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Communication Strategies Based on Neuro-Linguistics Programming

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ABSTRACT

Rather recently entered into the Romanian environment, the neuro-linguistic programming is a field of research that, at a superficial approach, raises questions about how honestly it is used, thus leading to suspicions and controversies. But beyond the concern over the immediate applications, neuro-linguistic communication might turn out to be an outstanding breakthrough of the end of the 20th century. The Romanian book market is rather poor when it comes to this type of literature; most of the existing books are translations (rather poor in terms of quality) of some famous works in English or French. The Romanian works on this topic are extremely limited and not entirely original; they reproduce approaches and techniques from various books written in foreign languages. The international market, on the other hand, is abundant in works in this field, some of them are comprehensive, based on rigorous scientific studies, others tackle a superficial level of usage of these methods in negotiations, sales and the management of every day relationships. Apart from books, numerous specialised journals are present as well. The titles of the most important periodical publications are "Anchoror Point", "Carpe Diem", "In Fact Magazine", "Multi Mind", "NLP Word", "Rapport" etc. There are numerous organisations worldwide dealing with the neuro-linguistic programming. Since 1991 (when the NLPU project was initiated by Robert Dilts and Todd Epstein), the NLP has reached the university environment, in particular as modules and post graduate departments. Such modules are available in the United States of America, France and the United Kingdom. The second category of organisations operating in this field is represented by the consultancy companies providing counselling in the organizational field. There are numerous such organisations worldwide, the most famous being: ANLP (Association for NLP), AAPHAN (The Australian Association of Professional Hypnotherapists and NLP Practitioners Inc.), GANLP (German Association for Neuro-Linguistic Programming), the Society of Neuro-Linguistic Programming etc. In the virtual environment of the internet, there is an impressive number of websites approaching, under different aspects, the neuro-linguistic programming.

The scope of the neuro-linguistic programming includes three main fields: psychotherapy education and the organizational field. In each of these fields, the NLP has developed specific, extremely diverse techniques and applications. Add to these a forth specific field, with an impact on all the previous others, i.e. the interpersonal communication.

I admit that it took me quite a long time to study in order to convince myself that these methods actually work and may be truly useful in peoples' lives. Going beyond the immediate usefulness of the techniques and methods proposed by this field, I have thoroughly searched for their scientific grounds. I have gradually started to identify them in the management of daily relationships, in the political discourse, in how certain people act and even in how certain writers render the inner world. The neuro-linguistic programming identifies certain structures, which are related to the human neurology. Once you learn how to identify them and know how they are expressed in the human being, they can help you make a qualitative leap in different fields of our daily activity.

Neuro-linguistic programming is a vast field, and in recent years newer and newer

applications appeared, such as the one generically known by the name of "personal development". In this paper, I focused on the methods that refer to the linguistic aspects, only, with a particular focus on the educational process. In order for me to know and use these methods a very useful instrument was my participation to a working seminar based on methods of neuro-linguistic programming, in the field of education, held in Brussels, by Professor Alain Thiry as well as the post graduate courses that I attended.

I titled this paper **Communication Strategies based on Neuro-Linguistic Programming**, using the term of *communication strategies*, as in my opinion all the aspects approached in this paper are related to the field of communication, either the everyday communication or the more complex and sophisticated forms of communication such as those referring to the information systems. Depending on the currents and theoretical and practical approaches, communication is defined in different manners, but they all have in common the sharing of information, ideas and feelings. Communication is achieved, first of all, by means of language, written or verbal, but as I indicated in the paper, there are other more or less symbolic means. Certain sub-chapters, such as the ones about motivation, memory or the strategies of memorisation, may, at first sight, seem to fall out of the scope of the communication strategies. However, they all lead, by different methods and ways, to communication. Hence if we admit that, in an interaction, any behaviour has the value of a message, we cannot prevent ourselves from communicating. Activity or inactivity, word or silence, everything is a message.

I focused on four of the variety of communication strategies used in the neuro-linguistic programming: **the modelling, the Meta-model, the Milton model and the metaphor**. We live in a real world, however, we do not operate directly or immediately on this world, but we operate inside it using a map or a series of maps about this world, in order to guide our behaviours inside it. These maps are distinct than the territory they shape, through the three universal processes of human modelling: *generalization, elimination and deformation*. In situations when people are unsatisfied, most frequently, the limitations they feel are located in their representation about the world and not in the world itself. These communication strategies operate independently of the content, dealing only with the form of the process, hence their applicability in such diverse fields.

There are three main access ways whereby we, as human beings, receive information about the world around us: *sight, hearing and kinaesthetic* (the rest of the bodily sensations). The other generally accepted access channels – the smell and the taste – are less frequently used as means of obtaining information about the world. Each of these sensory access channels makes available for us a continuous flow of information that we use in order to structure our experience. These access channels whereby we represent our experience about the world are called **representational systems** and they are one of the fundamental elements for developing any action related to the neuro-linguistic programming. It is extremely useful to identify and know how the representational systems determine the human behaviour.

In the field of education, the neuro-linguistic programming focuses on conceiving the learning as a modelling process, which could be used in two main directions: to stimulate creativity and streamline the teaching-learning process (memorization strategies and memory optimization, optimization of teacher-student communication etc.). Initially, I started to use these methods in working with my students and I applied them, every now and then, in class. The information from the neuro-linguistic field has helped me very much, in particular, in order to understand my students' particularities and the causes that led to poor performance at school. Identifying and solving these causes has led to repositioning the whole personality of the

student and at the same time to good performance at school. Together with the classic educational methods I used the methods of neuro-linguistic programming in the analysis of some pieces of literature proposed by the school textbooks. The correct formulation of the working items has enabled my students to use their practical skills, which made them stand out in the community, better understand a literary text, a character or a situation of life.

The source-texts, included in the first part of this paper contain texts taken from the textbooks for 9ᵗʰ and 7ᵗʰ grade (used in class in the period 1998-2008):

• Alexandru Crişan, Liviu Papadima, Ioana Pârvulescu, Florentina Sâmihăian, Rodica Zafiu, *Limba şi Literatura Română (Romanian Language and Literature)*, Textbook for 9ᵗʰ grade, Humanitas Publishing House, Bucharest, 2002.

• Mircea Martin (coordinator), Carmen Ligia Rădulescu, Elisabeta Roşca, Rodica Zane, *Limba şi Literatura Română (Romanian Language and Literature)*, Textbook for 9ᵗʰ grade, Paralela 45 Publishing House, Piteşti, 2003.

• Silviu Angelescu, Nicolae I. Nicolae, Emil Ionescu, *Limba şi Literatura Română* (*Romanian Language and Literature*), Textbook for 9ᵗʰ grade, All 2000 Publishing House, Bucharest, 1999.

• Anca Şerban, Sergiu Şerban, *Limba română (Romanian Language)*, Textbook for 7ᵗʰ grade, All Publishing House, Bucharest, 1999.

I have approached these working methods and strategies in the didactic discourse because I believe that they provide new and consistent information for the student education process. The concrete methods of memorization, the use in practice of information provided by eye indices, the strategies of modelling excellency behaviours, the management of emotions, knowing the interdependence link between mind and physiological processes in the body are recent scientific breakthroughs that the neuro-linguistic approach promotes in a manner which is easily understandable for a numerous and varied audience, in terms of intellectual capacity.

My medical education background (I attended the medical high school, the medical college) advised me to look for scientific arguments. Such answers arise rather quickly, in my paper I only indicated the relevant references in order to move too far from the field of linguistics. Therefore, the **Annex** appeared gradually, which is now the second part of the paper, including several scientific arguments (anatomy, physiology, cognitive psychology, neuro-sciences, psychology), which enable us to understand the field of neuro-linguistic programming. Part of the texts, drawings or schemes from the Annex open the direction of interest towards the pieces of literature and towards a better use of the communication strategies based on neuro-linguistic programming in the didactic discourse.

What started out as an intellectual curiosity over 10 years ago, resulted at present into this doctoral thesis.

Does one or other consider that neuro-linguistic programming offers a model for learning how to recognize and reach excellency, by proposing multiple and varied communication strategies, which can be used by anybody in their individual actions? Indeed.

Little is known about the mechanisms that govern the human brain and mind, although they control the human being. What I structured herein, is a mere part of the breakthroughs brought by the neuro-linguistic programming. I selected herein several communication strategies used in order to better know, control and enhance our own thoughts and emotions. This paper offers the easiest and most in handy tools for those who want to develop new

effective behaviours, for those who want to develop their creativity, they help us in our effort to memorise, improve the art of listening and relating with people around us. The communication strategies proposed by neuro-linguistic communication for the teaching discourse add to and render more effective the actions carried out in our teaching practice.

In terms of content, this paper is structured into two main parts. The first part refers strictly to the communication strategies based on neuro-linguistic programming and includes the first nine chapters (149 pages). The second parts, referring to the practical application into the teaching practice of the afore presented communication strategies includes the tenth chapter (113 pages).

The first chapter, titled *Elements of neuro-linguistics*, briefly presents the evolution of the philosophical ideas about language (from the sacred object to the instrument word), the history and emergence of the neuro-linguistic theory and the main topic of the current neuro-linguistics.

The second chapter, titled *Introduction into neuro-linguistic programming*, refers to the definition of this field, the way a neuro-linguistics specialist works and the global presentation of this field. Neuro-linguistic programming is presented as a general model for the human psychology, as it proposes a framework for analysis and numerous concepts in order to describe the human behaviour as well as the instruments required in order to intervene and change it. In the field of neuro-linguistic programming interpersonal communication is not limited to exchanging information only, it allows, in particular, for the access to the mechanisms that reveal and determine our way of thinking, feeling and acting. These offer information about: how a person receives, encodes and issues various messages; how starting from these aspects people develop their own vision about the world and their own specific behaviours; as well as how, starting from this vision, human behaviour can be changed and improved, if necessary. In the human behaviour, any conduct may be represented by the neuro-linguistic programming in the simplest way by what is called the "computational index"[1] (a basic unit of the reference index), this person distinguishes what a person lives and /or expresses: the external behaviour (E.B.), the inner state (I.S.) and the inner processes (I.P.).

Epistemological roots, the third chapter of this paper, is a synthesis of the philosophical ideas of some systems of thinking such as: *empirism*, *idealism*, *pragmatism* and *constructivism*, whose confrontation and combination of ideas have represented the basis of creating the field of neuro-linguistic programming. The use of language involves and generates a gap, significant sometimes, between our sensory experiences and what we express by means of words. The first represent the primary aspects, which generate silent representations, remaining at the level of the body, while words are the result of secondary processes, which render the lived reality abstract and put distance between the human being and the lived reality. The words "speak" about the reality, but they are not the reality itself.

The fourth chapter, titled *Theoretical bases*, presents the rules of organization and operation in the field of neuro-linguistic programming.

The fifth chapter, *Communication strategies based on neuro-linguistic programming*, describes four of the most important communication strategies: **the modelling the Meta-model, the metaphor and the Milton model**. The field of neuro-linguistic programming has developed starting from the modelling of human behaviours and thinking processes. The modelling processes involve the discovery of how the brain ("neuro") works, by analysing the language

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[1] Monique Esser, *La P.N.L. en perspective*, Editions Labor, Brussels, 1993, p. 8.

patterns ("linguistics") and the non-verbal patterns. The outcomes of this analysis are turned into communication strategies or programmes, developed step by step, which may be used in order to notice the structure of an excellency conduct, worth to be learnt by other persons as well. This strategy models in-depth the human being's resources and conducts of excellency. The end purpose of the modelling strategy is practically the programming for excellency.

The Meta-model is a communication strategy that restores the connection between experience and language, being used in order to clarify the language, to allow for a better understanding of the opposite party and for a good expression, but in particular in order to have access to the deep experience behind the language. In the process of speaking, the human being moves, unconsciously, from the deep to the surface structure by means of three operational structures: **eliminations** or **omissions** of information, **generalisations and distortions**. Each of these three main types of operations is represented into specific structures.

The Meta model contains a set of questions, which try to **clarify** all the lacks, distortions and generalisations of language. The questions are meant to fill in the lacks of information, to recreate the structure and to clarify the information in order to give a meaning to the communication.

As for the **metaphor**, in the field of neuro-linguistic programming the metaphorical message has been identified as going subsequently through three different stages: the level of external significance; it activates a deeper associative structure of meanings; this structure, in its turn, activates a deep generated structure of meanings, which is directly relevant for the listener. It is said that the destiny of a word does not often depend on the mouth that articulates it, but on the ear that perceives it. Any metaphor may alter the perspective and the reference frameworks, revealing new meanings, offering a more comprehensive image of the issues.

The Milton model is opposed and complementary to the Meta-model, defining how the language can be used in order for a person to be able to choose the best meaning for them from the message conveyed by another person. This working model is intended to help people access their hidden (unconscious) resources.

The sixth chapter, *Research Fields*, presents the scope of the neuro-linguistic programming, in most of the fields that require, more or less, a form of communication: the social relations, an important tool for education, psychotherapy, public relations, management, personnel recruitment, management of human resources, sales etc.

The seventh chapter, *Unified fields of neuro-linguistic programming*, analyses the scheme of neurological levels, authored by Robert Dilts, which represents the internal organisation of the human personality. In a representation, starting from the simplest all the way up to the most complex, the organization of the human conduct may be ranked into the following levels: context and reactions to the environment; behaviours; capacities; beliefs and values; and identity.

The eight chapter, *Presuppositions in neuro-linguistic programming*, is a synthesis of the main presuppositions used for structuring knowledge, procedures and attitudes developed by the neuro-linguistic programming. These presuppositions rely on the principle that the relation we have with the world, the people around us and ourselves, is unavoidably, influenced by and through our presuppositions. Our representations and beliefs have been demonstrated to interfere constantly with the results that we obtain in relation to the others or to ourselves.

The ninth chapter, titled *Representational Systems*, presents the representational systems corresponding to the main sensory modalities whereby we receive information about the world:

visual (V), auditory (A), kinaesthetic (K), olfactory (O) and gustatory (G) – known under the VAKOG abbreviation. The identification and knowledge of the representational systems represents the basis of the neuro-linguistic programming, all the communication strategies in this field starting from the representational systems of the human being. Moreover, neuro-linguistic programming provides means to increase our sensorial accuracy and acquire new skills, which enable the personal development to a very high level and use it in the most diverse fields of activity.

We receive the information through our senses, and our brain encodes it in a specific manner. For instance, when we receive information via our visual channel, our brain encodes it as an image. The brain encodes the information received via the auditory channel as being sounds and words. And the information perceived through our feelings is encoded by the brain as being a feeling or an emotion. When we remember a certain piece of information, our brain accesses and expresses the respective memory in the same specific manner in which the information was kept. For instance: Microsoft Word is used in order to write a text, a Microsoft Word file is used in order to store it. Then in order to retrieve it, the file needs to be reaccessed in the same format. If we store a memory in a visual format, we will reaccess it by means of a visual language. Our mind encodes what it learns depending on how this piece of information is learnt. When this information is then reaccessed, it is reaccessed in the same representational system. The language used by people in order to illustrate an event is very indicative of the processes taking place in their brains, from the point of view of encoding and representation of information.

The tenth chapter, *Communication strategies based on neuro-linguistic programming used in the didactic discourse*, represents a practical approach of the communication theories presented in theory under chapters 1-9. Many of the difficulties encountered in the school environment may be solved by means of these strategies. I structured the communication strategies based on the neuro-linguistic programming used in the didactic discourse into three main categories: communication strategies based on language, communication strategies based on non-verbal communication and communication strategies used for memorization-learning. They may be used in cases of disorders of focus, memorisation, inhibitions caused by exaggerate efforts to be perfect, lack of confidence in one's own capacities or in the possibility to solve complex operations. Apart from the new technical skills, that they may bring to the person who wants to learn, they may also offer the tools to analyse the difficulties encountered in school, to diversify the means used to increase the efficiency of the intellectual endeavour, to change the manner of perceiving the results obtained at school. Together with the classic educational methods, the communication strategies based on neuro-linguistic programming may be used in the analysis of literary texts proposed in the textbooks. The correct formulation of the working items allows the students to use specific skills, which make them stand out among the other students, as well as a better understanding of a literary text, a character or a situation of life.

The chapters herein structured a part of the information available on the neuro-linguistic programming focused on the field of education, which I consider to bring new and consistent information for the didactic discourse. The communication strategies for memorization, the practical use of the information provided by eye indices, the strategies of modelling the excellency behaviours, the management of emotions, the awareness of the interdependence between the mind and the physiological processes of the human body are recent scientific breakthroughs, that the neuro-linguistic programming promote in an approach that is easily understandable by a numerous and diverse audience, in terms of intellectual capacity. The

neuro-linguistic programming identifies certain structures relating to the human neurology. Once we learn how to identify them and know how they are expressed in the human being, they may enable a qualitative leap in different areas of our daily activity, turning out to be an amazing breakthrough of the end of the 20th century.

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