

Creating Proper Learning Environment: The Role of NLP in the ESL Classroom

Dr. Raju Sebastian

Associate Professor, Department of English,
St. Berchmans College (Autonomous)
Changanasserry-68610, Kerala, India

Abstract: A proper environment is a fundamental requirement for all kinds of learning to take place. It is all the more so for second language learning, given the still unresolved mystery of language learning. However, very often language teachers and learners end up as victims of the environment they find themselves in rather than as creators of those environments. This paper discusses how Neuro-Linguistic Programming offers some hope in this direction. It documents the use of NLP strategies and insights for creating proper learning environments in actual classrooms and the results it has generated.

Index Terms: Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP), English as Second Language(ESL), Acquisition, Underprivileged Students, Rapport, anchoring, Satir categories, Milton model language pattern, unconscious, debriefing, perceptual positions, Eriksonian pattern, feedback, resourceful state

I. Introduction

“Human beings are the only creatures to have true language. The seemingly infinite flexibility and open-endedness of our language is one of the hallmarks of the human species” (Ramachandran 160). And down the ages researchers have been trying to unravel the secret of our language learning ability. The nature-versus-nurture debate has been the most acrimonious in this field. And the view upheld by most researchers in this regard is that “*the competence to acquire the rules* is innate, but exposure is needed to pick up the actual rules. This competence is bestowed by a still-unidentified “language acquisition device,” or LAD” (Ramachandran 169). It, therefore, goes without saying that language learning is different from any other type of learning. And if the forces behind language learning are a mystery, effective language pedagogy too is a challenge. That is why Krishnaswamy and Krishnaswamy say, “we need to think of an integrated model, integrating cognitive sciences, anthropology, natural sciences like neurosciences and biology, and sociology to gain a better understanding of language pedagogy” (50). And one undisputable aspect of language teaching and learning is a proper environment.

A proper environment is a basic requirement for any type of learning. But it is important to understand clearly what is meant by a proper learning environment. It is both internal and external: the physical setting as well as the mental states, attitudes and motivational levels of the students. The former is relatively easier to provide while the latter is a challenge to educationists worldwide. For it means empathizing with the barriers, blocks, fears and negativities of the students. When we respect their current views and provide them with the appropriate degree of safety and the opportunity to creatively explore, then we can take them beyond their immediate limitations (Caine and Caine). Eric Jensen too focuses on the mental states of the learners when he speaks about the importance of creating a safe and secure learning environment in his book *The Learning Brain*. According to him the brain becomes very active when risk-taking is encouraged and supported. However, it becomes helpless under perceived threats. Research tells us that threatening learners may foster more of the same behaviour that we are trying to avoid. A threat is any stimulus that causes the brain to trigger defensiveness or a sense of helplessness in the learner (10).

It is in this context that this study which proposes to use the insights from Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) in ESL acquisition gains relevance. Neuro-Linguistic Programming has generated considerable interest among English Language professionals in Europe and North America, especially in England and the US. For it is “a practical way of understanding our thinking and our behavior that can be used to make rapid and useful changes in our lives” (Andreas). Many of the NLP strategies have been found to be very useful in the English language classroom by different teachers around the world. It is also important to note that the NLP-approach to language teaching and learning is comprehensive. It takes into account the physical setting of learning, the mental states of the learners, the language used in the classroom, meta-communication such as voice quality, body language, facial expressions, gestures, rapport, motivation, pacing and leading, the structuring of the content etc.

II. Origin of the Problem

More often than not English is seen as yet another 'subject' in the curriculum in our schools and colleges. The complexity of language teaching and learning seems to be not appreciated properly in our ESL programmes especially in the undergraduate curricula. Even in many 'communicative English' programmes what is primarily tested is memory.

Whatever be the reasons behind such a state of affairs, it has its victims. And they, as usual, are the underprivileged students of the society. Underprivileged students in this case would mean students whose social, familial, economic, or educational background did not allow them to pick up English skills at school. Unfortunately such students constitute a sizable number in the undergraduate programmes in our colleges. These students suffer from a variety of problems and the lack of proficiency in English compound these problems. As they present themselves in the college, they are victims of serious level of inferiority complex, lack of motivation and the consequent disorientation. Consequently, they get into various forms indiscipline and addictions. Thus their entire undergraduate programme is ruined. More often than not they end up with the lowest grades or failure at the close of their undergraduate programme.

III. Significance of the Study and Interdisciplinary Relevance

Teaching and learning of English to such students has always been a challenge. That the traditional approach does not work with such students has been the experience of generations of teachers in the colleges in Kerala. New insights into the nature of language and language learning and acquisition are pouring in from different fields such as Linguistics, Psychology, Neurosciences, etc and English teachers would do well if they could incorporate these insights into the teaching of English. The present study becomes relevant in such a context. It is an attempt to make use of Neuro-Linguistic Programming (which draws on a number of disciplines including the ones mentioned above) in order to create a proper learning environment in the undergraduate General English classes thereby making ESL teaching-learning more effective.

IV. Social Relevance of the Study

The underprivileged students have one major set of problems in addition to the ones mentioned above. Their belief system is the first major stumbling block. Their beliefs about themselves, their strengths and weaknesses, their language learning abilities and their future are debilitatingly negative. They lack motivation and orientation. And their energy levels are very low when it comes to language learning. All these are part of what constitute a proper teaching-learning environment in the ESL classes. And NLP specializes in these fields and has a host of strategies to address these problems and develop appropriate skills and sub-skills. The researcher hopes, therefore, that this study will help each of such students gain a better self image, become more optimistic, set better life goals, get better motivation to work and realize their potential, and improve their communication in English. And when they are able to achieve these goals even to a minimum degree, the effects will be very positive in their families and the society at large.

V. Design of the Study

The study was conducted with second year students of various undergraduate classes of St. Berchmans college, Changanassery, Kerala, India. There were four batches of students with sixty students, on an average, per batch. There were 245 students altogether. The study was done by way of teaching an essay to these students.

The main objective of the study was to create a proper learning environment using NLP strategies. 'Proper learning environment' means motivating the students to actively participate in classroom activities like listening, discussion, asking questions, and clarifying doubts; creating good rapport with the students; and developing or strengthening such important student-qualities as attention, curiosity, interest and confidence.

The teaching module consisted of four one-hour sessions (including the first introductory session). Thus there were sixteen teaching sessions. Each session, except the first session, started with the resourceful state exercise lasting about 5-7 minutes. In the first session initial instructions were given, classroom rules were set up, the Resourceful State Exercise was introduced, and a short introduction to the topic at hand was given. In the second session, important unfamiliar words were introduced, the NLP spelling strategy was used to teach the spellings of some unfamiliar words, and an individual reading of the lesson was done. In the third and the fourth sessions, an in-depth analysis of the prose lesson was undertaken.

VI. Session 1

The lesson that was to be taught to this class was "A Gandhian in Garhwal," an article written by Ramachandra Guha. It was about the Chipko Movement and its founder Chandi Prasad Bhatt. Being the first session, it had the following objectives:

1. to build rapport with the students and establish classroom rules,
2. to introduce the idea of getting into a desired state and lead them to experience it; and
3. to introduce the topic of the experimental lesson and create interest and kindle curiosity in the students about the lesson.

VI. i. Establishing Rapport with the Class

On entering the class he greeted the students with a hearty smile. He introduced himself and made some initial remarks about the students, which he had already gathered. Right from these initial remarks through the entire session, the researcher took special care to use words related to the visual, auditory, and kinesthetic modes of perception as in the following opening remarks of the session:

I am very happy to be with you today because I have *heard* that you are a smart group of students and as I *see* you *looking* at me and *listening* to me the way you do I *feel* that we are going to *feel* great when we are together.

Using the words related to all the three modes of perception has much value in effective communication and rapport-building, according to NLP. We all have a preferred mode of perception and as such we tend to use words related to that mode of perception predominantly. Consequently, the listeners with a different mode of perception are likely to be left out at an

unconscious level. They may not be aware that they are left out but they would definitely exhibit such symptoms as boredom, lack of understanding, distraction etc. Using the words of the three modes of perception helped in bringing in that inclusive feeling in all the students and thus helped in better reception.

VI. ii Establishing Classroom Rules

To set up classroom rules he chose the centre of the stage to stand on. For him it was the instruction spotlight. And he adopted the leveller posture [head straight, legs straight and firmly on the ground and palms pressing down at mid-body height (Churches and Terry, *NLP for Teachers* 67)].

There are two NLP techniques used here: The former (i.e., instruction spotlight) is an example of spatial anchoring (Churches and Terry, *NLP for Teachers* 110). Anchoring is the process by which a stimulus gets connected to and thereby triggers a response (Grinder and Bandler, *Trance-formations* 61). And the researcher was trying to anchor the centre of the stage as the place to give instructions from so that whenever he moves on to that spot, the students would be unconsciously ready to listen to the instruction. The researcher is spared of the effort to invite the attention of the students to listen to him. This way, it helped to establish classroom discipline effortlessly. The latter (i.e., leveller position) was one of the Satir categories, the six body postures and language styles indicating specific ways of communicating, developed by Virginia Satir, Family Therapist (Grinder and Bandler, *Structure II* 47-53; Churches and Terry, *NLP for Teachers* 63-67). This posture is used when one wants to assert oneself. And this would be communicated to the listeners at an unconscious level. In other words, these two NLP techniques were used in the hope that it would help the researcher in establishing classroom discipline and establish rapport with the learners with relatively less effort.

The classroom rules were not stated as such. Rather they were given indirectly, in the form of stories or with the help of an exercise. The researcher wanted the students to observe four important classroom rules. They were: 'Be in time for the class;' 'bring the textbook to the class;' 'be brave enough to make mistakes in the class and learn from it;' and 'let your promises be 'I will do it' instead of 'I will try to do it.'

The third and the fourth rules are inspired by NLP. One of the key principles of NLP is "Everything is feedback. 'Failure' and 'success' are just forms of feedback" (Engel and Arthur, 5). And NLP chooses to focus on what could be learned from our mistakes, with ferocious determination. The fourth rule is an invitation to the students to give their full to this experiment. The word 'try' in the NLP parlance is a tricky word. While it sounds positive, a caveat for inaction is built into it. And therefore when we use such a word, NLP says, our mind and body tune itself to giving less than what it could really give. Therefore NLP does not promote the use of the word 'try' to make promises.

The first three rules were introduced with the help of a story and the fourth one, with the help of an exercise. At the end of each story (or the exercise), the rule was stated using the Milton (Erikson)-Model Language Pattern (Grinder and Bandler, *Trance-formations* 240-250). For example, at the end of the first story the researcher said: "And it is a good thing to begin to think about the benefit of coming in time for a programme, and you can always make it a point to come to the class in time".

The researcher used two important NLP techniques here. The first one was the use of stories. And the second one was the use of Milton model language pattern. Stories, NLP says, directly go to the unconscious and therefore have lasting effect on us (Mahony 125-129). And the Milton model language pattern is indirect and suggestive and therefore appeals to the unconscious. The researcher made use of the Milton model language pattern at every important point in his talk in all the sessions.

Then the researcher proceeded to the resourceful state exercise. And the learners were prepared for it with the help of a story. At the end of the story the learners were ready to do the exercise. The researcher directed the students through the exercise slowly with varying tones of voice.

VI. iii. Resourceful State Exercise

This exercise is based on the NLP view that we are capable of changing our state of mind and therefore our reality at will (McHugh 251). Our state of mind determines our attitude to reality and it, in turn, mysteriously changes the external reality as well. This exercise is a systematic way of consciously changing our state of mind to a desired one. And it underscores the idea that NLP has adopted from Cognitive Psychology that it is we who create our own reality whether consciously or unconsciously (Martindale 20).

The following is a transcript of the resourceful state exercise that the researcher used:

Sit comfortably. If possible, have your spine straight. Close your eyes. Get as clear a picture as possible of the room you are sitting in. Your position in this room, the people sitting close to you, the colour of their dress as well as yours, the different articles of furniture in this room, their colour, the colour of the walls, of the floor, and of the doors, windows, and curtains.... As you do that you may also listen to the different sounds that you can hear in this room. The sounds of vehicles passing by, sounds from other classes, the chirping of birds, teacher's voice, the sound of the fan, of your own breathing etc....

I am now going to ask you to become aware of certain sensations in your body that you are feeling at this moment, but of which you are not explicitly aware.... Become aware of your shirt touching your shoulders...the touch of your shirt on your back, or your back touching the chair.... Get a feel of your hands resting in your lap or touching each other.... Be in touch with the feeling as your thighs press against the chair.... And become conscious of the feeling when your feet touch the floor.

Once again: your shoulders...your back...your hands...your thighs...your feet

Again: shoulders...back...hands...thighs...and feet.

You may continue to go the round by yourself now moving from one part to the other. Do not dwell for more than a couple of seconds on each part. What is important is to get the *sensation* of each part....

Now that you are totally sensitized to your body, you are totally relaxed. And dwelling in this relaxed state, you may think of a time you were fully resourceful.... a time when you used all your abilities to achieve something. It could be winning a football game, supporting your friends win a game, studying for an exam in which you got good marks, doing an exercise in the gymnasium etc. Bring the event as clearly as possible to your mind.... What are the pictures that are

coming to your mind... Who are all there in the picture.... See yourself in it.... Focus on the quality of this picture.... Is it colourful or black and white.... If it is colourful, which are the colours.... How big is the picture.... Where is it... How far is it away from you.... Is there movement in the picture.... How bright is it.... Is it focused or unfocused.... Listen also to the sounds in this picture. What are the sounds in this picture.... Can you hear your own voice.... the shouts of joy.... the murmuring.... the voice of your friends and dear ones.... And the quality of these sounds and voices.... loud, soft... high pitch, low pitch... triumphant, jubilant, sad, lethargic... rhythmic, harmonious, cacophonous etc...

As you do these, become fully aware of the sensations and feelings in your body right now.... the flow of energy in your body.... The sensations of happiness and triumph.... the sensations of confidence.... the feeling of fully immersed in what you do.... the beating of your heart.... the speed and rhythm of your breathing.... your body temperature.... the feeling of weight.... In which part of your body do you feel these sensations....

Stay with these feelings.... And when you feel satisfied, you may come back and open your eyes. (De Mello 11-12; Bandler, *Get the Life* 23-24)

This exercise had two parts. The first part was a relaxation exercise. Its aim was to help the students to be fully present in the body. When one is fully present in the body, one is totally in the present; and when one is totally in the present, one is totally relaxed. The second part was a rejuvenating exercise; it was supposed to help the students to get into a resourceful state. It is based on two NLP principles: First, everyone possesses all the resources one needs (Engel and Arthur 5). Second, it is really possible to take charge of one's internal processes if one breaks them down to the lowest possible chunks (McHugh 251). Here, a happy memory/thought was chunked down to its components – pictures, sounds, and feelings. They, in turn, were broken down to their components – the quality of the picture (colour scheme, size, distance, movement etc.), the quality of the sounds/voices (loud/soft, harsh/soothing, high pitch/low pitch, jubilant/sad etc.), and the quality of the feelings (the sensations of the flow of energy, the sensations in one's body when one was confident, the sensations of joy, the sensations in one's body when one was fully immersed in something, temperature, pulse rate, weight, location etc.). NLP holds that when one becomes aware of these lowest chunks, one owns them and thereby gains control over them (McHugh 251).

VI. iv. Introducing the Essay

To such a group of students, charged up with a new-found interest and enthusiasm, the researcher introduced the lesson to be dealt with in the class. The transition was made using the Milton model language pattern: “*Now that you have recharged yourself with energy, enthusiasm, and interest, you may want to be introduced to the lesson that we are dealing with in the coming classes.*” The title of the lesson is ‘A Gandhian in Garhwal.’” After talking to them about the title, the author, and the main theme of the article and connecting it to certain recent events, the researcher invited the students to do an activity. They were to take a piece of paper and get ready. The researcher then asked them to write five words related to environmental protection. They were given three minutes to write the words. The researcher too joined the activity. After three minutes, they were asked to work in pairs. Each one was to assume the role of a learner and helper. One person read out his words. The second person assumed the role of a learner. He asked for clarification of the words that the first person had written. The first person assumed the role of helper and he explained what he meant by the words he wrote. When the first person finished doing this, they reversed their roles and repeated the process. They were given about twelve minutes to do the activity. The researcher too joined the activity.

The exercise was a diluted form of the NLP tool known as the Perceptual Positions (Churches and Terry, *NLP for Teachers* 73-78). In its original form, there were three roles to be played by the students: learner, helper, and observer. As the researcher thought that the first two roles were sufficient for the present purpose, he omitted the third position. In essence, the purpose of the exercise was to let the students approach a subject from multiple points of view thereby gaining more depth into it. When one student asked questions and listened to the other, he got more information about and hopefully gained more insight into the subject which he was unable to get by himself.

The reason why the researcher too joined the exercise was to improve his rapport with the students. It sent a clear message to the students that the researcher was approachable and part of the process. It is inspired by the NLP technique of Pacing. It is a way to build rapport with another person by joining their model of the world by matching their language, values, beliefs, actions, current experiences etc. (Hall 69). All these, we know, are crucial to rapport building.

At the end of the exercise, the researcher spent some time in debriefing the activity. And he concluded the debriefing with a typical Eriksonian suggestion: “*As you begin to make sense of these in your own time, learning becomes easy and enjoyable to you, especially in this class.*” It is in the italicized part that the suggestion is embedded. Before winding up the session, he reminded them of the four classroom rules he had set up for them. He also thanked the class for giving their maximum to the resourceful state exercise, for actively participating in the two activities, for keenly listening to the researcher, and for keeping the class discipline.

The act of thanking the class by picking up all their good points and deliberately not mentioning their negatives was again inspired by NLP. Two NLP principles operated here:

1. There is a distinction between a person and the behaviours they exhibit. ... it is useful to evaluate the behaviours while holding constant a positive evaluation of the self.
2. The behaviour a person exhibits is separate from the intention or purpose of that behaviour. The intention is always assumed to be positive.” (Bretto 1)

These two principles helped the researcher to always maintain a positive frame of mind in the class. And this in turn resulted in his focusing on everything positive in the class. When he talked about the positives, the students too focused on the positives and unconsciously decided to make it better the next time. Even those students who might not have given it a serious attempt were inspired to do it better next time.

It is not that the researcher was not aware of those students who were not following the rules or did not participate in the classroom process. Rather it was the NLP way of sending them the clear message that in spite of their indifference they were

treated as part of the class. This strategy, rather than threats, he hoped, would be a stronger reason for those inactive and uninterested students to get more involved in the classroom process the next time.

And he concluded the session with the following Eriksonian sentence: “As you finish this session, I know that you will *begin to make sense of what you have learned today in your own time and understand it deeper and better. All you have learned today will work for you at an unconscious level and you will wake up tomorrow with greater insights.* Have a nice day.” This message, the researcher hoped, would linger in their mind and keep them thinking about what they saw in the session, at an unconscious level.

As mentioned earlier, actively looking for the positive aspects of the students and appreciating them however small was an attitude that the researcher maintained throughout the experiment. While being very much aware of what was desirable in them, he made it a point not to give any negative stroke as far as possible. It has been inspired by NLP’s insight into human nature and the way we create our own worlds. According to NLP, we have no reason to judge other people, but only to understand them (McHugh 5-6).

VII. Sessions 2

The very first thing the researcher noted about this session was something quite encouraging: all the students were in their seats even *before* the bell. And the researcher lost no time in expressing his joy and appreciation for this. He then wrote the selected words on the top right corner of the board. After the preliminary formalities, the resourceful state exercise was directed. Most of the students did some serious internal work, as was evident from their nonverbal cues. Or to say the least, there was no trace of the previous day’s problems. At the end of the exercise, the researcher took a quick sample feedback about it from the students. All those who responded reported some change in their energy level. And the researcher praised the class for the good work they were putting in. He assured them that they were embarking on a great journey of taking control of their life and that by investing their time and energy in such an exercise, they were taking the first step.

Then the meanings and spellings of significant words in the essay were taught with specific NLP strategies. After that a simplified version of the essay was given to the students for reading. They were initiated into the activity with an Eriksonian statement: “Having learned the meanings of so many words *means* that you are ready to read the text and understand it on your own. You already possess all the resources for this task.”

It is to be noted that this instruction is full of presuppositions¹. The researcher presupposed that the students already learned the new words and expressions, that they were ready to read the text, and that they were aware of the fact they had all the resources needed for the task. None of these might be factually correct. And then there was the use of the word ‘means’ which suggested an imaginary causal connection among these presuppositions. But as mentioned in the previous session, Erickson saw more reality in these positive presuppositions, i.e., he held that such presuppositions and ‘causal connections’ had the potential to actualize those presuppositions in the students than a more ‘factual’ statement could.

Before winding up the session, the researcher recounted the major points of the session. He checked some of the word meanings and spellings to see if they still remembered them. (And they did.) He also listed some of the main ideas in the text. And he appreciated the class for keeping the classroom rules and for responsibly behaving in the class. He specially mentioned that they had done the vocabulary exercise faster than expected. And he wound up with the following Milton-Model suggestion: I am sure that you will *begin to make sense of today’s learning in your own time and understand it deeper and better. All that you have learned today will work for you at an unconscious level and you will wake up tomorrow with greater insights.* Good day.”

VIII. Session 3

Students came punctually to the class with the text materials – both the original text and the simplified text. Taking note of this, the researcher mentioned this specifically at the very outset of the class and encouraged them to keep up this responsible behaviour. Then the researcher asked the spellings and meanings of some words they learned the previous day. The class as a whole answered them without much difficulty. To each answer the researcher reacted with expressions such as ‘very good’, ‘excellent’ etc. It was evident that most of the students benefitted, at least to some extent, from the previous day’s exercise. Then the resourceful state exercise was directed. And all the students appeared to be participating in it seriously. The researcher pointed out this as well at the end of the exercise. It was clear from their faces that a lot many students benefitted from this exercise.

Then the main activity of the day was introduced: reading and analyzing the simplified text in groups of three. In and through this activity, the researcher became aware of the fact that only seventy per cent of the students were following him. Others were disoriented. One of the reasons is their handicap with the language. There could be other reasons as well. There were a few students who were indifferent to what was happening in the class. The researcher decided to leave them at that provided they did not disturb the class. For their problems could not have been solved within the limits of the present study. That is why in his appreciation of the students, at the end of the activity, the researcher emphasized the word ‘majority.’ For the number of students who were disoriented was not negligible. And they could not be expected to become active in the class with psychological suggestions alone. Their problems ran deeper. They had to be specially handled and dealt with, with more empathy and skill. Emphasizing the word ‘majority’ was the researcher’s way of confronting the disoriented students. He was cautioning them that they would not get any appreciation unless they mended their ways. And this was done without giving them any negative stroke.

And the session was concluded with a recap of the main ideas that emerged in the course of the day’s work. And the following Eriksonian suggestion too was given at the end: “*Now that you have finished doing an in-depth analysis of the simplified text, you could begin to think of reading the article in its original form. You already have all the skills and information you need to do this. Therefore, read the original text this evening at home and enjoy. Thank you.*”

¹ Presuppositions, according to Grinder and Bandler “are the most powerful of the language patterns, when used by a communicator who *presupposes what she doesn’t want to have questioned.* A general principle is to give the person lots of choices, and yet have all of the choices presuppose the response you want” (*Trance-formations* 244).

IX. Session 4

All the students were in time for the session. The researcher noted this and appreciated the students for this. And they did the resourceful state exercise with diligence and enthusiasm. However, the researcher also noted that eight students—the largest number so far—were not doing the exercise. The researcher used the peripheral praise strategy immediately. Thereupon they behaved as if they were doing the exercise. But the researcher did not get any nonverbal cues about their doing it correctly. This being the last session, the researcher decided to leave it at that and focused on the majority of the students who were doing the exercise in all seriousness. At the end of the exercise, the researcher praised the class for their genuine attempt in doing the exercise.

And then he enquired of the class whether they read the original text back at home. Only a minority – about ten students – answered in the affirmative. And they reported that they were able to understand the text more or less well. And the researcher made the class give them a hand. At the same time the researcher gladly made a note of the rest of the students' sincerity in admitting that they had not read the text at home.

Before concluding the session, the researcher reiterated his appreciation for their readiness to abide by the classroom rules (though with some exception), their seriousness and earnestness in doing the resourceful state exercise, their earnestness in doing the various classroom activities and their readiness to take corrections from the researcher. All these, the researcher said, pointed to and confirmed what the researcher had heard about them – that they were a special batch of students. It was all these qualities that made them special in the eyes of the researcher. And he advised them to keep the good spirits they were exhibiting so far. The resourceful state exercise, if practised daily, would go a long way in helping them control their lives, he assured them. And by wishing them all the very best in their studies, the researcher wound up his study.

X. Analysis and Findings

X. i. Resourceful State Exercise

The resourceful state exercise, used to open each lesson, was basically aimed at empowering the students, and making them responsible and accountable to themselves. The ultimate objective of all NLP work is to reduce our dependence on circumstances and to increase our behavioural choices in a given situation. The exercise was an adaptation of the body awareness techniques used in Vipasana as used by Anthony de Mello (11-12) and the concept of submodalities in NLP. The researcher chose to open every class with this exercise because he thought it would enhance the students' ability to focus on studies as their mental energy might have been expended in a host of other areas not always conducive to learning. The response of the students to this exercise was very positive, according to the researcher's observation as well as the written evaluation by the students. According to the latter, an average 74% of the students found this exercise helpful for learning.

X. ii. The Use of Stories

The researcher used stories to introduce classroom rules that would set the frame for classroom behaviour. NLP recognizes the importance of stories and frame setting in any form of communication. Stories directly get into our unconscious and influence our thinking and behaviour. Besides, they are great rapport-building tools. And frame is basically "context, environment... and way of perceiving something" (Hall 367). And NLP holds that the person who sets the frame controls the communication. That is, the one who sets the context for the communication at the beginning will have more influence on everything that follows (Churches and Terry, *NLP for Teachers* 54). It was also a way to make the students responsible and accountable. By setting the frame for classroom behaviour through some stories, the researcher sought to exert some influence on student behaviour in the class. The effectiveness of this technique was evident when the majority of the students followed all the four classroom rules for most of the time. A special mention of punctuality and bringing the text to the class could be made here. These are two areas, in which the students very often do not comply with the teachers' directives. However, as mentioned above, the students made it a point to bring the text to class and to be on time for class most of the time.

X.iii. Researcher's Approach to the Students

Among the different aspects of the experiment, the one that received the most overwhelming response of the students was the researcher's approach to the students. About 97% of the students felt it was helpful for learning. Very minute or seemingly silly aspects of the researcher's behaviours were taken up for NLP intervention. The researcher played the CLT roles of need analyst, organizer of resources, facilitator, and group process manager in the class. And these roles called for much attention to be paid in such areas as rapport building, motivating, goal-setting, the precise use of language or *linguaging*, correcting mistakes, developing self-esteem and self-confidence, encouraging, celebrating etc.

For example, the researcher not only took into account the students' academic needs but their emotional needs as well. Therefore he chose to appreciate even the simplest positive behaviour they exhibited such as greeting the researcher, smiling, obliging even the simple commands of the researcher etc. It was found that acknowledging such simple but positive behaviours had an electric impact on the students. Though at first they found it silly on the part of the researcher, subsequently they understood the sincerity behind such an attitude. As a result, rapport building was easy and rewarding. Even the smallest achievements of the students were made an occasion for celebration (on a corresponding scale only). It had its effect on classroom discipline, attention, and participation.

As a facilitator, the researcher set the frames for the classroom processes and explained the specific ways in which a task was to be carried out. It was the NLP way of controlling and influencing the whole process, as already mentioned above. He helped them focus all their energy on their studies by way of the 'right learning state' exercise. He instilled confidence in the students and motivated them using a number of NLP techniques such as refusing to give negative strokes, using Milton Model Language Patterns, sincerely pointing out even the smallest of their strong areas, correcting their mistakes by simplifying the task, encouraging, and celebrating even small successes.

His use of peripheral praise to avoid negative strokes was inspired by Gregory Bateson's idea of the importance of the relationship aspect in learning. Through the peripheral praise strategy, the researcher was focusing on *what was working* and not

on *what was not working* or *what was wrong*. (As we have seen in the first chapter, this was the fundamental difference between NLP and mainstream psychology.) And by focusing on what was positive in the context the researcher was reinforcing the relationship with everyone in the class. And it must have been this relationship angle coupled with the unconscious realization that the only way to get strokes in this class was to do something positive, which prompted the misbehaving students to refocus on the classroom processes.

Through the use of the Milton Model, the researcher was experimenting with the NLP idea of effortless change. Through a clever mix of presupposition, anticipation, recognition and voice modulation, the researcher was trying to influence the unconscious mind of the students. Influencing the unconscious mind becomes important as it is considered as the source of all actions, and therefore of all change. To reach the unconscious, the conscious mind has to be suppressed, silenced or distracted. Milton Erikson has demonstrated that it was possible to do this by embedding commands to the unconscious in a mix of presupposition, anticipation, recognition, and voice modulation. In this way, the embedded commands slip through the conscious mind and reach the unconscious and initiate changes there. And the researcher was adapting his technique to his experimental classes to generate similar results. He took the framework of the sentences used by Milton Erikson and changed the content to suit his purposes. And they were used at the beginning and end of all the important junctures of the classroom process. The results were not, of course, dramatic, but they were fair enough given the short span of time the researcher had worked with this. To say the least, they were a great help in setting the frame for each task, motivating and encouraging the students and keeping a positive atmosphere throughout the session.

XI. Conclusion

Creating a proper learning environment is one of the fundamental but most challenging tasks for the conscientious educator. Given the slippery nature of language teaching-learning, the task becomes all the more urgent and difficult. And this paper is an attempt in describing a genuine effort in this direction. NLP, as this study has demonstrated, offers some original insights and strategies for taking charge of our lives which, in turn, helps us create the world we want. It shows us how not to live as victims of our environment, but as creators of our environment.

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