

SECTION 1

Recognizing Single Objects

10. The first category of problems is that of recognising representations of single objects. This depends on the ability to connect the abstract lines and shapes on a piece of paper with the real concrete world. Seth Spaulding writing in Audio Visual Communication Review, Winter 1955, Vol.3, No.1, in an article entitled Research on Pictorial Illustration maintains that "an illustration is an abstraction, and for the viewer meaning exists only to the extent to which the observer has experience with which to interpret the drawing and to the extent to which the observer can relate the lines on the paper to the actual experience which it represents". A year later, reporting on a study of the illustrations designed to help tell a story, or help the reader interpret the text in supplementary reading materials for newly literate adults in Latin America (published in an article entitled Communication Potential of Pictorial Illustrations Audio Visual Communication Review, Winter 1956, Vol. III, No.1) he says again that the illustration had no educative value if the drawing had not been presented in terms of the past experience of the intended audience. If the viewer's experience is limited, the range of pictorial statements that will have meaning is restricted.

11. Most of the non-literate or newly literate people of the Commonwealth live in rural areas, where opportunities for education are limited and life is poor in variety of experience. Once roads are built, people move about, trading increases, changes take place and urban centres develop.

12. With urbanization comes not only greater range of perceptual experiences, but also more opportunities for schooling and it has been noted by a number of investigators that schooling will enable pupils more readily to recognize pictorial representations of the objects they know. In a survey of recognition of visual symbols carried out in Kenya Report on the Recognition of Drawings started by Alan Holmes and completed by Bernard Shaw in December 1969 (mimeograph, available from the Visual Aids Division of CEDO, Tavistock House South, Tavistock Square, London W.C.1) it was found that there was a general tendency for correct answers to recognition tests to increase in percentage proportionately with increase in years of education. In some cases placing the object in a familiar context aided recognition, in others it did not do so.

13. Given that objects can be recognized if they are within the experience of the learner, the designer will ask if total realism is essential or if an outlined form is sufficient. The question of degrees of realism has been studied by several investigators, among them A. Fuglesang, while working on The National Food and Nutrition Commission in Lusaka, Zambia. His Report Communication with Illiterates (1969) is available in mimeographed form from the Commission, P.O. Box 2669, Lusaka, Zambia. He found that line drawings were less effective than silhouettes, which in turn were less effective than a photograph of which the non-essential background had been blocked out. The line drawing does not give enough detail and a fully detailed photograph gives too much. That the inclusion of non relevant details can be confusing was also found by Hector and Hudson when testing if non-literate adults in Johannesburg had grasped the message as set out in industrial safety posters. An abstract of this study is published under the title The perception of safety posters by Bantu industrial workers by Wendy Winter

in *Psychologia Africana*, Vol.10 1963. Items in the background were misunderstood and non-relevant details drew attention away from the important items. Fonseca and Kearn working in rural Brazil found that pictorial symbols, to be most useful for young people of limited schooling, must evidence "intelligent selection of detail". Comprehension is reduced either by excessive unnecessary detail or excessive deletion of detail, (Reported in Comprehension of Pictorial Symbols : an experiment in rural Brazil by Luiz Fonseca and Bryant Kearn published by College of Agriculture, University of Wisconsin, 1960)

14. Another question that arises when designing illustrations, particularly of textbooks, is that of scale. People inexperienced in pictorial communication can recognize a drawing that is smaller in size than the object it represents, but not an enlargement. Alan Holmes stated this in a personal communication to the writer and refers to it again in his book Health Education in Developing Countries, Nelson 1964.

15. How much detail and what kind of detail are the two questions that still must exercise the mind of the designer of visual material, be it book illustration, handout, wallchart or poster, filmstrip or cartoon film. From the studies we have examined it may be concluded that an illustration of a single object must have a sufficiency of cues which characterize that object and the cues must be relevant to the intended viewer. For example, children in North East Thailand* rely on distinctions of dress to distinguish people of different occupations and status. Sometimes objects are not recognized until shown in a context; for example Shaw, in Visual Symbols Survey, states that a horse had only been identified by 58%, but a horse with a man riding it brought up identification to 88%. I deduce that the additional cues given by the context were the necessary ones that characterize a horse as distinct from a cow, for that community. When offered a drawing it is not looked at as a complete object but it is surveyed detail by detail in a search for the cues that will make recognition possible. For example, rural people in Kenya studied a drawing of a goat, detail by detail and at the point when the tail was reached described it as a cow. Goats have tails that turn upwards and the drawing was wrong in this one respect.

16. Contextualization is unnecessary except to give the essential cues when these are missing in the drawing. Furthermore contextualization can lead to confusion because it is no longer clear what the message is. For this reason photographs may fail to convey the intended meaning because of the elaboration of detail which is in excess of the sufficient number that will characterize that object for that viewer.

17. To summarize, the recognition of single objects is dependent upon there being enough cues which characterize that object, and which are relevant within the environment of the viewer. These cues may or may not include colour. Spaulding, finding that when full colour realism could not be achieved it merely confused, recommends that the use of colour in booklets for new literates should be confined to decorative motifs whenever realistic colour cannot be afforded.

* Aesthetic perception in North East Thailand.