



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
1987 Volume I: The Modern Short Story in Latin America

Improving Thinking Skills of Spanish Learning Disabled Students Through the Analysis of Latin-American Short Stories

Curriculum Unit 87.01.06

by Bethania Urena Hernandez

In this curriculum and I am focusing on a specific cognitive dysfunction encountered in culturally deprived students: a lack of spontaneous comparative behavior, that is to compare objects and experiences to others to see what is similar and what is different.

Developing this unit I am using Reuven Feuerstein's theory of mediating learning experience (MLE) from his book *Instrumental Enrichment: An Intervention Program for Cognitive Modifiability*. I am taking from him my specific objectives and citing some of his findings concerning culturally deprived children, the cognitive dysfunction that they manifest, and some techniques of remediation. I have chosen to focus on this student population, especially middle school through high school Spanish learning disabled students, because these are the students with whom I work and for whom I have developed the specific lesson plan that follows.

With the purpose of creating inside motivation and understanding of the material, I will introduce the unit by presenting several lessons of comparison from the Reuven Feuerstein's book. Reuven Feuerstein's Instrumental Enrichment program has been used in the New Haven system since 1982, with slow learners in middle and high schools. For information about the program, teachers may contact Mrs. Pauline White at The Staff Development Office, East Rock Community School.

I will make a bridge from Feuerstein's Instrument "comparison" into Languages Arts by analyzing and comparing short stories from Latin-American writers.

Spanish learning disabled students, like any other learning disabled children, present common characteristics such as:

- poor reading skills
- poor reading comprehension
- poor written and/or oral communication skills
- poor math skills
- poor or no problem solving skills
- poor or no interest in academics
- low tolerance to frustration

Besides these characteristics, there are other factors in these students which make their present special patterns of behaviors and learning deficiencies, and at the same time requires special instructional techniques in order to help them to improve academically and emotionally. Those factors are: the majority of the families where these students come from live in depressed areas; most of them have illiterate parents with a large family (sometimes with six, eight or more children); most of the time the students live only with one of the parents, generally with the mother, or the grand-parents. Occasionally the father is in jail or has already formed another family. This situation leaves the mother with little time or the knowledge to interact with the children telling stories, talking about the family or past events, or providing any kind of cultural transmission. What is worse, the mother has a poor self-concept, thinks of herself as illiterate and inept and passes this attitude to her children. Feuerstein has commented on the effects of such a situation;

This attitude toward such an important and vital aspect of one's past cannot but result in a rejection of oneself and will affect, in the first instance the nature of the relationship between mother and child. By rejecting one's own worth as a person, the mother limits her relationship with her child to the fulfillment of his biological needs. Inclination to provide the child with anything beyond his immediate requirements is diminished, if not eliminated. Many such parents openly declare that they are ignorant, illiterate and unskilled people and have nothing to give their children and, indeed, express concern that their offspring will grow up like them, In this manner an entire community may relinquish its responsibilities in shaping the future generations. Clearly, such an attitude will have a considerable impact on the self-image, identification, socialization and moral and cognitive development of the child. ¹

Feuerstein underlined the importance of the cultural transmission or remediation between mother and child, pointing out that without such mediation, the child will become stuck in the present; he can not become oriented properly for the future. It is very common also that the custodian of the child (mother or grand mother) suffers from a disease which requires that she stay in bed and occasionally requires hospitalization. In such a situation the oldest child, often a middle school student, must assume the responsibility for taking care of the house and the youngest child. The result is a great deal of absenteeism from school.

All of these factors accompanied by a high degree of migration and emigration place these children in a culturally deprived population. Such a group is further deprived of course by its unfamiliarity with the language and customs of the dominant English speaking population. Reuven Feuerstein has commented on the particular problem of such children when they immigrate into a dominant culture: "Clashes between cultures are frequently observed as a result of immigration. This is especially the case when people from culturally different and disadvantaged minority groups are confronted with the requirements of a dominant culture that is largely unfamiliar to them." ² Feuerstein also says, "It is our view that both level of scholastic achievement and the low level of general cognitive adaptation of the retarded performers especially among socioculturally disadvantaged adolescents are a product of a lack of, or inefficient use of, those functions that are the prerequisites to adequate thinking." ³ He also says: "children from economically and psychologically impoverished homes perform poorly on intelligence tests and function generally at a low level because they have been denied appropriate learning experiences." ⁴

In this curriculum unit I am focusing on a specific cognitive dysfunction encountered in these students: "Lack of spontaneous comparative behavior", a mental process by which relationships between objects and events are established.

In this respect Feuerstein states: "Lack of summative and comparative behavior, will limit even further an awareness of experienced time even more than it will restrict perception of other dimensions of the

experienced world. An episodic grasp of real need for organizing, sequencing and understanding the relationship between ordered along temporal dimensions.”⁵ He also says:

Comparative behavior is therefore one of the functions that must be corrected before the various other steps in development. Inducing comparison initially involves making the individual perceive two or more objects or events at the focus of the scrutiny. Inducing such perception is done not simply, so that the individuals will identify discrete entities but to facilitate the establishment of relationships between the objects of his scrutiny in terms of their differences and commonalities. The lack of spontaneous comparative behavior leaves the individual unaffected by the variety of experiences he has undergone.⁶

In order to help the students to overcome this inability, my main goal is to improve thinking skills by analyzing and comparing short stories in terms of topic, main idea, characters, places etc.

Students will compare these stories with similar ones from the students’ own country.

Attributes by which the stories will be compared will be established. They will include: nationality, language, sex, occupation, weather, food, music, places and feelings. A great deal of emphasis will be placed on using planning behavior, systematic work, hypothetical thinking, looking for cause and effects, making inferences, generalization etc. We will pay special attention to verbal expression because this is one of the most common deficiencies that these students present, for example, have limited vocabularies. When asked for synonyms and/or antonyms or when asked to describe and object, they are unable to present adequate answers. Even when students have an extensive vocabulary, they mispronounce the words and their sentences are not well structured. In this respect Feuerstein also writes about his finding of the relationship between language and cognitive functions.

A lack of verbal skills may also affect a child’s ability to elaborate certain cognitive operations. The absence of a specific verbal code to designate certain attributes of an object will not only affect efficiency at the input phase; on the elaborational level (see *Instrumental Enrichment And Intervention Program For Cognitive Modifiability* by Reuven Feuerstein pages 73, 74 & 75.) Lack of operational terms such as: “opposite”, “relation” and “identity” may keep the child bound to specific tasks that he can handle on a concrete level and may impair his ability to generalize the same operation on tasks differing in content and complexity.⁷

Input refers to the way we receive incoming information. Elaboration refers to the way we mentally process this information. Output refers to how we express the understanding of the received information.

When Feuerstein refers to “opposite”, “relation” and “identity” these concepts require a more abstract mental process. If the students do not know the meaning of the words or they are not able to process the information mentally, they will never be able to work on a more complex task.

How can we as educators, help such students learn? To address the problem of these students, specific objectives are needed. The general objectives are the same as they might be in any language arts classroom.

1. Improve reading skills
2. Improve oral and reading comprehension
3. Participate in class discussion
4. Improve communication skills
5. Dictionary skills

The specific objectives adopted from Feuerstein are as follows:

1. "To enhance the comparative behavior of the students." To help the students understand the need for comparison in any life situation such as: when buying food; fruits, vegetables etc. To select the most fresh and healthiest ones, those which have less calories etc. When buying clothes, shoes, to compare material, style, which are more washable, best finished, prices etc. In vocational, which job is more applicable to his/her knowledge, or more convenient in terms of salary, location etc. In academic in math, when reading content tables, bargraphs about weather, population etc.
2. "To increase and enrich the repertory of attributes by which stimuli can be compared." Even though these students can identify certain attributes or objects such as color, sizes, shapes etc., they do not have the ability to identify abstract attributes such as: personality, direction, etc.
3. "To isolate relevant parameters for comparison by increasing the students' ability to differentiate between elements." They do not have the ability to look for the most relevant characteristics when describing, two objects or pictures. They have the tendency to choose the most obvious.

When comparing milk and coca-cola, students would say: milk is white, the other is black, milk comes in a plastic container, the other comes in bottles or cans etc. But they do not say the milk comes from an animal, the coca cola is made by men or in a factory.

4. "To encourage flexibility in the use of parameters for comparison by increasing the students' ability to differentiate between elements."

This relates to an ability to elaborate at a more abstract level; looking for features, thinking of functions of the elements. It also has a lot to do with language because the larger vocabulary that they have the more attributes they can see and label.

This unit will cover two short stories from Central America and Two from Puerto Rico.

1. "The Christmas Festivities in Costa Rica" In *La Navidad* .
2. "The Christmas Festivities in Puerto Rico" In *What is happening in December*.
3. "One letter to God" (Una Carta a Dios) Gregorio L. Fuente. Taken from: *Modern Spanish Prose*.
4. "Esperanza" Taken from: *Leyendas de Puerto Rico*.

The unit will cover four to five weeks or more depending on the understanding of the material first and the

facility with which the students could transport the concepts to a more abstract level of comparison.

The first week will center around Reuven Feuerstein's instrument in comparison, the second week will include the introduction of reading and comparison of the first two short stories.

1. "Como se celebra la Navidad en Costa Rica"
2. "Como se celebra la Navidad en Puerto Rico"

The third week will include reading analysis and comparison of two other short stories.

1. "One letter to God"
2. "Esperanza"

The fourth week the class will read, analyze and compare short stories selected by the students from the classroom or the school library.

Procedure:

The teacher will say to the students: We will work on a very interesting program which will help you a lot to improve thinking skills. This program concerns comparison. The teacher will explain what comparison is: Why and when we compare. He or she will talk about attributes of objects. Give examples: An apple is a fruit, is red, contains juice, has seeds etc. A banana is yellow, is long, has seeds, is soft.

The teacher will tell the students that if we compare the two fruits, we look for similarities (common things), and differences.

Commonalities

both are fruits

both have juice

both have seeds

Differences

color

shape

size & texture come from different climates etc.

The teacher should give other examples using people. Two siblings, Jose eight years old in 3rd grade and

Maria six years old in first grade:

Commonalities

both are human beings

same parents

same house

same school

Differences

different sexes

different ages

different names

different grades

The teacher will ask the students, what other things can be compared?

Possible answers: cars, animals, sports etc. The teacher would say: yes what else? trying to give each student the opportunity to talk. After this introduction the teacher will start presenting the lesson.

(figure available in print form)

Indicate what is common to each pair of pictures and the differences between them.

(figure available in print form)

Indicate what is in common to the things named by each pair of words and the differences between them.

(figure available in print form)

In each of the following exercises, you are given the similarity and differences. Fill in what is missing so that your answers are described by the given information.

(figure available in print form)

Look at the sample. In each of the two frames, make a drawing that is different from the sample in those aspects indicated by the encircled words.

(figure available in print form)

Indicate what is common to each pair of pictures and the differences between them.

After this work on comparisons, the teacher will bridge into short stories. Each story can take one or two days to complete. "How People in Costa Rica celebrate "Christmas."

Strategy

The teacher will prepare dittos with the stories for each student in the class on short stories.

Procedure

As it becomes evident that the students are having difficulty reading, and in order to set the students more familiar with the subject, a model reading story will be recommended. The teacher will read the story asking the students to read with her/him but silently. The teacher will comment briefly, mentioning the most

important aspects of the story such as places, events, etc. Later the teacher will ask the students to read one or two paragraphs of the story and when the reading is finished, the teacher will initiate a discussion by asking questions like this: “who can remember the title of the story?”, “Do you think it was an interesting story?”, “ A funny or a sad story?” etc..

Discussion

Teacher: What is the story all about?

Answer : How people celebrate Christmas in Costa Rica?

Teacher: Very good. When do they start celebrating Christmas?

Answer : The 24 of December.

Teacher: Very good. Who can tell me what do we celebrate in Christmas?

Answer : The nativity of Jesus.

Teacher: Very good, So, What is the Christmas Party?

Answer : A holiday, a Party.

Teacher: Christmas is a birthday party, we celebrate the nativity of Jesus, he was born 1989 years ago, and we as Christians celebrate his birthday. Now Let us see how the people in Costa Rica Celebrate Christmas.

Answer : They start the 24 and continue until January 1st.

Teacher: Very Good, and who celebrates the Christmas?

Answer : Everybody, men, women and children.

Teacher: Yes, everybody is happy celebrating. The story says that they open chinamos . . . Who can tell the class what chinamos are?

Answer : Places where people sell food.

Teacher: What kind of food do they sell?

Answer : The story only says “Gallos” like Mexican tacos but the school principal who is from Costa Rica says that they also eat tamales, empanadas, palmito etc.

Teacher: Very good. (here the teacher induce the students to think hypothetically) What other foods do you think they also eat at Christmas?

Answer : Maybe Puerco Asado (Roasted Pork), rice and peas, salad, candies and guaro made with sugar cane.

Teacher: Very good, this is a very good assumption, and probably something else different, every country has its own food, something different for each What about entertainment?

Answer : They have games for children and games for adults.

Teacher: Yes, let us see what kind of entertainment they have for children.

Answer: Carrousels, Toboggan, roulettes, trains etc.

Teacher: Very good, They have a lot of things for children, now let us see what do they have for adults.

Answer: Roulette, bull fights.

Teacher: Yes, they also have bull fights, have you ever seen this?

Answer: Yes, in the movies and on television.

Teacher: They have this sport in Spain and in many countries in Latin America, What other kind of entertainment they have.

Answer: Football, bike racing, parties, firecrackers, they also dance in the parks and in their houses.

Teacher: Yes, it looks like every body has a lot of fun. Let us analyze this story in detail.

The Teacher will go to the blackboard and write the following;

Subject— How Costa Rica Celebrates Christmas?

Characters Sex Country Language Food Entert Feelings

men
women
children

The teacher will write every answer given by the students in the appropriated spaces above.

The next reading selection would be “How Puerto Rico celebrate Christmas.” With this story the same procedure is followed. After the second analysis has been completed, the teacher will explain to the students the next activity: To compare the two stories. The teacher asks questions and directs the discussion, emphasizing always the most relevant points. The teacher will write the subject on the blackboard, title and attributes by which the two stories will be compare.

Christmas Celebration

Country—Costa Rica: Puerto Rico

Location—Central America: Caribbean

Language— Spanish: Spanish

Charac.— men, women, children: men, women

Time— December to January first: December, January

Food— Gallo, tamales, palmito: rice, peas, pork

Drink— guaro from sugar cane: coquito from coconut

Entert.— Music, dance, sport, football, bull fight, train: dance, parranda, trulla, tuna, firecrackers

Emotions—happiness, joy, excitement: happiness, joy excitement

After writing these analysis, the teacher explain to the students; Now we will compare the two Christmas celebrations and write on both sides of the black board,

Similarities

Differences

The teacher should always strive to direct the students to look for the most relevant attributes; as the teacher is writing on the board the students are writing at their desks. The students will write along with the teacher all the analysis of each story and the similarities and differences of each.

Next reading and analysis will be “Una Carta A Dios”;

Discussion

Teacher: What is this story all about?

Answer: A man who sent a letter to God.

Teacher: Yes, this man sent a letter to God, but why?

Answer: Because he needed money or, he wants God to Send money to him.

Teacher: Yes, but what did he need money for?

Answer: Because he lost everything in a storm

Teacher: So, what is the topic in this story?

Answer: A farmer lost his crops by a hail storm, and asked God for money.

Teacher: Good, now let us analyze the whole story, where did this story takes place?

Answer: On a farm, in the country side.

Teacher: Good, What was the man’s occupation?

Answer: Farmer.

Teacher: Very good, what is the farmer’s name?

Answer: Lencho.

Teacher: Was lencho single or married?

Answer: Married, and with children.

Teacher: What kind of crops did Lencho cultivated?

Answer: Corn and beans.

Teacher: Very Good, But, Were things going well or was there something wrong on the farm?

Answer: There was something wrong because the farm was destroyed by the hail storm.

Teacher: Yes, this was later, but what happened before? What was Lencho hoping for?

Answer: The land was very dry and Lencho was hoping it would rain.

Teacher: (Cause and Effect) Good, he wanted it to rain, why? What happens when it rains? What

is the rain for?

Answer: Because when the soil is dry the plants die and they need water to grow

Teacher: Very good, Why did Lencho think it was going to rain? Because the sky was dark and very cloudy, Here the teacher makes the student use hypothetical thinking by asking: "If it rains, what is going to happen to the farm?", "Do you think he is going to make a lot of money?"

Teacher: What happened later? Did it rain?

Answer : A hail storm came and destroyed the farm.

Teacher: Very good, what did Lencho do then?

Answer : He decided to send a letter to God asking for money in order to start planting again.

Teacher: (Exercise the students in logic use) Very good But tell me, do you think that this is possible?, Can God receive a letter?

Answer: No.

Teacher: Why not?

Answer: Because letters go by mail to the houses and God does not have a house; he is in heaven.

Teacher: Very good, It is not possible to mail a letter to God, but what happened then?

Answer: The manager sent the man the money he asked for.

Teacher: Very good, (Cause and effect) why do you think the man did that?

Answer: Because he is a good man and he was sad, because of what happened to Lencho.

Teacher: Very good, he was a very good person. Did he collect all the money that Lencho asked for?

Answer: No, only part of it.

Teacher: Yes, and what did Lencho thought about this? Was he happy?

Answer: No, he thought that the person in the post office opened the letter and took the money.

Teacher: Very good, now let us analyze the story in detail. Let us make a list of the characters found in the story.

Now the teacher writes on the blackboard a number of columns and asks the students for responses.

Title Una Carta A Dios

Characters Sex Occupation Place Objects Emotions

Lencho male farmer farm bean, corn worry, sad

Post office employee male manager post office letter s ad

After this analysis the teacher proceeds to the reading of the next story "Esperanza" following the same procedure.

After writing these analysis, the teacher explain to the students: Now we will compare the two stories looking for similarities and differences as we did before, and we will write them on both sides of the board.

The teacher will emphasize again systematic work and summative behavior by checking every column with the attributes and adding as more attributes as possible. Class discussion is also emphasize.

Any information given by the students will be written in the corresponding column. The teacher emphasizes systematic work by checking the story and looking for the most important aspects. After this analysis has been completed the teacher will start commenting on another story from Puerto Rico. In selecting the stories, the teacher must be careful to choose those ones which have something in common, so that there is a good basis for comparison.

With the second story, the same procedure is followed. After the second analysis has been completed the teacher will explain to the students the next activity: To compare the two stories.

Subject

Una Carta A Dios Esperanza

Country Mexico Puerto Rico

Charact . Lencho, Post office Miguel, Dog

Sex Males Males

Language Spanish Spanish

Job Farmer, Manager Fisherman

Place Farm, Post office The coast, San Juan

Weather Cloudy, Stormy Cloudy, Storm

Objects Corn, bean, letter Fish

Emotions Worried, sad, depressed worry, sad, depressed

Similarities

—
—
—
—
Differences

—
—
—
Lesson Plan

Instrument: Comparison

Objectives

1. To follow instruction precisely.
2. Increase students' flexibility in the use of attributes.
3. Use hypothetical thinking and logical evidence to complete a task.
4. Use systematic work so nothing important will be missed.

Sub-goal Improve oral participation in class discussion

Cognitive Function to be addressed Spontaneous comparative behavior.

Concepts and vocabularies to be introduced Assumption, sequence

Bridging the discussion to everyday life

Ex. When buying clothes:

I want a dress similar to the one in the window in style and price; different in size and color.

When shopping for food:

Checking a list so you do not forget anything.

To academic areas:

Working on sentence structure and grammar.

¥ underlining the nouns or making a circle around the verbs. etc.

¥ When taking a test, checking questions in order not to skip anything.

¥ When looking for jobs in the newspaper making a circle to those jobs related to students' skills.

To interpersonal relationships:

having flexibility in the selection of friends or accepting other points of view.

¥ In learning another language

Procedure The teacher gives the material to the students and says, "let's look at this page carefully; have you seen a page like this before?"

Answer: Yes

Teacher: Yes, we have seen a page like this before on page 12. Let us read this in order to know what we are being asked to do on this page. After the directions are read either the teacher or the student could do the reading.

Teacher: Tell me how is this page similar to the previous one?

Answer : It has figures, letters, letters in a circle, we are asked to draw figures again.

Teacher: Very good, Now, let us see what is different. If the students do not see the difference, the teacher will explain: In the previous one we were asked to draw figures that are the same as the sample only in those aspects indicated by circling words. Here we are asked to draw figures different from the sample in those aspects indicated by the circles words. Here the teacher emphasizes what she is looking for: Be precise in reading and understanding directions.

Making Assumptions: We are asked to draw only according to those aspects circled; we assume that the

drawing can be same as those which are not circle.

Being Flexible: We have to be flexible in looking at the words and checking with the model or looking at the model first and then checking the words.

Here the teacher makes the bridge by giving and asking for examples related to real life experiences related to academics, vocationals etc.

The teacher and students can work together. The teacher draws the first model on the blackboard, writes the words, repeats the instructions and makes the drawing, always giving the student the opportunity to decide which figures should be drawn.

There should be a summary at the end, talking about which part was more difficult on the page and why. The class should talk about the most relevant attributes on the page e.g., shapes, numbers, and colors, and less important attributes, such as size and direction.

Note: If the teacher is not familiar with this instrument, or if she/he is not interested in using it, she/he can prepare her/his own curriculum in comparison, using objects, the students, or any other thing.

Lesson II

Bridging the comparison to short

Objectives

- ¥ to learn the skills of comparison
- ¥ to find all the possible attributes that can be used in comparing.
- ¥ to look for the most relevant characteristics as the basis for comparison.

Subgoal To improve participation in class discussion.

1. Spontaneous comparative behavior
2. Systematic work
3. Summative behavior

Concepts and vocabulary to be introduced Analysis, relevant, irrelevant, opposite.

Bridging the discussion to every day life analyzing the Pros and cons of moving to another house, of changing

schools, moving from the United States to their own country.

In academics When analyzing sentences looking for nouns, verbs, articles.

In Interpersonal relationships When a new friend is introduced to you. You look for relevant attributes such as name, language spoken, personality.

In Vocational opposite: Seller vs. Buyer, pilot and train conductor, doctor and patient, teacher and student.

Procedure After reading the stories, the teacher will define the task: To analyze the two stories and compare them, looking always for the most relevant things. The teacher will provide each student with the paper and pencil and will write on the blackboard the subject with two columns in blank and on the left side the attributes by which the two will be compared.

For Example:

Subject

Christmas Celebration

Costa Rica Puerto Rico

Location

Language

Characters

Sex

Time

Food

Drink

Ingredient

Entertainment

Emotions

The teacher will start by asking to the students to complete the columns recalling the story. They can check each attribute; the teacher will write the answers on the blackboard at the same time that they write the answers in their papers.

After this task has been completed, the teacher will say: Now let us look for the similarities and differences in the two stories. The teacher goes to the blackboard and writes in two columns;

Similaritiess

Differences

The teacher says to the students: let us look for the similarities first, and start asking to the students to find all the common things in each celebration. The teacher induce the students to make a systematic work by checking every attribute in both columns in order not to skip any.

Once they have finished with the similarities, the students will start looking for the differences (here the teacher emphasizes opposite after this task is done emphasizing again systematic work and commenting about everything.) The teacher proceeds to bridge the vocabulary words into daily life experiences, academics, interpersonal relationships and vocational (summary)

Materials

¥ stories printed in dittos

¥ maps

¥ paper

¥ pencil

¥ blackboard

¥ film of Christmas celebration if available

Related activities:

1. Look for similarity and differences between two pictures; marking the differences.
2. Present a picture on an overhead projector and ask the students to look for similarities and differences in the picture.
3. Present two short films and ask the students to comment on the films and state the similarities and differences between the films, films: Human and Animals Beginning Motion Picture. Audio Visual Material Catalog. New Haven Public Schools
4. Check the weather every day during a week and compare the differences on degrees on the last days.
5. In math: Plot a graph using weather, length, population, sold items in a month etc., and analyze the graph in terms of:
 - larger—shorter
 - more—less
 - hotter—cooler
6. Improve comparison at a more abstract level by giving an expression and ask the students to

complete it.

- ¥ The day is so beautiful as _____.
- ¥ This girl is as pretty as _____.
- ¥ This paper is as white as _____.
- ¥ This room is as dark as _____.
- ¥ This orange is as sweet as _____.
- ¥ The motor is to the car, as the heart is to the _____.
- ¥ The fins are to the fish, as the wings are to the _____.
- ¥ The green is to the leaves, as the _____ is to the sky.
- ¥ white is to snow as _____ is to coffee etc.

Try always that the students name the attributes by which we are comparing.

Example: If I say Mary is eight years old and Jose is Six (I am comparing age).
If I say Tony is quiet and Joe talks too much (I am comparing behavior).

The teacher would try that the students give the attributes.

Example:

Teacher: If I say Marie has blue eyes and Jill has Black eyes, What am I comparing?
Student: Color

Teacher: If I say New York is larger than New Haven, What Am I comparing?

Student: Size

Teacher: If I say honey is sweet and coffee is bitter, what am I comparing?

Student: Flavor, etc..

7. Movie recommended for comparison, "Human and Animals beginning Motion Picture", Audio Visual Materials Catalog. New Haven Public Schools.

Notes

1. Reuven Feuerstein. *Instrumental Enrichment An Intervention Program for Cognitive Modifiability* . Baltimore: University Park press, 1980 P.39
2. Ibid P.39.
3. Ibid P. 1.
4. Ibid Introduction Page XIV.
5. Ibid P. 29.
6. Ibid P. 164.
7. Teachers Guides to the Feuerstein *Instrumental Enrichment Program. Teachers Guide To Comparison.*
8. Taken from the Reuven Feuerstein *Instrumental Enrichment for Comparison.*

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Rudolph, Juan; *El Llano en Llamas* , Colecion Popular, Fondo de Cultura Economica, Mexico.

Costa Rica

Las fiestas de diciembre en San José, Costa Rica empiezan el 24, y en todos los sectores de la ciudad reina la alegría. En este día se abren los “chinamos” puestos de antojitos, con sus famosos “gallos” (alimento parecido a los tacos mexicanos). Muy cerca se encuentran las diversiones para niños: el carrusel, el tobogán, la rueda de la fortuna, los trenecitos. Y para los adultos la ruleta, el tiro al blanco y toda clase de juegos de suerte.

Otras comidas: Tamales, empanadas, tortillas, jamonadas, pavo, arroz, palmito drink: guaro, hecho de caña de azúcar

Las corridas no faltan; toreros aficionados que, valientes, se lanzan al ruedo a probar su suerte frente a un toro manso divierten al público por horas.

Para los amantes al deporte, los partidos de fútbol internacional y las carreras ciclistas resultan emocionantes y muy concurridas.

En la Plaza González Viquez se organizan bailes populares, lo mismo que en otros distritos adyacentes; y los bailecitos familiares no faltan después de la tradicional cena.

Los niños también tienen sus fiestas muy especiales: los recreos, donde se divierten en el parque gozando de la lluvia de confetti.

Los fuegos artificiales, los cohetes, las luces de bengala y la ciudad profusamente iluminada le dan un ambiente de feria en donde los ciudadanos pasan horas muy agradables.

Christmas In Puerto, Rico

Puerto Rico is a rich country in traditions. The Puerto Ricans are happy by nature and love parties, especially those including music in their celebration. The best time to savor Puerto Rico’s traditional culture is during the Christmas season (Las Navidades). After the Thanksgiving holiday, people begin the celebration of “Las Navidades” in Puerto Rico. Merchants import shiploads of Christmas trees which are purchased and brought into many homes awaiting the arrival of Santa Claus. Besides the imported tree, the Puerto Ricans decorate typical native trees or small bushes planted in the yard.

Decorations are all around in the house, on buildings, in the streets creating a festive atmosphere. Among these decorations are the poinsettia flower, the lights and commercial adornments, but the Nativity stands out as a special symbol in the Christmas decorations in the homes of religious families.

Christmas time is a time for visiting friends and family. Friends organize “parrandas” (groups of roving merry-makers) that go from house to house with “asaltos” (surprising visits) until early morning. This group is also known as “trullas navideñas”. Other organized groups go into the big cities with guitars, “cuatros” and maracas, strolling through shops and restaurants singing Christmas songs, “aguinaldos”, evoking nostalgia for the rural-traditional Christmas music.

December 24, at noon, is the official beginning of Christmas. The midnight mass in the Catholic Church is followed by a late night supper. The Christmas Eve supper consists of roast pig, rice with pigeon peas, and “pasteles”. The “coquito” is a native drink very similar to the eggnog, but it is prepared with rum and coconut milk. Other homemade beverages such as “ponches” made with combinations of fruits and liquor are also

served. Common desserts are a variety of nuts, rice pudding and “turrón.”

Santa Claus brings gifts to the Puerto Rican children, especially urban families or those families that have lived in the United States.

On December 31st, Puerto Ricans celebrate New Year’s Eve (Despedid de Ao). In an atmosphere of joy and partying, the family reunites to pass the last hours of the year in growing anticipation of the final moments.

The last half-hour is one of great solemnity and ritual. Everybody is waiting for the New Year. According to individual beliefs intrinsic preparations are made with intense anticipation for the striking of midnight. Some eat twelve grapes while making twelve resolutions for the New Year. Others have a toast while listening to the radio to a traditional deeply significant poem, (*El brindis del bohemio*), reflective of cultural values, toasting the sacredness of mothers. It is a mixture of tears and happiness. Others practice superstitions, such as washing the floor to eliminate all evil spirits or throwing water over their shoulders and into the street as if to cleanse themselves of the past year problems. Some religious groups celebrate the New Year’s Eve with a membership reunion with a dinner and followed by a religious service.

Una carta a Dios

La casa —única en todo el valle—estaba subida ¹ en uno de esos cerros truncados que, a manera de pirámides rudimentarias, dejaron algunas tribus al continuar sus peregrinaciones. . . . Entre las matas ² del ma’z, el frijol con su florecilla morada, ³ promesa inequívoca de una buena cosecha.

Lo único que estaba haciendo falta a ⁴ la tierra era una lluvia, cuando menos un fuerte aguacero, ⁵ de esos que forman charcos ⁶ entre los surcos. Dudar de que llover’a hubiera sido lo mismo que dejar de creer en la experiencia de quienes, ⁷ por tradición, ense-aron a sembrar ⁸ en determinado d’a del a-o.

Durante la ma-ana, Lencho—conocedor del campo, apegado a ⁹ las viejas costumbres y creyente a pu-o cerrado ¹⁰ —no hab’a hecho más que examinar el cielo por el rumbo ¹¹ del noreste.

—Ahora s’ que se viene el agua, ¹² vieja.

Y la vieja, que preparaba la comida, le respondió:

—Dios lo quiera.

Los muchachos más grandes limpiaban ¹³ de hierba la siembra, mientras que los más peque-os correteaban cerca de la casa, hasta que la mujer les gritó a todos:

—Vengan que les voy a dar en la boca... ¹⁴

Fue en el curso de la comida cuando, como lo hab’a asegurado Lencho, comenzaron a caer gruesas gotas de lluvia. Por el noreste se ve’an avanzar grandes montañas de nubes. El aire ol’a a jarro nuevo. ¹⁵

—Hagan de cuenta, ¹⁶ muchachos—exclamaba el hombre mientras sent’a la fruición ¹⁷ de mojarse con el pretexto de recoger algunos enseres ¹⁸ olvidados sobre una cerca ¹⁹ de piedra—, que no son gotas de agua las que están cayendo: son monedas nuevas: las gotas grandes son de a diez ²⁰ y las gotas chicas son de a cinco .

. .

Y dejaba pasear sus ojos satisfechos por la milpa ²¹ a punto de jilotear, adornada con las hileras ²¹ frondosas del frijol, y entonces toda ella cubierta por la transparente cortina de la lluvia. Pero, de pronto, comenzó a soplar un fuerte viento y con las gotas de agua comenzaron a caer granizos ²³ tan grandes como bellotas. Esos s' que parec'an monedas de plata nueva. Los muchachos, exponiéndose a la lluvia, correteaban y recog'an las perlas heladas de mayor tama-o.

—Esto s' que está muy mal—exclamaba mortificado el hombre—; ojalá que pase pronto . . .

No pasó pronto. Durante una hora, el granizo apedreó ²⁴ la casa, la huerta, el monte, la milpa y todo el valle. El campo estaba tan blanco que parec'a una salina. ²⁵ Los árboles, deshojados. El ma'z, hecho pedazos. El frijol, sin una flor. Lencho, con el alma llena de tribulaciones. Pasada la tormenta, en medio de los surcos, dec'a a sus hijos:

—Más hubiera dejado una nube de langosta ²⁶ . . . El granizo no ha dejado nada: ni ²⁷ una sola mata de ma'z dará una mazorca, ni una mata de frijol dará una vaina . . .

La noche fue de lamentaciones:

—¡Todo nuestro trabajo, perdido!

—¡Y ni a quién acudir! ²⁸

—Este a-o pasaremos hambre ²⁹ . . .

Pero muy en el fondo ³⁰ espiritual de cuantos conviv'an bajo aquella casa solitaria en mitad del valle, hab'a una esperanza: la ayuda de Dios.

—No te mortifiques tanto, aunque el mal es muy grande. ¡Recuerda que nadie se muere de hambre!

—Eso dicen: nadie se muere de hambre . . .

Y mientras llegaba el amanecer, Lencho pensó mucho en lo que hab'a visto en la iglesia del pueblo los domingos: un triángulo y dentro del triángulo un ojo, un ojo que parec'a muy grande, un ojo que, según le hab'an explicado, lo mira todo, hasta lo que está en el fondo de las conciencias.

Lencho era hombre rudo ³¹ y él mismo sol'a decir que el campo embrutece, ³² pero no lo era tanto ³³ que no supiera escribir. Ya con la luz del d'a y aprovechando la circunstancia de que era domingo, después de haberse afirmado en su idea de que s' hay quien vele ³⁴ por todos, se puso a escribir una carta que él mismo llevar'a al pueblo para echarla al correo.

Era nada menos que una carta a Dios.

“Dios—escribió—, si no me ayudas pasaré hambre con todos los mios, durante este a-o: necesito cien pesos para volver a sembrar y vivir mientras viene la otra cosecha, pues el granizo . . .”

Rotuló ³⁵ el sobre “A Dios”, metió el pliego ³⁶ y, aún preocupado, se dirigió al pueblo. Ya en la oficina de correos, le puso un timbre a la carta y echó ésta en el buzón.

Un empleado, que era cartero y todo en la oficina de correos, llegó riendo con toda la boca ³⁷ ante su jefe: le mostraba nada menos que la carta dirigida a Dios: Nunca en su existencia de repartidor ³⁸ hab'a conocido ese domicilio. El jefe de la oficina —gordo y bonachón ³⁹—también se puso a re' r, pero bien pronto se le plegó el entrecejo ⁴⁰ y, mientras daba golpecitos en su mesa con la carta, comentaba:

—¡La fe! ¡Quián tuviera ⁴¹ la fe de quien escribió esta carta! ¡Creer como él cree! ¡Esperar con la confianza con que él sabe esperar! ¡Sostener ⁴² correspondericia con Dios!

Y, para no defraudar aquel tesoro de fe, descubierto a través de una carta que no pod'a ser entregada, el jefe postal concibió una idea: contestar la carta. Pero una vez abierta, se vio que contestar necesitaba algo más que buena voluntad, tinta y papel. No por ello ⁴³ se dio por vencido: exigió ⁴⁴ a su empleado una dádiva, él puso parte de su sueldo y a varias personas les pidió su óbolo ⁴⁵ “para una obra piadosa”.

Fue imposible para él reunir los cien pesos solicitados por Lencho, y se conformó ⁴⁶ con enviar al campesino cuando menos lo que hab'a reunido: algo más que la mitad. Puso los billetes en un sobre dirigido a Lencho y con ellos un pliego que no ten'a más que una palabra, a manera de firma: DIOS.

Al siguiente domingo Lencho llegó a preguntar, más temprano que de costumbre, si hab'a alguna carta para él. Fue el mismo repartidor quien le hizo entrega ⁴⁷ de la carta, mientras que el jefe, con la alegr'a de quien ha hecho una buena acción, espiaba a través de un vidrio raspado, ⁴⁸ desde su despacho. ⁴⁹

Lencho no mostró la menor sorpresa al ver los billetes—tanta era su seguridad—, pero hizo un gesto de cólera al contar el dinero... ¡Dios no pod'a haberse equivocado, ni negar lo que se le hab'a pedido!

Inmediatamente, Lencho se acercó a la ventanilla para pedir papel y tinta. En la mesa destinada al público, se puso a escribir, arrugando ⁵⁰ mucho la frente a causa del esfuerzo que hac'a para dar forma legible a sus ideas. Al terminar, fue a pedir un timbre el cual mojó con la lengua y luego aseguró de un pu-etazo. ⁵¹

En cuanto la carta cayó al buzón, el jefe de correos fue a recogerla. Dec'a:

“Dios: Del dinero que te ped', sólo llegaron a mis manos sesenta pesos. Mándame el resto, que me hace mucha falta; pero no me lo mandes por conducto ⁵² de la oficina de correos, porque los empleados son muy ladrones. ⁵³ Lencho”.

Esperanza (1910) 11

En Puerto Rico hay una actitud ambigua^o acerca de los perros. Por una parte, mucha gente los quiere mucho, y en muchas partes son muy bien recibidos. Pero la gente también les tiene miedo, un miedo a veces exagerado. Y el origen de esto se encuentra en que los espa-oles muchas veces usaron perros para perseguir a los indios. Uno de los relatos de Coll y Toste trata del má sfamoso de estos perros, que se llamaba Becerrillo. Este feroz y valiente perro por fin murió defendiendo a su amo en un ataque de los caribes.

En una playa de la ciudad de San Juan un perro de piedra mira hacia el mar. Y las dos leyendas que se han formado en torno a esta vieja estatua revelan muy bien la actitud ambigua que mencionamos. En una de

estas leyendas, un ta'no perseguido por un perro de los esp-aoles implora a Yucajú que lo salve. En ese mismo instante el perro se convierte en piedra. La otra leyenda es la que vamos a narrar aquí.

Se dice que el perro es el mejor amigo del hombre, y muchas historias lo comprueban. Y ninguna es más elocuente del° afecto y la lealtad que sienten estas nobles bestias por sus amos que la presente.

Allá para la época en que la industrialización y el progreso económico no hab'an llegado a la Isla, muchos de los humildes pescaban para ganarse la vida. Todos los d'as antes de salir el sol sal'an en sus remendados botes a probar suerte en el mar. Para aquellos pobres pescadores no exist'an vacaciones, ni domionos, ni d'as feriados (excepto el Viernes Santo: ese d'a era sagrado y nadie sal'a a pescar).

Uno de estos pescadores llamado Miguel viv'a en una choza en un arrabal° de San Juan. Prefer'a salir en su bote por un punto de la costa norte que está situado frente al puente que une al Condado con San Juan. Nadie más usaba ese lugar por ser considerado peligroso.° Las olas bat'an con fuerza sobre los pe-zacos° que rodean la playa. Al valiente Miguel le gustaba ese punto porque hab'a muchos peces y además pod'a disfrutar de paz y tranquilidad. Le gustaba estar solo para pensar en su amada Alurelia, la esposa fallecida. All morir, ella le hab'a dejado como consuelo a su soledad un fiel perro. El animal lo acompa-aba todas las ma-anas a la playa y lo esperaba alegremente all' todas las tardes cuando él regresaba en su bote. Miguel conversaba con el animal, su único amigo.

—Hoy era un da' bueno; hab'a mucha pesca.

El animal parec'a entenderle y se mostraba contento, lamiendo° a su amo.

—Hoy no pesqué nada.

—No hab'a mucha pesca; sólo traje estas sardinitas.

Y as' suced'a a diario: el hombre y la bestia se comprend'an y compart'an la vida.

De noche el animal dorm'a al lado del camastro del amo, vigilando y cuidando.

—Estoy enfermo, amigo. Me duele la cabeza y tengo calentura—le dijo un d'a Miguel al regresar. El perro se sintió triste. Siguió al amo hasta la choza donde, al llegar, se tiró en el camastro. Pasó la noche delirando por la fiebre. El perro no se despegó ni un momento de se lado,° le lam'a las manos y la frente en un intento por refrescarlo del calor febril. As' estuvo dos d'as. Y durante ese tiempo el perro no lo abandonó ni para comer.

Al tercer d'a la fiebre cedió y Miguel fue recuperando poco a poco hasta que todo volvió a la normalidad.

Un d'a varios meses más tarde, el mar amaneció muy borrascoso.° El cielo estaba nublado y soplabla una brisa fuerte. Parec'a indicar tormenta. Miguel sab'a que no era un buen d'a para salir al mar. Pero pensó que si no pescaba no comer'an ni él ni el perro. Sus provisiones se hab'an terminado el d'a anterior, los peces no hab'an picado,° y no hab'a conseguido dinero. Ten'a que trabajar; además él era valiente y hábil con el bote.

El perro se mostraba inquieto.

—No te preocupes, amigo. Regresaré tan pronto pesque lo suficiente para que podamos comer—le dijo Miguel tratando de calmar al preocupado animal.

El perro miraba desde la orilla como el amo se alejaba en el mar. Allí permaneció hasta que el bote se perdió en la distancia. Se sentó en la playa a esperar el regreso. Estuvo todo el día mirando hacia el mismo punto en la distancia. Se sentía triste. El mar se embravecía más a medida que se acercaba la tormenta. Ni la fuerte lluvia, ni el fuerte viento, ni el frío, ni el hambre lograron que el perro abandonara la playa. Esperaba a su amo, a su amigo. Esperó todo el día, toda la noche, todo el día siguiente. Nunca perdió la esperanza de volver a ver a su amo.

Miguel no regresó; se quedó en el mar. El perro no abandonó la playa. Todavía puede verse sentado mirando al mar. La noche lo volvió piedra.

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