

GENERAL ASPECTS OF NLP IN TEACHING LANGUAGES¹

Abstract: This article is focus on NLP as a tool helping to improve personal excellence in teaching languages. NLP states that learning begins in the students' frame of reference and thus, it is important for teachers to increase their interpersonal skills and ability to recognize it. A map of how language operates is drawn by the Meta Model - a tool for a fuller understanding of what people say -, which deals with the concepts of surface structure and deep structure. The meta programs deal with deletions, distortions and generalisations which appear in language during communication. Establish rapport is a helpful method to create favourable teaching atmosphere and humanising teaching is a way to improve students' performance.

Keywords: NLP, language teaching, meta programme, disruptive behaviour, excellent communicator.

Teaching implies discovering a way to increase choice and state a new attitude of mind. Personal development represents a permanent purpose of teachers in the whole world. Teachers are supposed to achieve objectives, to access new and interesting resources, and make the best out of themselves. Neuro – linguistic programming² together with emotional intelligence offer new ways of approaching teaching: "NLP is a practical skill that creates the results we truly want in the world while creating value for others in the process. It is the study of what makes the difference between the excellent and the average. It also leaves behind a trail of extremely effective techniques for education, counseling, business and therapy" (O'Connor, Seymour:1993:2).

As regards NLP, it is a fact that every teacher uses it, whether consciously or unconsciously. There are close connections between NLP and Language Teaching (LT).

NLP was first described as a methodology (Bandler, Grinder: 1975: 6)³ whose purpose was to notice the distinctive patterns used by excellent communicators. NLP and LT go well together, although they are rather different: NLP learns from the observation of communication patterns, and LT learns from what NLP suggests as best practice as regards improvement of interpersonal communication. The compatibility between NLP and LT methodology concerns communicative language learning and humanistic approaches.

There are several chief concepts Neuro – linguistic programming deals with, such as maps and filters (*the map is not the territory*; VAKOG⁴, beliefs, values, decisions, memories), pacing and leading, establishing rapport, stating anchors, eliciting submodalities, Meta Models (representation of the words endowed with influential power

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² NLP - based on the work of Richard Bandler and John Grinder who initially recognized the importance of eye contact and movement in identifying emotional states and how individuals think. The basis is the exploration of the relationship between neurology, linguistics, and observable patterns (programs) of behavior. The roots of NLP are the same as the roots of cognitive science, i.e., a mixture of linguistics, psychology, anthropology, philosophy, neurology and computer science (or cybernetics). Brief presentations of NLP have appeared in some articles in the HLT journal, in Tosey and Mathison (2003: 361-378), and on www.NLPresearch.org.

³ O part of the book is based on Grinder's earlier studies on transformational grammar, i.e. Chomsky's generative syntax.

⁴ Acronym of Visual, Auditory, Kinaesthetic, Olfactory and Gustatory;

and of the way words act), TOTE¹, neurological levels, presuppositions, metaprograms and logical level.

As far as language learning is concerned, NLP explains how the information from the outside is processed. NLP is related to brain functions (left/right), learning styles (visual, auditory, kinaesthetic), multiple intelligence and other areas of research which have been seeking to identify modes of learning and, in the same time, recognize the importance of the individual learner.

The meta model represents a map of how language operates, is a tool for gaining a better understanding of what people say, and deals with the concepts of surface structure and deep structure: "The Meta Model uses language to clarify language, it prevents you from deluding yourself that you understand what words mean; it reconnects language with experience" (O'Connor, Seymour, *op.cit.*: 90) The deep structure, containing the specific thoughts is difficult to understand unless the whole way - from the surface structure to the deep structure - is reconstructed; for instance if, at the surface structure the linguistic outcome is "ugh", there is a long way to decode it since it was subject to generalisation, distortion and deletion, which hide the specific thoughts present in the deep structure. This happens during the teacher - student communicational interchange, and the teachers have to reconfigure their attitude or better to establish metaprograms and Meta Models to get good results (Ralea, 2011).

Language puts order in thoughts and behaviours, and involves questions that seek to reverse and unravel deletions, distortions and generalisations by challenging them: "These questions aim to fill in missing information, reshape the structure and elicit specific information to make sense of the communication" (O'Connor, Seymour, *op.cit.*:92):

a) The deletions: teachers already know that they should not present too much new language at once because there is too much information for the learners to acquire and they delete or omit some information, and that 'less is better': 'He hurt himself. (How specifically?)'; 'Our communication is good. (Define communication!)';

b) The distortions: teachers are aware of the fact that foreign language learners distort information into forms which they can understand and learn, mistaking and misunderstanding the content; student's implication in the process of studying and learning is the only positive aspect: 'They won't like it. (How do you know?)'; 'It makes me so angry when they are late. (How exactly do they make you angry?)'

c) The generalisations: the acquired information is reproduced in broad conclusions, sometimes implying errors: 'Discipline in this class is never as it should be. (Never?)'; 'I can't do that. (What prevents you?)'.

The metaprogram is a characteristic feature of the people because it is represented by the language they use and/or their behaviour: "Metaprograms filter the world to help us create our own map. (...) Because metaprograms filter experience and we pass on our experience with language, certain patterns of language are typical of certain metaprograms" (O'Connor, Seymour, *op.cit.*: 149-150). A better communication between teachers and students can be ensured if teachers respect students' model of the world, are flexible and speak to them in their language, teaching them how to learn: "Learning is no longer enough, learning to learn is essential" (idem: 205).

One of the problems teachers face with is disruptive behaviour of the students. The cause may be the teacher's attitude, the arid abstract content of the course, the lack of real interaction between teacher and students during teaching, the lack of challenging and

¹ Test-operate-test-exit;

interesting methods (Using negative imperatives is not a good solution. The teachers should always tell students what they want students to do, not what they want them to stop doing): " You can model any human behaviour if you can master the beliefs, the physiology and the specific thought processes, that is, the strategies that lie behind it" (idem:182).

Humanising teaching, making it more transparent, practical and efficient is a way to improve students' performance; teachers need to integrate the skills and modify the common teaching techniques. In order to achieve a favourable teaching atmosphere, teachers should establish rapport, the relationship built on respect and trust between the teacher and the students, the most important stage in teaching methodology: "The cornerstone of my teaching is respect. I try and look for the human being in each student and address myself to that person. I also hope that my students will do the same. As much as possible I try to create a classroom atmosphere that encourages students to treat each other with respect" (Hardisty:2003). The purpose is to make students feel capable, creative, competent and ready to reach their potential in studying foreign languages. The first class, seminar or lecture should be on "Let's know each other", aiming at an honest talk to the students, showing interest in students as individuals.

The solution to make students interested in a subject is that the teacher should be interested in students' life; this way, students will feel free to share their difficulties in studying and, moreover, they will try hard not to disappoint teacher's kindness.

Only a few concepts of NLP have been mentioned in this article, which all are very broad subjects on their own. There are many more things that could be mentioned or discussed further. Here the purpose was to slightly touch on the key elements of NLP in teaching languages and show that teachers use it everyday both in their classes and in their daily lives.

NLP uses the most practical methods and structures that could help anyone who would like to become successful in whatever area they like, not only teaching languages. Thus, maybe all these would help teachers to take a second look at NLP, especially if they are not for it and find out about things that would make them even more successful in their profession. NLP helps teachers to become more aware of themselves and of the world around them, achieve their objectives, and become stronger persons and better communicators.

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