REVIEW ARTICLE

ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING THROUGH NLP: TECHNIQUES AND METHODS

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ABSTRACT

NLP and ELT are complementary in nature. In the Oxford English Dictionary Neuro-linguistic programming (NLP) has been defined as "a system of alternative therapy intended to educate people in self-awareness and effective communication, and to model and change their patterns of mental and emotional behaviour"[1]. NLP can prove to be an effective tool in the English language teaching to accelerate teaching process. By using the approaches and techniques of NLP, the English language teachers could stimulate creativity, build confidence and help in improving body language for professional life. English Language teachers have developed many classroom activities based on NLP which integrate the four language skills namely LSRW skills, which could be used in ELT classroom specifically. This paper gauges the use of NLP in English language teaching and the practices and techniques which could be used by ELT practitioners in an ELT classroom.

Keywords: Neuro Linguistic Programming, ELT, language learning techniques, language skills

Introduction

English Language Teaching in India

English enjoys the status of Lingua Franca in today's globalized scenario. Lingua Franca describes the English language as "a common means of communication for speakers of different first languages".[2]

In the past decades the language teachers used methods and techniques which did not emphasize much on the communicative aspect of language learning and speaking competence of the students. As the language of International communication, methods for teaching English like Grammar Translation Method, Bilingual method and Direct method are not sufficient enough to equip the language learners with the kind of language skills which they need to become proficient in the language. To fill this gap, Neuro Linguistic Programming can help the English language learners to improve their LSRW skills, presentation skills and body language effectively.

Neuro Linguistic Programming

NLP is an interpersonal communication system which analyses and integrates three main areas: Neuro, Linguistics and Programming. Neuro refers to neurological processes, i.e. the way the body and mind interact. 'Linguistics' refers to thought patterns and the language used 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. NLP consists of a set of principles and various techniques to achieve specific goals in personal development and communication.

NLP was developed by Richard Bandler, a mathematician and a graduate student of psychology, and John Grinder, an associate

professor in 1970. "The title `NLP' reflects the principle that a person is a whole mind-body system, with consistent, patterned connections between neurological processes (`neuro'), language (`linguistic') and learned behavioural strategies (`programming')"[3]

The pragmatic approach of NLP will give an insight into the learner's mind and thought process by analyzing the kind of language used by him/her. Its aim is to achieve results by altering the thoughts and actions of a language learner by adopting NLP techniques.

NLP has a few presuppositions, and its four pillars namely- outcomes, rapport, sensory acuity and flexibility are extremely useful to improve student's communication and behaviour.

Core Concepts of NLP

Neuro-linguistics programming was initially created as "A tool for improving communication" by R. Bandler and J. Grinder. The techniques and strategies of NLP can facilitate language learners and teachers by empowering them to make teaching-learning process more effective and goal oriented. It also results in the enhancement of performance and competencies of learners. A few key concepts of Neuro Linguistic programming are Anchoring, Mirroring, Rapport building, Modelling, Future pacing, and Metamodelling.

Language learning and teaching through NLP

The foundation of NLP is neurology and communication. Its implications for learning language suggest that we as human beings have different perceptual preferences and learning styles. The ELT Teachers can develop these preferred learning styles of language learners for optimum learning solutions.

Representational Systems

Finding an answer to the question as to how human mind processes and stores the information received from various sources, Richard Bandler and John Grinder identified the relation between the emotional states and eye movements of an individual.

"At the core of NLP is the belief that, when people are engaged in activities, they are also making use of a representational system; that is, they are using some internal representation of the

materials they are involved with, such as a conversation, a rifle shot, a spelling task. These representations can be visual, auditory, kinesthetic, or involve the other senses. In addition, a person may be creating a representation or recalling one. For example, a person asked to spell a word may visualize that word printed on a piece of paper, may hear it being sounded out, or may construct the spelling from the application of a series of logical rules."[4]

"Language learners use their five senses to learn a language, which are called representational systems in NLP. Representational systems include: Visual (we look and see), Auditory (we hear and listen), Kinesthetic (we feel externally, we feel internally and we feel movement), Olfactory (we smell things) and Gustatory (we taste)"[5]. It's the responsibility of an English language teacher to identify and use the different techniques to help learners.

NLP in ELT classroom

In recent times, many classroom activities have been developed by English language teachers which are modified versions of current practices (simulations, role plays, storytelling) being followed in an ELT classroom. Quite a few of these activities integrate the four language skills namely- Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing. Exploring these techniques could help in language teaching and learning:

- **Anchoring**

Anchoring in NLP is a technique to create a positive mental image with the help of "anchors" or "triggers". Anchoring helps in motivating the learners in building positive attitude towards learning. With the help of mental images, positive emotions are installed in learners by certain gestures, various expressions and different body movements. By recalling these anchors the language learners can be guided to achieve confident state of mind. Anchoring has proved to be a highly beneficial technique for second language learners.

- **Building rapport**

In Oxford dictionary, Rapport has been defined as "a close and harmonious relationship in which the people or groups concerned understand

each other's feelings or ideas and communicate well." By establishing rapport with learners, the English language teaching and learning process can be accelerated. Fostering rapport between learners will lead to fill up the gaps in communication, provide a conducive environment, thus leading to an interactive class filled with activities.

- **Mirroring**

Effective communication can be achieved by adopting Mirroring technique in the classroom. An individual's posture, gestures, facial expressions, breathing patterns, weight shifts and paralanguage can be mirrored to achieve rapport between learners. Using these patterns in the classroom enhances verbal and non-verbal communication among the learners. Mirroring the language and behaviour patterns of fluent speakers will motivate the learners resulting inn enhancing their speaking and presentation skills. Modelling and mirroring the study patterns of academically good performers in the class will help the learners to perform well in examination.

- **Perceptual Positioning**

Perceptual positioning refers to the technique of viewing a situation from "third angle"- from the view of a neutral person. In ELT classroom, this technique will yield results in Story telling or reading activities, where the writer or teller of the story can take the first position; one of the characters from the story can take the second position, and the listener or reader can take the third position with a neutral viewpoint. NLP gives a technique for resolving disputes reaching neutral decision. It could also be used while guiding English language learners for facing personal interviews and enhancing their negotiation skills.

- **Maintaining flow**

The technique of "Maintaining Flow" in a language classroom is extremely useful for successful learning. It indicates that "best learning takes place when uninterrupted". The flow of activities, collaborations, challenges, and concentration of learner's results in bridging the information gap and will instil a sense of belongingness in learners. Well structured language games, jokes and puns, poems and anecdotes customized according to learner needs will help in maintaining flow in the classroom.

Conclusion

It could be said that NLP is a praxis which is being used by the language teachers in ELT classroom across the world. The techniques and strategies of NLP will definitely make English language learning and teaching an interesting and amusing activity. With NLP, English language teachers, as facilitators, can enhance the personality, communication skills and interpersonal skills of language learners to face the world with confidence.

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