

Neuro-linguistic Programming as an Instructional Strategy to Enhance Communicative Competence of Language Teachers

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ABSTRACT

The research paper explores Neuro-linguistic Programming as an instructional strategy in the context of language teaching, to enhance communication competence of language teachers. The research paper, furthermore addresses Neuro-Linguistic Programming and its potential in academia with the prime aim of examining its role i) in enhancing communicative competence of language teachers and ii) investigating its effect on mode of language teaching in the educational settings. To achieve this end, 20 ELT teachers and 20 students were selected purposively. The teachers were taught to become more aware of their students representational styles and use them while communicating with them. Students were asked to rate their teachers on communicative competence scale before and after usage of NLP strategy. The results of the correlational analysis and t-tests exhibited a positive association between communication competence and usage of NLP by teachers, resulting in more goal oriented and student centered language learning. The teachers who employed NLP as an instructional strategy were rated high on communicative competence scale proving the effectiveness of NLP as strategic tool for enhancing learners' output.

KEYWORDS: Communication Competence, Educational Setting, Representational Styles, Neuro-Linguistic Programming

1. INTRODUCTION

Teaching and Learning languages with the new methodologies has been an age old phenomenon. Today the academic domain has become increasingly competitive with the advent of new perspectives and technological interventions. As a result, professional competence and ability of educationists to deliver the knowledge and ensuring involvement of students has become altogether more demanding. To address these core issues teachers are expected to develop their own teaching procedures informed by a particular requirement of the discipline, students' needs and a particular theory of learning. Keeping in view the demanding educational requirements, academicians worldwide are engaged in revising and modifying spectacles of teaching/learning based on the performance of the learners and their response to various instructional strategies. Specifically speaking, in a language learning context the goal of communication acquires more significance due to its transference of shared meaning. Consequently, the ability to choose a communicative behavior which is both appropriate and effective for the learner of language, becomes a great challenge.

In this regard researchers like Helm(1989) and Yero (2002) studied use of variety of instructional techniques to improve communication with the students. They believed that language teachers in particular must use "every possible tool" and NLP is one of the most useful instructional strategy that can enhance students performance, in this regard. Therefore, employing NLP techniques in a classroom environment especially while teaching languages may turn into a groundbreaking development in the field of education.

1.1 Communicative Competence and Language Teachers

Language teachers tend to be capable and apt in the use of socio- interactive procedures for teaching. It has been historically proven that communicative competence of teachers enhance communicative competence of students. Communication is thus, the most important manifestation of social interaction. As a result, the effectiveness of language teaching is largely a product of communication process.

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Bjekić et al. (2008) defined teacher's communicative competence, building on Spitzberg and Cupach's (1989) model of the communication competence. According to this definition, the communicative competence includes teacher's formative professional competence, knowledge, skills, abilities and motivational disposition which enable effective communication in the teaching process and other educational social interactions. This indicates that teachers with better communication strategies are more competent in conversing, behavioral manifestations (gestures, visual direction), social relations, empathy, and listening skills. The language teachers for this reason have to pay much attention to communicative aspect based on new instructional strategies. These strategies offer a wide spectrum of possibilities for teaching language and acquiring competence. NLP is one such strategy that can be used to improve communication competence.

Thus, the present research aims to assess and improve communication competence of language teachers by using NLP as an instructional strategy.

1.2 Usage of NLP as an Instructional Strategy for Language Teachers

Neuro- Linguistic Programming, a term and an approach, initially developed by Bandler and Grinder in 1970's focuses on fostering communication process and facilitating the learning process in the individual's development. They proposed that if people were able to figure out the way they attempt something successfully then by understanding the thoughts, experiences of life and communication, they can emulate the process in training other people too.

Similarly, O'Conner and Seymour (2002) view NLP as an amalgam of art and science aimed at personal excellence (p.1) encapsulating the uniqueness of personal style. In educational setting Tosey, Mathison, and Michelli (2005) argue that it is a field which has prospects of innovation due to its wide range of techniques such as representational style, modeling and meta-analysis. They believe that learners and teachers together can make use and apply these techniques both within the formal and informal education settings. In the same vein, Craft (2001) tried to explore the relationship between NLP and learning. She asserted that NLP is a set of practical strategies people use to achieve the desired outcomes in their lives and to be successful. According to her views, NLP collects and gathers words, thoughts, and behaviors to achieve the goals.

Sharpley (1985), and Tosey and Mathison (2003), NLP educators, are of the opinion that all teachers in some manner influence their learners' responses by virtue of language usage. Many of them use NLP techniques to achieve educational objectives without being aware of it, or may unintentionally use language in its negative way. Therefore, use of NLP helps teachers to reflect on their behavior and be conscious of what they are doing and saying in the classroom which in turn makes the learning environment more conducive. Furthermore, Millroad (2004) conducted three workshops, for 16 experienced English teachers of at least five years of teaching experience, to enhance their awareness of NLP in their classroom discourse. He concluded that teacher's discourse could be considered as a tool of success or failure in learners through creating congruence via NLP strategies. In another attempt, Legall and Dondon (2006) mentioned the problem of students' behavioral evolution and suggested NLP as an instrument to motivate students and enrich the quality of teacher learner relationship.

In essence, based on NLP, teaching becomes a process of creating states which encourages learning by facilitating learners' exploration of their internal representations and help achieve desired goal. Helm (1989) stated that NLP techniques give a good chance to foster learners' learning and communication skills. NLP principles have proven to be notably influential in language acquisition specially second or foreign language learning (ESL/EFL). In this regard Richards and Rodgers (2001) have found NLP an ancillary technique in teaching second language learners. Besides, Tosey and Mathison (2003) offered NLP strategies a viable solution to classroom problems. Millroad (2004) views this technique as "an approach to language teaching which claims to help achieve excellence in learner's performance" (p. 28). Kudliskis and Burden (2009) suggested NLP principles are useful for teachers and students facing exam anxiety and other learning related pressures. NLP model links many behaviors and verbal cues to thought processes. One of the discovered links is between eye movement and representational systems. Thus, by studying both verbal cues and eye movements, a person can develop a much better understanding of others internal thought processes.

2 Purpose of the study

The research is an attempt to explore the application of NLP in a language learning context, especially to improve instructional strategy of teachers. The relationship between NLP and variables in teaching for instance emotional management, ability to get the message across, effective communication, feedback and empathy were studied as part of communicative competence. The study attempted to answer the following questions:

1. Does the appropriate use of representational system (NLP technique) enhance the communicative competence of teachers?

2. Does the enhanced communicative competence influence teacher's instructional strategies in language teaching /learning context?

2.1 Problem Statement

To assess the difference in performance of communicative competence of teachers by using NLP Technique (Representational System).

2.2 Sample of the Study

The sample of the present study included 20 male and female ELT teachers of a private university and at least 20 students to assess the communicative competence. The sample was selected purposively as an in-depth information was required to study the differences in communicative competence of teachers due to training of representational system styles.

2.3 Description of Scale (Communication Competence Scale)

Communication Competence Scale was developed by Aftab in 2005. The scale consist of 36 items. A high score indicates competence in communication and vice-versa. The scale measures communicative competence of an individual.

2.4 Scoring of Communication Competence Scale

The communication competence scale is a five point Likert type scale. Statements are scored on a rating scale ranging from "strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, strongly agree". The minimum score is 58 and maximum score can be 209. It consists of both positive and negative items. The scoring is revised from the negative items. Emotional management (4, 10, 13, 22). Ability to get the message across (1, 12, 9). Effective communication (3, 7, 17, 23, 24, 25). Feed back (6, 19, 20, 21, 36). Compulsive communication (8, 9, 18).

2.5 Operational Definition of Communicative Competence

Communicative Competence is the ability of a person to initiate and complete the process of communication successfully or even satisfactory to gain one's objective. (Aftab, 2005).

3.METHODOLOGY

The study was divided into three phases.

The first phase included a brain storming session in which questions were asked from a group of 20 university ELT teachers to assess this connection. The teachers were asked a series of questions that involved some decision making process in the past. The questioner observed, the eye movements of the respondent as he or she answered. This enabled the interviewer discover which representational systems, the individuals used at each stage in the process. Eye movements are similar in most people and usually indicate the following: -

-When people look up and left, they are visualizing something from the past. Thus, they have visual representational styles and the preferred modes of communication with them are visual.

- When people look sideways to the left, they are hearing sounds from the past. Thus, have auditory representational style and predicates to be used with them include auditory words.

- When people look down and to the left, they are talking with themselves in a kind of internal dialogue. They have kinesthetic mode of communication.

After assessing their representational systems these teachers were then dispersed and were requested to come again after a week. Meanwhile researcher collected data on communicative competence of each teacher by asking their students to fill a questionnaire measuring it. Observations were also made to assess the usage of NLP in class room by teachers.

In the next session teachers were briefed on their specific representational system styles and were grouped accordingly. They were trained to be aware of their specific representational system style and then to use them in everyday life especially to increase competence in classroom. Observations were again recorded to assess their usage of NLP in classroom.

In the third phase of study, a questionnaire assessing the communicative competence for each teacher was filled by their students and the differences in phase 1 and phase 2 were then assessed.

4.RESULTS

Table 1. Alpha Reliability Coefficient of Communicative Competence Scale

Sub scales	No. of items	Alpha Reliability		Total n=20
		Males (n=10)	Females (n=10)	
Emotional management	4	.380	.384	1.000
Ability to get the message across	3	.532	.351	1.000
Effective Communication	6	.679	.592	1.000
Feed Back	5	.649	.598	1.000
Listening	2	.577	.564	1.000
Empathy	5	.629	.630	1.000
Compulsive Communication	3	.582	.502	1.000

Alpha reliability of sub-scales of Communicative Competence within different sample categories (N=20)

The table depicts that the communicative competence scale and subscales are reliable ranging from .380 to .679.

Table 2. Frequency of NLP usage by Language teachers during pre-test and post-test phases

Pre test Group	Post test Group
2 out of 20 teachers	20 out of 20 teachers

During the initial phase of study teachers were interviewed and observed to assess their usage of NLP as an Instructional Strategy in their class rooms and it was found that after teachers became aware of their own representational styles, they became more apt in using them in class room.

Table 3. Mean, Standard Deviation & paired sample t-scores of pre-test and post-test groups on communication competence

Group	N	M	S.D	Paired sample t test
Pretest	20	12.8	11.08	10.46
Post test	20	10.5	10.78	

Level of Significance (alpha) $\alpha = 0.05$

Mean differences among pre-test and post-test groups depict that usage of NLP has significant impact on communication competence.

Table 4. Correlation between Communicative Competence and Usage of NLP. (N=20)

Teachers	1	2
1- CC	-	.082**
2-Usage of NLP	.082**	-

Note. CC=Communication Competence, NLP=Neuro linguistic Programming

The table shows positive correlation between usage of NLP and communicative competence of teachers.

5. Conclusion

The findings of the study indicate a significant relationship between use of NLP techniques and an enhanced learning atmosphere. This finding confirmed that NLP strategies have a positive correlation with communicative competence of teachers which in turn benefits the learners.

This study was an attempt to find a co-relation of communicative competence in educational settings in relation to NLP. Further studies can be conducted to examine additional discrepancies as well as the impact of other variables including teachers' personality types, emotional intelligence and IQ with regards to NLP. The exploration of effectiveness of NLP strategies in educational setting can prove to be the potential research areas of future researchers.

Moreover, the findings substantiate the fact that language teachers are more successful in their career if they improve their instructional strategies with new research methods like NLP strategies. On the other hand, it seems that teachers in language institutes are more eager to use NLP techniques even if they are not so experienced in the realm of teaching.

Communicative competence of teachers has vast impact on student learning ability. As the profession of teaching is an interactive communication process, so the communicative competence as a potent teaching tool is to be strengthened with the help of systematically organized in-service training programs.

Considering the teachers' role in today's world, it is need of the hour to educate and train the teachers who will be capable of facilitating classroom communication to meet demands of a highly competitive socio-industrial set up. Development of interactive skills and improvement in communication strategies along with communication alternatives could redefine the entire learning process and benefit students in the long run. For this matter an approach to understand causes and consequences of their communication actions in a classroom setting ought to be devised. Moreover, new techniques and approaches like NLP could pave path for finding and applying the best communication alternatives in order to devise suitable strategies for various learning settings to maximize learning outcomes.

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