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The effect of Neuro Linguistic Programming (NLP) techniques on young Iranian EFL Learners' motivation, learning improvement, and on teacher's success

Anita Lashkarian^{a*}, Sima Sayadian^a

^a *Department of English, Maybod Branch, Islamic Azad University, Maybod, Iran*

Abstract

Neuro-linguistic programming (NLP) techniques can help EFL learners become successful by increasing their motivation, by decreasing their anxiety leading to learning improvement. But much research has shown a poor understanding of NLP, and suffers from methodological problems as well. The main objectives of this study were to investigate the effect of NLP techniques on young Iranian EFL learners' level of motivation, learning improvement and teacher's success. Sixty students from a junior school in Iran were randomly assigned to two groups of thirty each. The experimental group was taught from the prescribed text aided by NLP techniques. The control group received no treatment. In order to see whether NLP techniques had a significant effect on the learners' motivation, an Attitude/Motivation questionnaire was administered to the two groups before and at the end of teaching sessions that lasted for twelve weeks, in the form of a pre-test and a post test. The learning improvement was assessed on the basis of the related tasks administered to the students in both groups. Moreover, a questionnaire was administered to the teacher(s) in the form of an interview to see whether the application of NLP techniques was an added criterion to the teacher's success. The results of the independent samples t-test and content analysis indicated that the young Iranian EFL learners of English not only increased on their motivation level as a result of receiving NLP techniques, but showed a considerable improvement in EFL proficiency. Furthermore, NLP techniques contributed positively to teacher's success. The results emphasized the importance of NLP techniques in EFL settings by enabling the teacher to communicate better with students, strengthen the learning environment, and develop positive interaction that would increase academic effectiveness, motivation and proficiency of learners.

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* Corresponding author. Tel.: 00989131568544.
E-mail address: anitalashkarian@yahoo.com

1. Introduction

Communicative language teaching (CLT) is currently popular and in practice in most of the educational institutions all over the world. CLT can be understood as a set of principles about the goals of language teaching, how learners learn a language, the kinds of classroom activities that best facilitate learning, and the roles of teachers and learners in the classroom. To achieve CLT goals more effectively Neuro-Linguistic Programming (Grinder and Bandler, 1976) can be helpful. In fact Neuro-Linguistic Programming is the study of how the interaction of our brain (NEURO), our language (LINGUISTIC) and body produces patterns of behavior (PROGRAMMING). Furthermore, NLP techniques such as reframing, anchoring, creating rapport can be applied by learners and educators to facilitate learning. By applying these techniques effectively, an educator can communicate better with students, strengthen the learning environment, and develop positive interaction that will increase academic effectiveness.

2. NLP techniques for ELT/EFL Classes

Reframing is the technique that the teacher utilizes by relating to personal experiences and makes it concrete and tangible for the learners. It can be used to modify students' conception of themselves or of the language, which makes it a powerful motivational tool. Reframing can also be used for creating artificial contexts to be used in the classroom and thus provide the students with a wider array of learning opportunities without the need of material support.

Anchoring is one of NLP techniques that make association between what we see, hear and feel and our emotional states. Fortunately, anchors can in fact be formed with any sensory experience. Evidence for this claim is widely available in the personal history of every individual. The fact that simply by seeing a spider a person can get a phobic response is one of them. Anchoring is one of the reasons why it is advisable to keep teaching multi-sensory since students have a wider array of sensory stimuli to link the language to. For the purposes of teaching English, auditory anchors are the most suitable since they can be used by the teacher during normal classroom interaction.

Rapport is at the heart of every healthy classroom. It is the critical ingredient that allows teachers and students to create is defined in the Webster dictionary (2014) as a "relation marked by harmony, conformity, accord, or affinity". Simply put, and for the purpose of this paper, rapport can be seen as that shared sense of oneness amongst the people in the classroom when there is a willingness to engage and focus on tasks. In essence, creating rapport through building community helps to facilitate students' willingness to participate in tasks. It has been noted by researchers that students who are in rapport with a teacher are more motivated and able to learn more easily. Thus, working on the creation of rapport is a goal that can help teachers and students to develop more cohesive learning communities. Teachers need to create rapport with students in a variety of situations such as the beginning of a course, the beginning of a lesson, and the beginning of specific activities, to name just a few. It is also important for teachers to re-establish rapport or repair it during times when student response is lacking, when the class is tired or bored, or when students are being "problematic."

NLP not only provides techniques, strategies, and solution to the problems of teaching and learning, motivating and engaging students, it goes further. It enables teachers to develop the flexibility of response to create their own changes. A report on the background study will reveal the importance of NLP in education and in EFL classes.

3. Review of literature

Neuro-linguistic programming or NLP (Hardingham, 1998) has been seen recently as one of the resources to enhance effectiveness of language instruction. NLP claims to help achieve excellence of performance in language teaching and learning, improve classroom communication, optimize learner attitudes and motivation, raise self-esteem, facilitate personal growth in students, and even change their attitude to life (Thornbury, 2001, p.394).

Richards and Rodgers (2001) also have introduced NLP as a supplementary technique in teaching second language, and Millroad (2004) defined this technique as "an approach to language teaching which is claimed to help achieve excellence in learner performance" (p. 28), enjoying much potential for teaching and learning second language. Proponents of NLP, such as O'Connor and Lages (2004) and O'Connor and Seymour (2003), see NLP as a highly effective motivational tool.

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