

Michel Thiollent
State University of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

Questions of Language in a Training Mechanism for Unemployed Metallurgy Workers in Brazil

With the globalization and company restructuring, the area of metallurgy is characterized by an increase in the number of unemployed. The level of education of these, often inferior to a first degree, makes conversion difficult. One union (CNM/CUT) has developed a training mechanism (at the level of primary education) for those out of work. A large scale experiment more commonly known as *Projeto Integrar*. It is innovative in its educational approach and is interesting in the way it analyzes language.

Four principles relating to language can be highlighted:

1. Mastery of spoken and written language tied to the access to knowledge about the present-day world. Conventional subjects (Portuguese, history, geography, physics, chemistry, English, etc.) are taught in an integrated fashion in order to perfect language usage within these different aspects. Mastery of the Portuguese language, written language, technical register, elements of English, all of which are situated within a perspective of industrial transformations in progress.
2. Acquisition of a socio-economic vocabulary adapted to a new situation. Within the context of modernization, the vocabulary of management enters into daily life and changes one's perception of reality. For example, terms like "qualifications", "yield" and "productivity" tend to be substituted by "abilities", "performances" and "quality", respectively. The first group of terms refers to a Taylorist-Fordist vision, while the second group is associated with a recent vision of modernity. The documents used in training are written with consideration for critical method and lexical changes.
3. Relating language to technical skills. Workers in this area have professional training and experience tied to the use of machine-tools and fabrication procedure which evolves rapidly. It is, in fact, impossible to make the students able to master this evolution. In the beginning, the relation of language to technical skills is limited to an introduction to systems of measurement and computer skills, which makes a certain versatility possible.
4. Relating language to action. In Brazil, an educational tradition exists which has been derived from the influence of Paulo Freire. According to this tradition, learning new words does not only enrich vocabulary but it also amplifies one's ability to act and to transform one's situation. In this example, language learning is organized in such a way as to encourage students' to express themselves about questions relating to the possibilities of work or the formation of cooperatives. Learning of written language, with help from the computer, and spoken language, with the support of visual exposition, happens by means of exercises laden with significant contents. For example, it is a question of knowing how to write up a foundation project for a cooperative and being able to present it to the representatives of public organizations.

In conclusion, in the context of a system created for the needs of workers without jobs, questions of language are addressed in accordance with the four principles presented above.