Effective Communication and Neurolinguistic Programming

Ahsan Bashir (Corresponding Author)
Department of English,
COMSATS Institute of Information Technology, Lahore, Pakistan
E-mail: ahsanbashir@ciitlahore.edu.pk

Mamuna Ghani
Department of English, The Islamia University, Bahawalpur, Pakistan

Abstract

Importance of effective communication can hardly be ignored in any sphere of life. This is achieved through various means. One such instrument is Neurolinguistic Programming (NLP) which has now taken roots in various aspects of learning and education. Its potential spans education and learning, language teaching, business management and marketing, psychology, law, and several other fields. In our work, we will briefly explore various facets of NLP with special reference to effective communication

Keywords: Effective Communication, Neurolinguistic Programming,

1. Introduction

In present times, scholars as well as practitioners consider NLP a field of knowledge and practice that has the potential and prospect essential for enabling professionals achieve desired results in the multi-pronged process of communication.

NLP strikes at the very core of the process of communication i.e. *mind,* which acts as a processing unit, *language*, a tool to convey and receive any information and *repetitive behavioral patterns*, which are mainly responsible for any perception that we form or any notions that we convey(O'Connor and McDermott, 2001).

Originators of this theory, NLP, claim it to be an art and science of excellence. For the very reason Richard Bandler and John Grinder, at the University of Santa Cruz, were motivated to take up research in this exciting field. Together they worked on the mystery of excellence. The very thought that some people excel in what they do, whereas, others do not, perturbed their curious creative mind. They wanted to find out what makes 'outstanding performers' outstanding. Their pursuit led them to many revelations.

NLP is 'the psychology of excellence'. It is based on the belief that everyone can be taught excellence and hence could be an outstanding performer, no matter what walk of life he originates from and what his trade is (Lady, 2007). Joanne Walter and Ardeshir Bayat call it "a process that can be applied to model excellence in any field" (Walter, Bayat, 2003).It could be a doctor talking to his patients, a teacher communicating with the students, a lawyer breaking his witness, a judge communicating with lawyers, a policeman investigating a suspect, a politician talking to his constituency, an army

commander motivating his soldiers, a business executive leading a team of professionals, a coach training his players, etc. NLP could help them all in achieving their goals through effective communication. The list is very long and includes almost everyone who comes across the phenomenon of communication; the minimum interaction not limited to one talking to one, but could be one talking to oneself. Indeed it was the quest for the *mystery of excellence* which motivated the pioneers of NLP to pursue their research. They don't believe that excellence is natural talent. Instead, they consider natural talent "a label than an explanation" (Walter and Bayat, 2003)**.** In their view, excellence is in abundance and everyone is loaded with it. What we need to do is to free ourselves from self-limiting thought processes and give ourselves more choices.

It was due to 'the intellectually adventurous atmosphere at UC Santa Cruz' that Grinder and Bandler could pursue their work on the secrets of excellence in outstanding performers (Bandler and Grinder, 1975). Their curiosity motivated them to learn more about people. They focused on how outstanding performers achieved their desired results. Richard Bandler, a gestalt therapist, invited John Grinder to observe his gestalt group. His aim was to figure out if it would be possible to develop syntax of behaviour from the use of his language (Lady, 2007). The results were quite amazing. Grinder discovered that Bandler was using 'certain principles' of linguistics (which he did not name) in his therapy (Lady, 2007). Encouraged by this result, they observed two great but very different personalities, Virginia Satir, a family therapist and Fritz Perls, a gestalt therapist. To their amazement, they found similar linguistic principles at work in the groups run by them too (Lady, 2007). They also noticed that Virginia Satir would speak to different groups of people using different type of diction and language. The diction pattern would vary from visual and auditory to kinesthetic (Lady, 2007).

They continued their research on these lines and figured out the importance of language in the phenomenon of communication and change. They claimed that human behaviour is not random, but has well-formed structures (Bandler and Grinder, 1975). And if anything has a structure, it can be studied and patterns of language can be traced. If these patterns of language are traced from the behavioural structures of outstanding performers, they can be learnt by others and hence they can model similar excellence in their lives (Walter and Bayat, 2003 and Bandler and Grinder, 1975). Sounds very simple, yet intriguing. In the domain of NLP, this process is termed as modeling

2. Modeling

Modeling is at the very heart of NLP [www.new-oceans.co.uk/new/arts/what_is_nlp.htm]. Modeling is to focus on a skill that one wishes to learn in an 'outstanding performer' and find out how it is achieved. According to Ian McDermott and Joseph O'Connor (2001), "modeling a skill means to find out how the person who has the skill thinks about it and what are the beliefs that enable him to do it". They also believe that it is possible to simulate emotions, experiences, behaviours, beliefs, and values. Another argument brought forward is that a child's major source of learning is 'modeling'. What he needs to learn is exactly what is going on around him, so he simply imitates it. This is primarily the reason why individuals from same family may have many elements of communication, and not just looks, in common, like their voice tone, diction, intonation, etc. (O'Connor and McDermott, 2001).

3. Metamodel

The findings of Bandler and Grinder (Bandler and Grinder, 1975) in observing Perls and Satir were not only significant but also ground breaking. The discovery of similar linguistic patterns in the use of language by these two gurus,in order to "challenge the thought process oftheir clients", paved the way for a new line of enquiry. Is it that certain linguistic patterns are beyond the use of language of any one person? They called these common patterns as *Metamodel*. Meta means above or beyond. Metamodel helps us answer many fascinating questions about the process of communication. Metamodel helps us answer quite satisfactorily classic questions like;what we mean to say is really the meaning conveyed? And how does what we say represent what we think? (O'Connor and McDermott, 2001).

4. Language

This is an intricate process. A domain ruled by power, magic and fascination of language. We use language to experience, language to think about the experience and then language to convey the experience. We receive a lot of information through our senses. The volume of this information is so huge that a mind can hardly process it. The sensory data reaching our mind is about 2 million bits of information per second whereas what our mind can handle is 134 bits of information per second. The process is just like channeling an ocean through a tap (O'Connor and McDermott, 2001). Metamodel helps us filter this information so that we can make meaning out of it. These filters are termed as *deletion*, *generalization* and *distortion* (James, 2003), and they act as "gatekeepers at the doors of our perception" (O'Connor& McDermott, 2001).

Language has an overwhelming sphere of dominance and influence. How we think can alter our state [www.new-oceans.co.uk/new/ arts/what_is_nlp.htm;http://eltnotebook.blogspot.com/2006/10/using-nlp-in-elt-htm]. We can feel motivated, bored, ready to learn, ready to act, indifferent, etc. just by listening to the words of our own or somebody else's'. The words we speak have the ability to evoke strong emotions and actions of all kinds. The power and magic of language is incredible. Language has profound effects and control [www.new-oceans.co.uk/new/ arts/what_is_nlp.htm]. If we hear words, even if they are not meant for us, or even if it is not necessary to give feedback, our mind will still react. We 'have to respond, if only in thoughts' [O'Connor& McDermott, 2001]. We all communicate and communicate all the time. We cannot *not* communicate [http://www.1000ventures.com/business_guide/crosscuttings/nlp_main.html].We can improve our communication process if we can harness this process and learn the art and magic of language. The prime question, then, is that from where does language get this power and magic. How can we get the exact words that can convey the exact message to have exactly the effect we want? (O'Connor and McDermott, 2001). This is precisely when we find ourselves deep in the sovereign territory of Neurolinguistic Programming.

NLP has reserved for itself a very respectable place in that field of knowledge which helps people to improve their lives by better communication with themselves and with the world. The scope of NLP is so vast that it is an element of surprise for many. "It seems strange that the same process can help you relate better to your loved ones,

enhance your professional performance, improve your golf or tennis score, and enable you to teach your child to spell or study" [www.nlp-now.co.uk/nlp_management.htm]. NLP knows no limits. It can help people no matter what field they belong to. It could be "Education and learning" (Millrood, 2004;Sumrall), "English language teaching" [http://eltnotebook.blogspot.com/2006/10/using-nlp-in-elt-htm], "NLP and student motivation" [http://eltnotebook.blogspot.com/2006/10/using-nlp-in-elt-htm], "Business management and training" (Dowlen, 1996), "Marketing and sale" [http://www.stant-1.demon.co.uk], "Helping people with phobias" (Bolstad), "Treating smoking habits" [http://www.nlpschedule.com /smoking.html], "Improving memory" [http://www.stant-1.demon.co.uk/enjoyment.htm], "Personal development" [http://www.stant-1.demon.co.uk], "Professional coaching of sports" [http://www.stant-1.demon.co.uk], "Law" [http://www.designedthinking.net/html/law.html], "Crime investigation" [http://www.nlpschedule.com/random/police-interrogration.html], "Training" [Vincent & Susan, 2001; http://www.stant-1.demon.co.uk/nlptrain.htm], "Customer Services" [http://www.stant-1.demon.co.uk,] etc. The areas of influence of NLP are quite diverse and huge, it can help individuals and organizations in developing and improving themselves in various ways so that ever changing challenges of life could be met with successfully. For individuals the challenges could be posed in social and professional networks, where they have to interact with their family, friends, peers, colleagues, clients, students (Legall et al., 2006 and Clementina & Sorin, 2011). NLP can also be used successfully in training/coaching in sports etc. as has been nicely described in the journal "The Performance Solution: A Research Journal of Coaching, Mentoring, Supervision and NLP" in its Volume 2 of 2011. For organizations the need and importance of good communicate is tremendous. They need to motivate (Iosif and Tiberiu, 2012), enhance learning capacity (Bokeno, 2011 and Wake, 2011), resolve conflicts (Eduard, 2011), negotiate effectively (Eduard, 2011), improve work efficiency of the employees working with them; not only to ensure a successful and prosperous future for the organization, but also to provide an enriched work experience for the workforce.

5. Impact of NLP on Teaching-Learning Environment

NLP holds great potential for teaching and learning process (Millrood, 2004). There are many techniques and strategies which can help teacher to improve the teaching-learning environment in his class. Successful communication in class is directly proportional to student learning and achievement, and successful communication is quite heavily dependent on Neurolinguistic Programming. It helps teachers to teach, evaluate and assess his students in a most befitting manner (Brown, 2004).Some of the characteristics of NLP approach, according to Paul Tosey and Jane Mathison, are given below.(Tosey & Mathison, 2003)

- NLP considers teacher-learner relationship as a constant and consistent feedback oriented interactive association. It is not a one way process, but meaning is conveyed and constructed through shared and mutual understanding.

- We act according to what we perceive as to be the reality, not according to the way it is in fact. We all have different realities.

- We all have unique ways of making images of the real world in our mind. We make these images with the help of sensory data (information received through

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five senses) and language. NLP keenly investigates how images of the real world are made inside the mind. One of the major assumptions of NLP is that these internal images or internal representations are consistent and unique to each individual.

- Another important assumption of NLP is that the language and behaviour of an individual is greatly influenced and affected by the structures of internal representation.

- Behaviours, beliefs, values, skills, etc. are all learnt. Learning is a process in which internal representations and sequences of acts are acquired and modified.

- Learning is influenced by neurophysiological 'state', set of beliefs about the process of learning, and set of learner's individual traits. Interestingly, the variables mentioned above affecting the process of learning are also learnt, hence could be changed or improved.

- The learning or modification mentioned above takes place when teacher and student communicate with each other, successfully. The use of language could be verbal or nonverbal and the learning could be conscious or unconscious. Although a very small proportion of the entire learning is controlled and acquired consciously, thus modifications of which individuals are not conscious forms the bulk of learning.

- We learn from all communications. In teaching-learning environment, teacher's behaviour and choice of language helps students learn the contents of the topic as well as shapes their 'view of the world'.

- The awareness of a teacher that his choice of attitudes, linguistic patterns and behaviours while communicating with the students would have crucial effects on the internal representation system of the students is quite essential for effective learning.

5. Conclusion(s)

Neurolinguistic programming, a relatively new field of knowledge, has shown immense promise and potential for almost all professions of life where communication is a dominant activity. NLP helps in achieving excellence through various techniques and strategies based on certain principles and assumptions which govern and affect the outcomes of our communication. Excellence, like other positive qualities such as beliefs, skills, etc. can be learnt and acquired using NLP techniques.

In teaching-learning environment, effective use of NLP could not only enhance the effectiveness of communication, and hence learning process, but also add quality to the whole experience. NLP not only focuses on the acquisition of knowledge with the help of communication on reciprocal basis, but also considers learning experience a part of huge unconscious learning through improvement, and modification of internal representation system. Hence, student gets hold of the new knowledge as well as learns new strategies and sharpens his skills to learn efficiently and smartly. The awareness of the process of communication and command over NLP strategies and techniques would certainly help contemporary teacher to become more resourceful and achieve his outcomes in a professional and smart manner.

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