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NEURO - LINGUISTIC PROGRAMMING AND ELT

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ABSTRACT

Learners who learn English as a second language are impacted by the challenges of Second Language Acquisition. Hence English Language Teaching methodologies must focus on including techniques and skills which would help overcome these challenges. This article studies the principles and practises of Neuro-Linguistic Programming and how it can benefit English Language Learners.

KEYWORDS: English Language Teaching, Neuro Linguistic Programming, Second Language Anxiety,

INTRODUCTION

English enjoys a dominating presence amongst all the world languages. It has the most number of speakers in the world after Mandarin and Spanish. More and more learners across the globe are learning it as a second language. English also serves as a link language. One in four speakers in the world are said to have the ability to communicate in English. English thus serves as the common denominator for speakers of different languages. English plays this role effectively in the linguistically and culturally diverse nation like India.

India is a multicultural and multilingual nation. The Census of 1991 revealed that there are 1576 'mother tongues' in India with distinct grammatical structures. With over a thousand languages spoken in the land, English still occupies a prominent position, long after the imperial masters' exit. English is an official language and serves as a link language amongst people from different regions of the country. The English speaking ability amongst the people have also led to huge employment opportunities on the global market, with India becoming a leading back office service provider. The desire to learn English goes well beyond the employment aspect. Many in India equate English education with quality education and as the foundation for better things and future success.

ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE IN INDIA

English is learnt as a Second Language in India. The National Curriculum Framework for Education suggested a three language formula for students. According to this, a student in India learns his regional or mother tongue first, then learns English and then learns another Indian language like Hindi or Sanskrit. With this guideline, English is learnt across the nation in schools following different boards of education. Parents of children prefer to enrol their children in schools with English as the medium of Instruction. While there is a great demand for learning English as a second language, there are also quite a few challenges that it faces.

CHALLENGES IN LEARNING ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

There are many reasons that plague English language teaching in India. The reasons include systemic faults like vague syllabus, outdated methodologies to wrong assessment criteria. There are also practical challenges like large class size, lack of expert language educators and lack of funds for using valuable resources. Amongst the myriad reasons, there are also challenges the learner faces that are psychological in nature. These in particular cause variances amongst individual language learners. The key factors that impact individual learners are Motivation, Attitude, Aptitude, Age and

Personality. Anxiety and poor motivation obstructs the learner from learning and acquiring the language skills. Neuro-Linguistic Programming can help overcome these challenges.

NEURO LINGUISTIC PROGRAMMING

Neuro Linguistic Programming was founded by Richard Bandler and linguist John Grinder in the 1970's. It is an interpersonal communication system which focuses on analysing and integrating three main areas: Neuro, Linguistic and Programming. Neuro refers to neurological processes, i.e. the way the body and mind interact. 'Linguistic' doesn't restrict its relevance to language alone but also thought patterns and the language one uses in interpersonal communication. 'Programming' refers to how the mind can be trained by analysing behavioural patterns and use of language to improve focus and achieve specific goals. It is a pragmatic training philosophy which contains a set of principles and a repertoire of techniques that can be adapted to achieve specific goals.

NLP helps its user to change by teaching them to train their minds. It provides insights into a person's way of thinking by carefully analysing the language he or she uses. It aims to improve the way a person communicates with others and also understand how he can alter his thoughts and actions and achieve specific goals by employing NLP techniques.

NLP is not an ELT methodology but NLP has proved to be highly useful for enhancing learning environments. Hardingham in his book titled, *Psychology for Trainers* claims NLP to be one of the recent resources to enhance the overall effectiveness of language teaching. Thornbury in an article in *ELT Journal* titled "The unbearable Lightness of ELT" explains that NLP helps the learners to achieve mastery over the language, improve the teacher's effectiveness, increase communication in the classroom, optimize learner attitudes and motivation. Richards and Rodgers (2001) also spoke of NLP as an additional technique for teaching second language. NLP essentially improves the motivation of students and improves the rapport the teacher has with her students and aids in boosting self esteem and confidence of the

learner by helping them achieve their specific goals while learning.

KEY CONCEPTS AND TECHNIQUES IN NLP

NLP essentially helps one to understand oneself. It also helps to understand others better and thus enables better ways to communicate with others. NLP is in essence a model than a theory. It encourages people to understand the way the mind functions and train the mind according to the specific goals that need to be achieved. It includes many conceptual ideas and methods to achieve this. Anchoring, Modelling, Mirroring, Meta Model, Milton Model, internal representations of the world etc are a few of the key concepts in NLP. In addition to these concepts there is a litany of techniques that emboldens the NLP practitioner.

NLP AND ELT

NLP has far reaching impact in many diverse fields ranging from personality development to sales to the all important teaching learning process. There are quite a few concepts that validate the use of NLP techniques for the purposes of teaching and learning. Second Language Learners are generally known to face a lot of anxiety over exposure to a foreign language. They also lack motivation or suffer from low self esteem doubting their capabilities to communicate in the Second Language. NLP helps the teachers and the learners to overcome these challenges in particular.

Modelling

The concept of NLP was first developed by Richard Bandler and John Grinder by studying the language and the behavioural patterns of successful people. They advocated NLP practitioners to emulate the language, strategies and the behavioural patterns of successful people, to become successful themselves. They firmly believed that keeping a person of excellence as a model would ultimately help the practitioner to become exceptional. Modelling can be a powerful tool for Second Language Learners. They can mirror or model the behaviour and language used by confident English users to become confident users of English themselves. Modelling is a practical approach to achieve improvement in language skills. Modelling boosts confidence and motivation levels

of the students. A key challenge in Second Language Learning can thus be overcome with NLP.

Building Rapport.

Building Rapport is one of the key concepts under Milton Model in NLP. It is essential to build rapport for effective communication. NLP uses techniques such as mirroring facial, body gestures, voice tonality and postures. This will build empathy and create rapport which in turn will lead to effective communication. Teachers who employ these techniques will find a marked improvement in class communication through this technique. It is crucial for the teacher to have good rapport with the student as that would create a positive learning environment. This eases the learning environment for the students and effective communication takes place. A good rapport with the teacher eases the anxiety of the learner and thus helps in overcoming a major challenge in second language learning.

Rapport can be built using many techniques Swish

Swish is an NLP technique that helps the users to associate positive emotions with a negative or a dreaded situation. Using this technique, the NLP practitioner can replace emotions like anxiety, fear and nervousness with positive reinforcements. It is a practical technique which aims to trick the brain to replace negative emotions with positive ones. When a second language feels nervous to speak in English or is anxious about using the language, this technique can help him replace fear and anxiety with more positive emotions like confidence and self-belief.

Future Pacing

Future Pacing is a visualization technique where a situation that is worrying them currently is visualized in the future after an intervention has been made to correct the wrong situation. Now that the intervention is over, Future Pacing helps the practitioner to verify if the intervention has worked, by imagining a problem situation in the future. If it brings out the desired outcome, then the intervention has worked. Future Pacing also helps the practitioner to identify any other areas that affect him and cause a negative situation.

Anchoring

Anchoring is a valuable NLP technique which helps to train the brain to adapt a suitable or

positive frame of mind or emotion before attempting a task. Human Behaviour and emotions are response to various stimuli or 'trigger'. Hence, the technique of anchoring helps recall a positive emotion like happiness or relaxation by relying on triggers or 'anchors'. In this technique, the practitioner uses these anchors to help change the state of mind to the required state. It is like bookmarking emotions with powerful anchors. Once the required emotions have distinct anchors, a practitioner can recall any of those emotions by recalling the anchor. Anchors are usually gestures, body movements or word. A language learner, who is diffident and shy or nervous or agitated, can use these anchors to get into a relaxed or confident state of mind. This can be a highly useful technique for the second language learners.

CONCLUSION

NLP is an extremely useful technique in training our minds and making them think in the best positive manner. But it requires a lot of practise, before one can actually see drastic results. The techniques like mirroring, anchoring etc require an intense memory to act as a trigger or an anchor. There have been objections to the benefits to NLP and some have even called it unscientific. However there are numerous instances of its success where people have been able to train their mind and redirect their thoughts and emotions that best serves their interests. In spite of faults and criticisms, it is clear that these techniques can help and improve the teaching learning process. It plays a crucial role in reducing the anxiety and psychological deterrents that hamper language learning. It will aid in making language learners confident users of the language. Hence it is prudent for language learners and educators alike to learn and implement NLP techniques on a personal level as well as to speed up the language learning process.

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