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## Ch. 11: Neurolinguistic Programming

### Key Words

1. neuro – how we experience the world through our five senses and represent it in our minds through our neurological processes
2. linguistic – the way language we use for both speech and thought shapes and reflects our experience of the world
3. programming – training ourselves to think, speak, and act in new and positive ways in order to release our potential
4. Neurolinguistic Programming – a collection of techniques, patterns, and strategies for assisting effective communication, personal growth and change, and learning based on assumptions about how the mind works and how people act and interact
5. outcomes – the goals or ends (knowing exactly what you want to achieve helps you achieve it); one of NLP's key principles
6. rapport – maximizing similarities and minimizing differences between people (and internally) at a nonconscious level; one of NLP's key principles
7. sensory acuity – noticing what another person is communicating, consciously and nonverbally; one of NLP's key principles
8. flexibility – doing things differently if what you are doing isn't working; having a range of skills to do something else or do something in a different way; one of NLP's key principles

## Questions

1. Since Neurolinguistic Programming wasn't designed for language learning, why did early practitioners decide to apply it to L2 learning? How can knowing basic communication techniques help you learn a new language?
2. How could using a sensory approach to teach language (like the example of eating a cookie) work in today's secondary schools? How can the teacher instruct students about abstract vocabulary using this technique?
3. Since NLP is short on theory, do scholars still take it seriously? Is research being done to expand on this theory? What studies have been done to test the effectiveness of this method?

## Observations

The 13 presuppositions guiding NLP are very general and do not really apply to language learning. NLP states that a teacher should make these presuppositions a part of his/her "belief system." However, as a former classroom teacher, some of these presuppositions are not accurate for secondary education. For example, "The nonconscious mind is benevolent," is a ridiculous statement given the disciplinary problems in today's schools as well as the general crime rates in society. Likewise, "All behavior has a positive intention," is also false. Other statements like, "The map becomes the territory: What you believe to be true is true or it becomes true," are just too "New Agey" to be taken seriously. Many schools do have the quote, "What you believe, you will achieve," painted on their hallway walls, but I doubt many educators actually believe that students will succeed simply by thinking positive thoughts. Students must commit to studying and taking their education seriously; it takes work, not just happy thoughts, to succeed.

As far as NLP procedure goes, I think some success could be had using the sensory approach to learning, but that should be just one technique a teacher uses, not the entire methodology. Some topics would be easy to teach, like the book's example of eating a cookie to describe feelings through time, but other more abstract concepts would be difficult to teach this way, especially negative words and emotions like "fear" and "war."

## Evaluation

The textbook described NLP in a way that was easy to understand, even though I ended the chapter thinking NLP sounds like the basis for those “power of positive thinking” books. The authors didn’t give enough information about NLP as a teaching strategy to convince me it will work in a typical classroom. I would like to have read more “real world” examples of this strange approach in action. Again, the authors used bulleted and numbered lists to make their points clear. However, they simply listed the 13 presuppositions from Revell and Norman (1997) without explaining their origin. More information like that would have helped me “buy into” this theory rather than dismiss it.

The authors gave a fair presentation of the content and did not seem biased, which is commendable given the subject. The book does mention that NLP practitioners tend to need specific training to use the techniques effectively, but it does not describe how teachers training to teach English as a second language may receive NLP training as part of their educational program. Finally, the bibliography and further reading list is very short in comparison to other chapters.

## Ch. 12: The Lexical Approach

### Key Words

1. lexis – words and word combinations
2. collocation – the regular occurrence together of certain words
3. discourse – communication; in this context, written communication analyzed to discover lexical units and word collocations

### Questions

1. How does an ESL teacher instruct students to become “discourse analysts” in order to successfully use this approach? How can a teacher using the target language teach students how to use this approach if that teacher does not know the students’ L1(s)?
2. Does learning lexical patterns really teach someone how to use a language? It seems like it would be possible to learn basic phrases for travel, but I don’t understand how using a lexical-only approach instructs someone to become fluent in an L2.
3. How expensive are these programs? It seems like programs like the Collins COBUILD English Course and the computer software needed to successfully use the Lexical Approach in a classroom would be cost-prohibitive.

### Observations

The Lexical Approach might be an effective method of teaching ESL, but I don’t know if secondary students would like to take on the role of independent scholar this approach seems to warrant. The high schoolers I’ve taught would not enjoy spending a 90-minute class period in the roles of “discoverer” and “data analyst” in order to learn a language, much less an entire semester using this approach. Like many of the other approaches we’ve discussed, this is a technique that may be helpful for some lessons but not for all.

Students should discoverer new information for themselves, but I think the teacher sometimes needs to provide more guidance in order to help students make sense of what they’re learning. A class that uses one of the pre-packaged lessons, although expensive, may be better able to use this approach than if the teacher is responsible for creating all the lexical lessons.

Personally, I'm not sure if I could explain collocations accurately enough to help someone learn English just by examining lexical units.

### **Evaluation**

I don't think the book gave enough information about how a typical lesson using the Lexical Approach would work. I would like to have had more information about the COBUILD system and if this method really works with all levels of learners. I would also like to know what the acronym COBUILD stands for, but the authors never explain. I would also like to have more explanation of the assumptions of the learning theory the Lexical Approach uses. The book refers to Lewis (2000) as saying that noticing lexical patterns contributes to turning input into intake, but then says that a formal description of grammatical rules probably does not help. What does this mean? Wouldn't knowing about grammatical rules help students as they piece together lexical units into spoken/written language? This just seems counterintuitive.

The textbook also states that lexical theories are in need of more research since they're ideas in search of an approach and a methodology. However, the book doesn't give any further information. I would like to have read at least one paragraph about how scholars are connecting lexical approaches to other research. How do lexical theories fit in with the other theories we've read? The authors just made this generic statement and moved on to the next chapter without fully explaining what they mean.

## Ch. 13: Competency-Based Language Teaching

### Key Words

1. competency – a description of the essential skills, knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors required for effective performance of a real-world task or activity; a measurement of a student’s ability to apply skills in various situations
2. graded objectives – a set of objectives ranging from easiest to hardest designed to let students see success at even the most basic levels; short-term goals build on each other so the student can see progress in both knowledge and skill over time
3. mosaic approach – approach that takes the overall goal of L2 learning and breaks it down into appropriate parts and subparts; learning the smaller parts helps students create the “bigger picture” or mosaic of L2

### Questions

1. U.S. school systems are using standards or competencies as teaching guidelines, but many teachers complain that the standards are forcing them to “teach to the test.” Do ESL teachers in the U.S. feel the same way, or are they more focused on using the standards to help students learn to speak English?
2. How do school systems and/or states create competencies? How are the competencies determined for different levels of ESL learner?

### Observations

As a former classroom teacher who has used a standards-based approach, I believe a standards- or competency-based approach to language learning would be a helpful way for both the students and the teacher. Having clearly defined objectives lets students know from the beginning what is expected of them and what they will be learning during the course. Using competencies for L2 instruction makes sense, even though North Carolina’s standards for ESL are very vague in comparison to state standards for history, for example. However, I’m not sure if I agree that using a competency-based approach is behaviorist in nature like the book describes, even though it is true that certain experiences require more formal language than

others. My view of competencies is that they are similar to the standard course of study that U.S. states are currently using to teach all subjects, not just ESL.

### **Evaluation**

I found the information on the Australian Migrant Education Program to be very interesting. The book's detailed description of this program reminded me of ways I used to teach my students. I usually started with a pre-assessment to see what my students already knew. From that information, I was able to plan lessons that would help them understand the content the state standards (competencies) required them to know. I also enjoyed the book's description of Auerbach's (1986) eight key features of using competencies in ESL instruction. The authors clearly define what a competency is and offer lists of sample competencies. They offer examples of advantages of a CBLT approach but fail to give any disadvantages learners may have.

The textbook gave enough information about competency-based ESL instruction for the topic to be clear. I would have liked more information about criticisms of the approach, especially since this is the only teaching approach (so far) that I agree with almost 100 percent. The authors mention a few criticisms but don't give many specific details about problems with this approach. They also state that many of CBLT's critics believe a competency-based approach perpetuates the status quo by expecting students to perform competencies in prescribed ways. The authors didn't elaborate on this claim.

## Ch. 14: Communicative Language Teaching

### Key Words

1. heuristic – indicates or points out something; stimulates interest as a means of further investigation
2. “strong” CLT – stresses the importance of learning language through communication; commonly referred to as “using English to learn it”
3. “weak” CLT – stresses the importance of giving learners opportunities to use their English for communicative purposes and attempts to integrate these activities into a wider program of language teaching; method of CLT typically used today
4. notational syllabus – a syllabus based on notions (broad abstractions such as time, sequence, quantity, location, frequency)

### Questions

1. What “notions” are used to create a notational syllabus? How does an instructor decide which notions to teach?
2. Which of the scholars listed in this chapter is the most important? That is, which research has had the most significant impact on CLT?
3. What are some examples of how CLT practitioners use this method in the classroom?

### Observations

The “weak” method of CLT, which stresses “learning English to use it” makes more sense than the “strong” version. I don’t understand how scholars could expect people who do not speak a language to simply “get it” by using the language. It would be like making noises without understanding what the noises mean.

From a theoretical perspective, CLT’s “eclectic” base of learning theories makes the most sense to me of all the theories we’ve discussed so far. Describing language as a system for expressing meaning whose function is to allow interaction and communication is a logical way of describing language that uses layman’s terms. Likewise, CLT’s view of structure as function and communicative use encompasses more than just grammar, which also makes sense. Finally,



putting language into categories is a helpful way of describing language, and this also relates to the Competency-Based Language Teaching's method of breaking down language learning into gradable objectives. Based on my own experiences in the classroom, CLT and CBLT are the most convincing methods of language teaching.

### **Evaluation**

The authors explain this approach in great detail, even though they sometimes exhibit a slight bias, such as when they claim comparisons like the chart on page 156-157 “stack the cards” in favor of CLT. However, the information in this chapter is much more thorough than the descriptions of other theories or learning approaches we've read. In fact, it was almost too detailed. There were countless authors referenced in this chapter, but I'm not sure which ones are the most important.

The authors present good information about the background of how and why CLT emerged, although they claim this is an approach and not a method without fully explaining the difference until the final chapter of the book. The chapter includes a good contrast between Chomsky's theory of competence and Hymes' term “communicative competence” (159), but it wasn't clear why this distinction is significant. The authors skim over Hymes and emphasis Wilkins (154) but claim there is “no single text or authority” on CLT (155). Overall, this chapter presented too much information without clearly distinguishing which is the most relevant to contemporary CLT. It's obvious a lot of research has been done regarding CLT as a teaching method, but the authors give an almost overwhelming presentation of what CLT scholars have been studying. I will need to go back and re-read the chapter to fully understand which scholars and theories are most relevant to using CLT in the classroom.