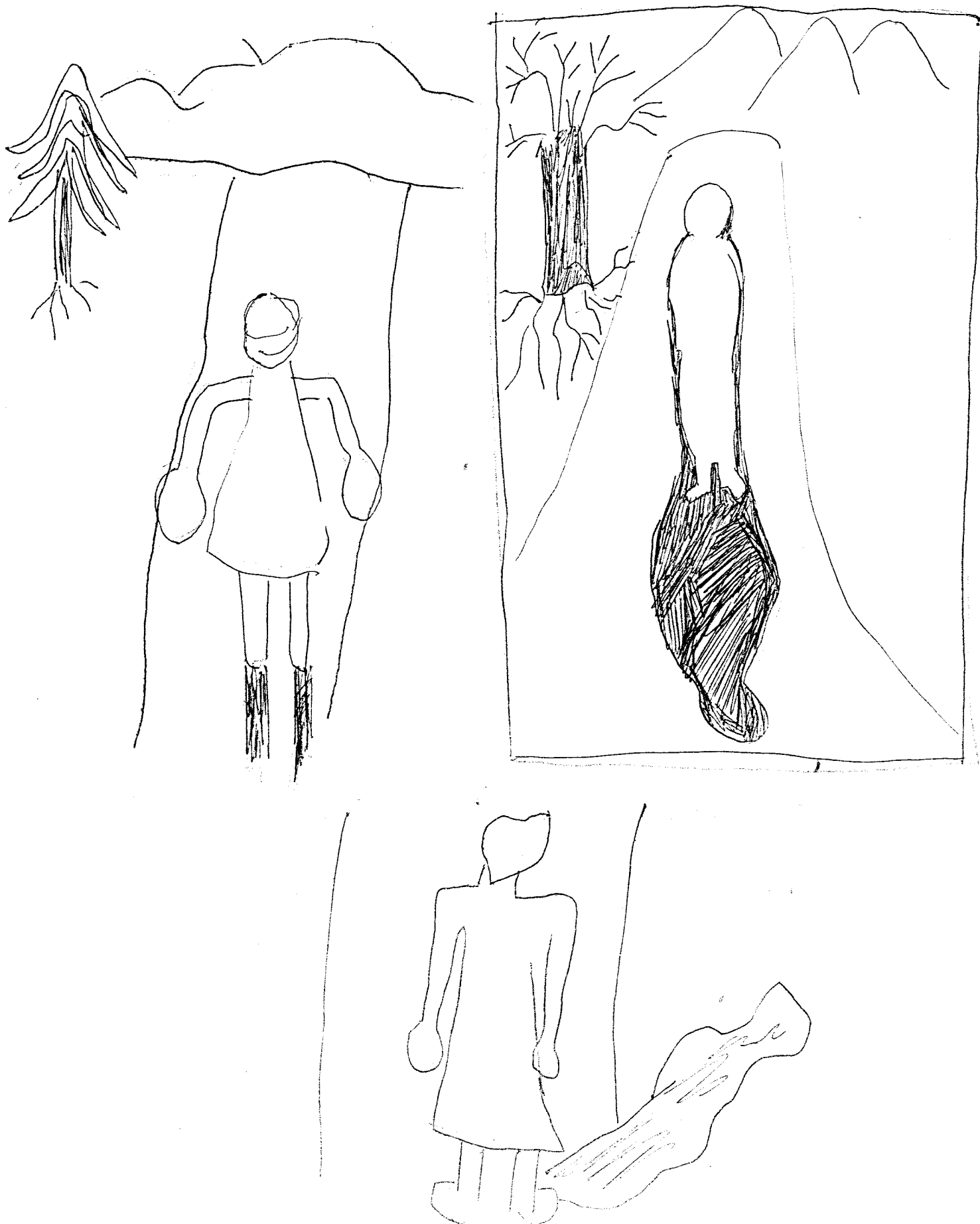


IT'S THE WAY WE PUT IT TOGETHER THAT SETS US APART.

Information Services Group

Appendix D

Some examples of learners' drawings for Question 26.



Appendix E

Final Evaluation - Visual Literacy and Pilot Project - Integrated Sciences and Social Studies

- 1 Name: _____
- 2 What work do you do? _____
- 3 What encouraged you to join this class? _____

- 4 Make a list of the things that you have learned in class:
New skills: _____

New knowledge: _____

New attitudes: _____

- 5 Outside the class, in life and at work, how are you using your new skills?

6 How has doing this course changed you as a person?

In your own eyes: _____

In the eyes of your family: _____

In the eyes of your friends: _____

In the eyes of the people at your work: _____

7 What things would you still like to learn at the Centre?

8 Estimate your achievements in Reading, Writing, Visual Literacy, Integrated Sciences and Social Studies.

	Very low	Low	Medium	High	Very high ¹
Reading					
Writing					
Visual Literacy					
Integrated Sciences					
Social Studies					

Appendix F

Questionnaire for Adult literacy tutors

Name: _____

Age: _____

Circle the answers which apply to each question and please try to answer the written questions fully in each case.

1 Which aspects of these workbooks did you find most problematic?

- f) integrated sciences - "science" section
- g) integrated sciences - "biology" section
- h) social studies - "history" section
- i) social studies - "geography" section

2 Please give a reason for your answer in number 1.

3 Which portions do you think were most successful?

- i) integrated sciences - "science" section
- ii) integrated sciences - "biology" section
- iii) social studies - "history" section
- iv) social studies - "geography" section

4 Please give a reason for your answer in number 3.

5 What aspects of visual images have you found to be problematic for adult learners at your centre?

- i) recognition of objects
- ii) perspective
- iii) western pictorial symbols
- iv) cross section
- v) literal interpretation of abstract, decorative or figurative images.

6 Do you think that visual literacy should be taught? Why?

7 What are the main things you think adult learners should be taught? (Ring)

- i) English
- ii) Maths
- iii) History
- iv) Geography
- v) Science
- vi) Biology
- vii) Technology
- viii) Life skills
- ix) Practical applications e.g. gardening, sewing, cooking, first aid, etc.

8 Please give a reason for each learning area which you chose in number 7.

i) English _____

ii) Maths _____

iii) History _____

iv) Geography _____

v) Science _____

vi) Biology _____

vii) Technology _____

viii) Life skills _____

ix) Practical applications e.g. gardening, sewing, cooking, first aid, etc.

- 9 Do you have any solutions to any visual/perceptual or language problems your learners have? E.g. any time when you thought of something which worked with your learners, after having a difficult problem.

- 10 Please add anything you want to here: e.g. suggestions for further research, suggestions for how to improve the books, what level do you think the books are? Etc.
