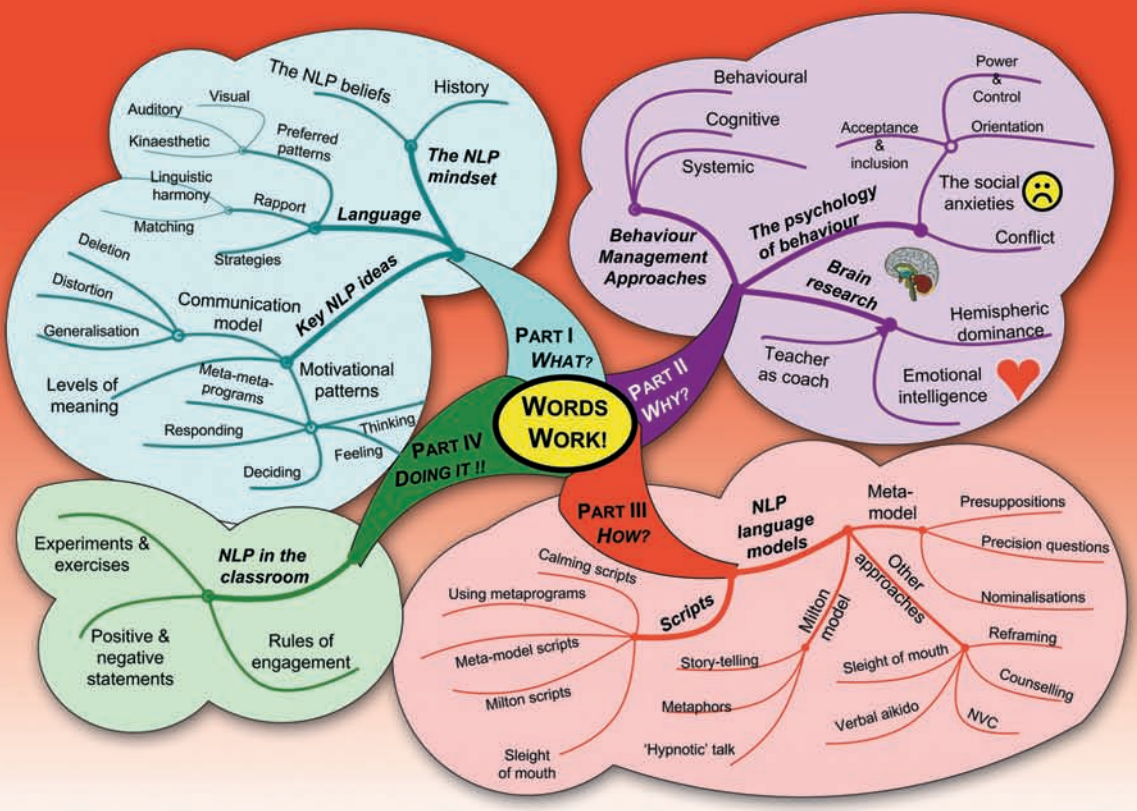
Making Your Words Work



Using NLP to Improve Communication, Learning & Behaviour

Terry Mahony

Making Your Words Work!

Using NLP to Improve Communication, Learning & Behaviour

Terry Mahony

Crown House Publishing Limited
www.crownhouse.co.uk
www.crownhousepublishing.com

First published by

Crown House Publishing Ltd
Crown Buildings, Bancyfelin, Carmarthen, Wales, SA33 5ND, UK
www.crownhouse.co.uk

and

Crown House Publishing Company LLC
6 Trowbridge Drive, Suite 5, Bethel, CT 06801, USA
www.crownhousepublishing.com

© *Terry Mahony 2003, 2007*

First published as *Words Work! How to Change Your Language to Improve Behaviour in Your Classroom* 2003. Original ISBN 1899836985.

Published 2007. Reprinted 2008, 2011.

The right of Terry Mahony to be identified as the author of this work has been asserted by him in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

All rights reserved. Except as permitted under current legislation no part of this work may be photocopied, stored in a retrieval system, published, performed in public, adapted, broadcast, transmitted, recorded or
reproduced in any form or by any means, without the prior permission of the copyright owners. Enquiries should be addressed to Crown House Publishing Limited.

British Library of Cataloguing-in-Publication Data
A catalogue entry for this book is available
from the British Library.

10-digit ISBN 184590041-3
13-digit ISBN 978-184590041-0

LCCN 2007921857

Printed and bound in the UK by
Bell & Bain Limited, Glasgow

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements ..... **vii**
Preface ..... **ix**
Introduction ..... **xv**

Part I: What Am I Going to Learn? ***1***

Chapter One **General Elements of NLP** **3**
The NLP mindset: guiding principles for excellent behaviour managers 4
Some of the key elements of NLP 7
1. The simple NLP communication model 7
2. The levels of meaning 11
3. Motivational patterns 14
Key conclusions 27
Sources and further reading for this chapter 32

Chapter Two **Mind your Language!** **33**
Patterns of language 33
Personally preferred speech patterns 34
Learning from experience 38
Visual 43
Auditory-tonal 43
Auditory-digital 43
Kinaesthetic 44
War and peace – rapport and disharmony 44
Ways of improving rapport 45
Linguistic harmony 47
Conflict and disharmony 49
Regaining rapport – mediation 51
"What makes this pupil tick?" – strategies in NLP 53
Key conclusions 64
Sources and further reading for this chapter 64

Part II: Why Should I Learn This? 67

Chapter Three **What's Happening in Classrooms Now? 69**
Managing behaviour 70
Discipline versus counselling 74
The psychology of behaviour and learning – a toolkit of ideas and practices 76
Brain research 94
Emotional intelligence – for you and them 98
The teacher as coach 102
Key conclusions 109
Sources and further reading for this chapter 110

Part III: Just How Do I Do It? 113

Chapter Four **It's All in the Mind 115**
Getting down to the nitty-gritty – the meta-model of language.....115
Presuppositions 118
Nominalisations 120
Developing the "Merlin" in you – hypnotic language approaches 121
The case for obscurity 121
Storytelling and metaphoric language.....125
Shaped daydreaming or state-inducing talk 127
Stories in quotations 129
Words that change the internal mindscape – other linguistic approaches 130
Sleight of mouth 130
Verbal aikido and fogging 132
Motivational talk 133
Reframing 134
The language of choice 135
NVC – nonviolent communication 140
Using counselling approaches 144
Solution-focused brief counselling 146
"Clean" language 147
Key conclusions 149
Sources and further reading for this chapter 149

Chapter Five **The Scripts 151**
Speech to calm the anxieties and raise self-esteem 151
Centring scripts 152
Addressing the specific anxieties 155
Using the meta-program patterns 158
Using the meta-model 159
Gestalt approaches 159
Using the Milton model and other "hypnotic" scripts and strategies 162
Example of a Milton vague communication 165
Embedded commands 165
An example of a guided visualisation 167
Sleight-of-mouth patterns 168
A miscellany of useful words 172

Part IV: What Can I Do With This Learning? 175

Chapter Six **Putting It All Together 177**
Language to improve behaviour – neuro-linguistics in action in your classroom 177
General rules of engagement 184
Negative and positive statements 186
In conclusion 187

Bibliography 189

List of figures

Mind map of the book .....cover
Figure (i): Reading this book.....xii
Figure 1.1: The NLP communication model 8
Figure 1.2: The conscious–unconscious mind connections.....10
Figure 1.3: The neurological levels (after Dilts).....12
Figure 1.4: The ladder of inference 13
Figure 1.5: McCarthy's 4-MAT.....19
Figure 1.6: The towards/away-motivation meta-program 21
Figure 1.7: The body-mind connections 26
Figure 2.1: The NLP language models.....34
Figure 2.2: The zone of proximal development (ZPD) 39
Figure 2.3: Mindscapes of learning 40
Figure 2.4: The mindscape-making process.....42
Figure 2.5: Peter's strategy 56
Figure 3.1: A model of teacher–pupil interaction 79
Figure 3.2: Flow 83
Figure 3.3: Patterns of conflict behaviour.....88
Figure 3.4: Misbehaviour strategy and teacher interventions.....91
Figure 3.5: A linear model of behaviour change.....93
Figure 3.6: The diminishing of full potential 103
Figure 3.7: The motivational ladder 105
Figure 4.1: Sleight of mouth – strategies for breaking out of the box 131
Figure 4.2: Thinking in the box 137

List of tables

Table (i): The NLP language approaches xvii
Table 2.1: Predicate words and phrases heard in teacher talk in behaviour management 50
Table 3.1: Classification of behaviour-management approaches 72
Table 3.2: The three basic social anxieties 77
Table 3.3: Positive intentions and entitlements 82
Table 3.4: The spectrum of teaching roles 85
Table 3.5: Anxiety-driven strategies for handling conflict 89
Table 3.6: Conflict and language 90
Table 3.7: Questions at the different neurological levels 90

Table 3.8: The four Fs of behaviour and teacher-distorted responses to conflict 92
Table 4.1: Meta-model examples 116
Table 5.1: Motivating language for the "mental" meta-programs 160
Table 5.2: Precision questions – the meta-model in use 161
Table 5.3: Gestalt language shifts 163
Table 5.4: Milton model statements – the meta-model patterns in reverse 164

List of exercises

Exercise 1.1: Know your linguistic meta-program filters 28
Exercise 2.1: Psycho-geography! 46
Exercise 2.2: Being your own mediator – a perceptual-positions exercise 58
Exercise 2.3: What is your preferred vocabulary? 60
Exercise 3.1: Anxiety 81
Exercise 3.2: Personal emotional competence – a tracking exercise 100
Exercise 3.3: Which is your most likely approach to conflict? 106
Exercise 4.1: Using the meta-model 118
Exercise 4.2: Breaking out of the box 139

Introduction

"Words are the main currency of our trade."
– Dhority, *The ACT Approach: the use of suggestion for integrative learning*

What makes a good teacher? Why are some teachers really good behaviour managers? When you stop and think about skilful behaviour management in the classroom, what comes to mind? As in all ages and even in this increasingly electronic age, Dhority's words are very true for teachers: words *are* our work! All good teachers are unconsciously skilful in their use of language to engender learning in their students. What changed in the last few decades of the last millennium was the rapid expansion in the scientific knowledge of the brain's functioning and the importance of language in the development of the maturing brain.

The study of how language and action affect the central nervous system is known as neuro-linguistic programming (NLP). Prior to its scientific underpinnings, it was once defined as *an attitude of curiosity that leaves behind it a trail of techniques*. Different researchers followed their curiosity in this field and discovered a range of patterns from which they developed techniques applicable to education. These techniques are finding their way into the classroom and this book takes what NLP tells us about language and communication and applies it to the daily interaction between teachers and pupils.

Many teachers have already found that, by using the suggestions to change their language and their vocabulary, they get better class control through improved behaviour from their pupils. It's not just about talking; it is about developing new patterns of conversation (*ways* of talking) that open up new ways of pupils' thinking. Words trigger internal representations and start processes in our mind. The "right" words are needed to produce the representations we wish to stimulate. We now know that different languages result in differently organised brains.

As the form of the language is different, so the neural paths that are formed while the young child is learning develop differently according to the language being acquired. Learning English, for example, with its alphabet of only 26 abstract symbols arranged linearly to form hundreds of thousands of words, will produce a differently wired brain from that of a Chinese child acquiring its native language constructed of the combination of thousands of individual pictograms. "Language development changes the landscape of the brain radically" (Carter, 1998). Pacific island peoples with no written language develop a wider range of kinaesthetic or nonverbal means of communication. Recent research (Jensen, 1994) shows that even after the language has developed, words can still alter the physical structure of the brain. Brain scans using positron emission tomography (PET) have demonstrated that carefully chosen words can activate the same areas of the brain, and have the same therapeutic effects, as a proprietary drug such as Prozac!

If we extrapolate this research it could support the underpinning premise of this book: altering what you say and the way that you say it can stimulate changes in the behaviour of the listener. As a teacher and a mediator, I believe in the persuasive power of language. This research supports that belief.

Professional mediators recognise three sets of skills in conflict management:

1. Identifying patterns in and behind conflict – patterns in the anxieties that people exhibit; patterns in the individual approaches to conflict as a protagonist.
2. Establishing a climate of nondefensiveness in both parties, which can depend on subskills such as gaining rapport easily, the use of assertive strategies at the appropriate time, the ability to change or modify belief systems and the different ways people see the same facts.
3. Communicating to ensure that conflict prevention and resolution by conversationally redefining positions and issues dampens down the emerging conflict.

This book focuses on the last skill: the development of sophisticated language skills and the linguistic devices and specific speech patterns that ensure improved communication. Although its

Table (i): The NLP language approaches

NLP language type	Types of experience	Purpose or use
Metamodel	*Sensory & physical* We experience the world through our five senses, but our linguistic description of our experience tends to be highly selective, with many deletions, distortions and generalisations of the sensory detail of that experience.	The meta-model uses precise questions to recover a fuller behavioural description of the events. It engages the linear or sequential processing of the brain and helps deconstruct the experience.
Milton	*Conceptual & perceptual* Whole collections of sensory experiences are generalised and given abstract names such as "love" or "communication", which we then use as if everyone had the same definition of what they mean.	The Milton Model is a form of deliberately vague language to talk to the unconscious mind and to stimulate the brain's intuitive ways of processing to create new meanings or mind sets.
Metaphor	*Metaphoric & symbolic* Metaphors and symbols are ways of describing real-life experiences when sensory-based descriptions seem inadequate. Elements in the metaphor, or aspects of the symbol, correspond to elements or aspects of our experience. We use them to extend the meaning of the events they relate to, or to enrich our description of them.	Teachers have always known the power of storytelling to educate and to elicit different emotional states and to promote lateral thinking.

main emphasis is on the language patterns of NLP, it draws on other aspects to aid the first two skill areas. There are three broad fields of language in NLP. They are used deliberately to achieve different outcomes. This book will provide you with a description

of the ideas contained in each field, where they can be applied in the classroom and examples of the different speech patterns in all three. Skill in the choice of which mode of language to use and in the specific speech patterns within each field will help create the classroom climate that is conducive to purposeful learning.

Good teachers intuitively use all three ways of communicating when teaching. The aim of this book is to increase your awareness of the greater potential of these approaches when you understand how they can be used deliberately to shape the behaviour of your students. All teachers want to make a difference. Each one of us in education wants to influence for the better the lives of our students. With a greater knowledge of the NLP language patterns, teachers are achieving the positive differences they want, because they understand, first, how the language used shapes the internal world of the listener, and, second, how that drives their outer world, the one of behaviour. And so I wonder how soon it will be before you begin to try out these ideas in a way that will develop the learning behaviour in your classroom.

Chapter Three
What's Happening in Classrooms Now?

> "If children come to feel that the universe does not make sense, it may be because the language we use to talk about it doesn't make sense."
>
> – John Holt, *How Children Fail*

Establishing a peaceful classroom for learning is the goal of all teachers. *Maintaining* a peaceful classroom now demands a complex set of skills, since it has become an increasingly difficult task over the last decade. Everyone working in education agrees that the pressures on teachers have never been so intense. Pressures come in the form of having to demonstrate competence to practice, of having to achieve targets for pupil attainment, of having to satisfy the demands of parents and of accountability through external inspection. Such pressures can promote behaviours that work against the maintenance of good teacher–pupil relationships in the classroom. When the delicate balance between task accomplishment and relationship is wrong, misbehaviour follows on.

In 2001, in the light of the emergence of a global digital communication system, Professor Stephen Heppel raised the question of whether we could continue to teach a nationally defined curriculum, using the same methods as we currently do. The technologies behind a global network could be harnessed to provide more flexible ways of learning, more individually tailored, student-centred programmes that would harness and build on individual creativity. Currently, British schools are controlled by a national agenda with its emphasis on standardisation and targets, which has resulted in a lack of professional confidence. The changes brought about by changing technology demand a flexible teacher population to respond to the different pedagogy. And flexibility is a casualty of low professional confidence. The growth of the global

digital communication network is already providing an alternative to traditional schooling. It is beginning to provide a draw for excluded pupils and the school refusers. For now, however, until such alternative learning becomes a reality for all students, teachers will still have to provide a learning environment for the disruptive and the disaffected. However, the picture is not all dark. Over the last decade or so, a lot of excellent advances supporting the development and maintenance of productive learning behaviour have come out of the different fields of:

- The management of behaviour;
- The psychology of behaviour;
- Brain functioning and learning;
- Neuro-linguistic programming (NLP).

Since this book is about this last field, this chapter skims lightly over the relevant developments in learning behaviours that relate to NLP practice in the other three fields, just to provide a context for the learning of its new language skills.

Managing behaviour

Louise Porter has classified the theories and practices of behaviour management evident in current use in our schools and she has placed them on a spectrum dependent on their underpinning belief systems and rationales. They stretch broadly from more authoritarian approaches through to more liberal mindsets. They can also be aligned with the neurological-levels diagram (Figure 1.3). Teachers often use an eclectic mix of the techniques that fall out of these different theoretical approaches. For most teachers, they are not usually based on a conscious choice between the different approaches, but on the tried and tested principle of pragmatism – on what has worked in the past! However, heading the list of what *children* say is that what good teachers do to get everyone in the class working well, without disruption, are:

- They take time to explain and help with problems without making the pupil feel silly or look foolish in front of peers;
- They have a positive relationship with the pupils, being willing to laugh and joke with them while showing that they are genuinely interested in them;

- They communicate clearly the operating rules of the classroom and are fair in applying what sanctions have been agreed for when those rules are broken.

This research confirms what good teachers know instinctively: good relationships and clear communications are the keys to opening up the classroom as a learning place. Good planning and clear systems for agreeing class routines and rules, with purposeful behavioural goals appropriately negotiated, *maintain* it as a learning place. Under the pressures of a wayward group of pupils, it is easy to lose sight of the fact that behaviour management systems are means to a learning end and not ends in themselves.

Many schools still operate behaviour-management systems that incorporate different forms of rewards and sanctions even though much research demonstrates their limited benefits. This is mainly because such systems are an attempt to motivate pupils *externally* rather than to create a system that encourages and develops self-motivation – motivation that is *internally* driven. These internally driven systems create environments that promote the American humanistic psychologist Abraham Maslow's self-actualisation ideals (this is the term Maslow applied to the fulfilment of one's greatest human potential). It is now commonly found that reward systems decrease creativity and that the quality of learning is poorer than that which takes place in other systems. One reason for this is that it tends to shift a teacher's energy into being a classroom monitor, rather than being the classroom's manager of learning.

Another reason may be that the introduction of such a system, of itself, raises anxiety levels and negative emotions within the classroom. Indeed, the research goes further and asserts that reward systems actively sustain low levels of achievement. An NLP saying is, "Energy flows where the attention goes." That is, if you focus on something like punishment, then you will spend much time punishing. This encourages children to learn the "pay-off principle" – learning to do only what is necessary to gain the rewards and avoid the punishments – even if the punishments are merely the withdrawal of the rewards. Children quickly learn that schooling is about "playing the game", which is hardly a healthy mental attitude for positive lifelong learning. More frightening is that this is the very principle that a generation of British teachers themselves

Table 3.1: Classification of behaviour-management approaches

Underpinning approach	**Louise Porter's classification**	**Logical level**
Behaviour theory	1. Limit-setting approaches – based on the teacher's right to impose order and to discipline those who break the rules (e.g., "assertiveness discipline")	Environment
	2. Applied behaviour analysis – based on the ideas of behaviour modification, including reinforcement of positive behaviour and "punishment" of undesirable behaviour	Behaviour
Mix	3. Cognitive-behaviourism – behaviour-modification approaches incorporating the student's thinking processes to promote self-discipline and to move away from externally imposed systems to regulate behaviour	
Cognitive	4. Neo-Adlerian – such as the STET approach (Systematic Training for Effective Teaching) based on developing cooperative relationships	Capability
	5. Choice theory – an approach utilising the ideas of both Types 3 and 6, based on the belief that all behaviour is (consciously or unconsciously) chosen, and chosen to meet a need	Beliefs & Values
Pupil-centred approaches	6. Humanistic/"democratic" relationships between teachers and students aimed at meeting their emotional needs and nurturing their innate curiosity for learning	Identity
Systems theory	7. Systems theory – this is based on behaviour as a result of the interactions between the complex sets of relationships that exist in any organisational system; despite it being complex, it is possible to see patterns in such systems and to derive laws about them	Community

have learned in developing an educational system that focuses on school targets that are nationally inspected. Such inspections can result in a distribution of OFSTED rewards (positive reports) and sanctions labelled "in need of special measures", "failing" etc. Teachers will play the game to avoid these last categories. And children model teachers!

Adam X

My name is Adam X
It used to be Adam Walsh
But every time I see my name
It says Adam X

My mate's Martin Smith
He's now Martin X
Yesterday he was Martin XX
Today he's Martin X again.
We ain't related.
We never met until he came here
to this school and my class.
But now we must be brothers.
We must be.
We've got the same name

I was Adam Walsh
until I tapped my pencil
The teacher said
"Stop tapping your pencil Adam"
And I did

Then I'm thinking again
and my pencil taps,
almost on its own.
"Adam. I warned you
I'll write your name on the board"
He did

And I was just Adam.

There it goes again,
as I think about
the really exciting bit
of my story

Tap.

"ADAM!"
and Adam X was born.

Happens a lot now
I don't mind.
I got lots of family now.
Keith and
Stuart and
Kylie and
Sam and
Martin of course
We're all "eXis"

I like them.
I hate him.
And
I hate my name on the board

The psychologist says
"He's a kinesthetic child.
Pencils just tap when he's
around."

My teacher says
"ADAM!"

and I'm Adam X again
and I bloody hate it.

© Brian Vince, 1999 – used with the author's permission

The only book to focus on the use of language models to improve classroom management, *Making Your Words Work* offers a large repertoire of linguistic approaches to improve communication between teacher and pupil.

It provides a robust rationale of the causes of anxiety and dysfunctional behaviours, especially useful in situations where the pupil is a potentially disruptive influence. It also covers the latest developments in effective teaching through the modification of language use. Developing the skills and behaviour management strategies in this book will promote learning, improve relationships with pupils and result in a happier, more productive classroom.

"This book should be on every staffroom bookshelf. It takes you beyond the mundane and trite linguistic acrimony that often results from damaging, throwaway comments. Be more effective in what you do, and, more importantly, in what you say. An excellent read!"

NPhA News

"If you suspect that words hold the key to effective learning Making Your Words Work is a book you will want to dip into again and again. Terry Mahony's overview of research, models and techniques show how you can unblock the linguistic barriers to learning in your classroom."

Lyn Bull, Independent Education Consultant, G&T Consultant, MFL Consultant

"For those who already have some knowledge of NLP, Accelerated Learning and brain research - this book will enable them to firmly lock theory with practice. It covers models of learning and personality factors that build into a comprehensive account of essential skills to redirect inappropriate behaviours. For the newcomer the practical ideas alone make this a recommendable book."

Rob Long, Chartered Educational Psychologist, Rob Long's Education Works

Terry Mahony is head of Hampshire's Professional Development & Training Service and a trainer on the Leading From the Middle programme of the National College for School Leadership. He has over twenty years' experience as a leadership trainer and coach and is an accredited mediator with the Portsmouth Mediation Service, working to resolve conflicts in the community and the workplace.

Education

Crown House Publishing Limited
www.crownhouse.co.uk
www.chpus.com

ISBN 978-184590041-0