

## **PEDAGOGICAL APPROACHES USING NEURO-LINGUISTIC PROGRAMMING (NLP) STRATEGIES FROM PERSPECTIVE OF NLP-TRAINED TEACHERS**

\*Nik Muhammad Hanis Nek Rakami & Muhammad Ihsan Rokeman

Fakulti Pembangunan Manusia, Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris,  
35900 Tanjung Malim, Perak, Malaysia

\*Corresponding Author: [nik.mdhanis@fpm.upsi.edu.my](mailto:nik.mdhanis@fpm.upsi.edu.my)

**Published:** 28 December 2023

**To cite this article (APA):** Nek Rakami, N. M. H., & Rokeman, M. I. (2023). Pedagogical approaches using Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) Strategies from Perspective of NLP-Trained teachers. *Jurnal Pendidikan Bitara UPSI*, 93–98. <https://doi.org/10.37134/bitara.vol16.2.10.2023>

**To link to this article:** <https://doi.org/10.37134/bitara.vol16.2.10.2023>

### **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this study is to explore how Neuro Linguistic Programming (NLP) strategies applied by NLP-trained teachers as their pedagogical approaches in teaching and learning. A qualitative research was conducted among secondary school teachers in Malaysia. A total of 7 interviewees were selected. Content analysis and critical discourse analysis on analysing three sources of data collection have been carefully applied. The teachers are NLP practitioners who have been certified by the National Federation of Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NFNLP) and NLP Malaysia. This study identifies strategies of NLP that have been applied in the teaching and learning process. The strategies include 'building rapport', 'representational system', 'logical level', 'Milton Models', 'metaphors' and 'anchoring'. The findings indicate that NLP is a viable means of teaching and learning practices in the classroom, but it needs flexibility due to the obstacles faced in its practices. This study identifies that NLP is a great tool in empowering teaching skills among teachers. It is also a medium to enhance the teaching and learning process. Therefore, this study proposes more thorough research on the challenges and practices of NLP on teaching and learning in the future.

**Keywords:** NLP, secondary school teachers, pedagogy

### **INTRODUCTION**

NLP is one of the most powerful tools for communications, change, and excellent performance. It has been widely applied, with often astonishing results, in fields as diverse as business, coaching, sales & influence, psychology, sports, healthcare, negotiation, education (Tosey, 2005). The term 'Neuro' refers to the human nervous system, including the brain and the five senses, 'Linguistic' is the verbal & non-verbal languages with which we communicate and 'Programming' is the ability to structure our neurological and linguistic systems to achieve desired results.

According to Thornbury (2001), NLP could be a potential tool to optimize students' positive attitudes towards learning by increasing their motivation, at the same time reducing their learning anxiety and to help teachers and also students gain high standards of performance in teaching and learning. NLP could establish a positive classroom atmosphere where teacher facilitates and helps students to explore and enhance their internal representations, leading towards desired learning goals. (Tosey & Mathison, 2005)

NLP is a combination of Noam Chomsky's theory, Erickson's theory, and Gestalt's theory. These three theories influenced Bandler and Grinder in patterning NLP (Dolnick, 2006). According to Dolnick (2006), there were two concepts most important to the field of NLP from Noam Chomsky's

theory. Firstly, how language operates in our brain and second, there are rules governing this process. Chomsky’s work had influenced Bandler and Grinder to develop a system, organizing language and thinking system into three categories namely visual, kinesthetic, and auditory, and they named it as representational systems. (Dolnick, 2006).

Milton H. Erickson, who was a famous psychiatrist and hypnotherapist, influenced Bandler and Grinder’s NLP technique called pacing and leading, (Erickson, 2005). Erickson established a technique, in which he said to patients as he hypnotized them, “My voice will go with you” (Rosen, 1982), created safety net as they traveled through the subconscious mind.

Frederick “Fritz” Perls, who was a founder of Gestalt Therapy, claimed that Gestalt Therapy would help patients create awareness, which then generated the insight necessary to find solutions to problems (Yontef, 1993). From the Perls’ gestalt therapy, Bandler and Grinder formulated and developed NLP strategies, among them are swish pattern, logical level, well-formed outcome, and sub modalities. (Dolnick, 2006).

In the context of pedagogical approaches, NLP is a tool for engagement, excitement, and effectiveness of communication. NLP could be used for effective communication, rapport building, recognizing different learning styles and working with them, information gathering, improving effectiveness, and setting goals (Pilgrims, 2005). This study objectively seeks the answers from a focus question, 1) How NLP-trained teachers apply NLP in classroom?

## **METHODOLOGY**

This case study sought to explore the implementation of NLP in Malaysian classroom. In addition, it also aimed to explore the challenges faced by teachers in the classroom when NLP is implemented. Craig (2001) states that when teachers are aware about what they are doing by researching on the strategies and approaches, they will use effective language to ensure the message gets across.

### **The Participants**

This study involved 7 teachers who are practitioners of NLP. The participants were selected based on their certification of NLP by National Federation Neuro Linguistic Malaysia (NFNLP). The researcher had determined the characteristics of the participants to be a part of this study. The participants have already acquired few years of teaching experience. They are professionals with university degrees. The researcher coded the participants as Teacher A, B, C, D, E,F and G. The background of the participants are as follows:

**Table 1.1** Participants of Studies

<b>Teacher Code</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>G</b>
<b>Age (Years)</b>	30	48	28	37	39	34	47
<b>Gender</b>	Male	Male	Male	Female	Female	Female	Male
<b>Teaching Experiences (Years)</b>	6	25	4	13	15	9	26
<b>Teaching Course</b>	History	English	Malay Language	English	Science	Science	Malay Language
<b>Region</b>	Negeri Sembilan	Pulau Pinang	Selangor	Kuala Lumpur	Perak	Kedah	Johor
<b>NLP Experiences (Years)</b>	5	7	7	9	8	8	12

## FINDINGS

This study found that the participants have applied NLP strategies in classroom. They explained well on how they practised the strategies. The findings are as follows;

**Table 1.2** Findings of Studies

Participants	Strategies
Teacher A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• VAK Representational System</li><li>• Building Rapport</li><li>• Anchoring</li></ul>
Teacher B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Logical Levels</li><li>• Milton Models</li></ul>
Teacher C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Anchoring</li><li>• Metaphors</li></ul>
Teacher D	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• VAK Representational System</li><li>• Reframing</li><li>• Anchoring</li></ul>
Teacher E	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Building Rapport</li><li>• Anchoring</li></ul>
Teacher F	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Reframing</li><li>• VAK Representational System</li></ul>
Teacher G	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Pace and Lead</li><li>• Building Rapport</li></ul>

## DISCUSSION

### 1. Strategies

#### *1.1 VAK Representational System*

In this research, Teacher A claimed that he had applied representational system strategy by saying that:

“In NLP, we do believe that every single person has their own representational system. NLP divided human being to 3 groups, visual, auditory and kinesthetic. Our subconscious mind will install more according to our representational system.” (Teacher A)

According to NLP, subjective experience can be expressed in terms of three primary representation systems: kinaesthetic (K), auditory (A), and visual (V) (Davis and Davis, 1991). The technique is now well-liked as a means of communication and self-improvement. For example, NLP is a recognized form of psychotherapy in the United Kingdom and is used by a wide range of professional practitioners, including educators, managers, trainers, salespeople, market researchers, counsellors, consultants, physicians, lawyers, and more (Tosey et al., 2005). NLP is accredited by the United Kingdom Council for Psychotherapy (Experiential Constructivist Therapies section). Individual internal learning is the main focus of VAK representation systems (Yemm, 2006). Gaining an understanding of representational systems gives us a useful tool for building connection, empathy, and influence as well as a demonstrable understanding of how people think.

## **1.2 Anchoring**

Teacher C had applied anchoring strategies in his classroom. He explained the meaning of anchoring and how he applied it. He said that,

“Anchoring means you trigger something with something else. You associate something with something else. In teaching, you must know how to anchor your subjects that you taught with something. Let say, I am teaching Sirah, *Fathul Makkah*, I will show the symbol of love using my hands. Everytime I pronounce the word *Fathul Makkah*, I will you show this symbol. And I will repeat this word *Fathul Makkah* many times. At last, whenever I teach subtopic of *Fathul Makkah*, the hikmah of *Fathul Makkah*, I will relate the hikmah of *Fathul Makkah* with spirit of love.”(Teacher C)

According to Tosey and Mathison (2010), who discussed the idea of learning as association, anchoring utilise linkage between an experience which could be words, images, or subjects with which that experience is, or could be associated. Anchoring is an application for a teacher to re-access or trigger the memories, that is associated with something (Tosey & Mathison, 2010)

## **1.3 Building Rapport**

The teacher A noted that understanding representational system lead to another NLP strategy that was applied in the classroom. It is rapport. It is important for a teacher to have a good rapport with students. Teacher A said that,

“Building rapport means ensuring there is no gap between you and students. It also means that you have synchronized your subconscious mind with them. If you have a good rapport with students, you could install most of everything that you want in their mind, because there is no more mental block.” (Teacher A)

Teacher C also applied same strategy in his classroom. He explained what building rapport is all about and briefed how he applied it. He said that,

“Rapport means building chemistry, relationship and trust. It is very important. You have to be in a same level of your students, so that you can deliver well. Teachers must be in students’ shoes. You should talk with your students using their language, not yours.” (Teacher C)

Building rapport is important as it determines the behavior or response of students towards teaching and learning. According to Hallowell & Ratey. (1996), behavioral problems in the classroom that disrupt teaching and learning should be rare. Instead, the prevalence of disruptive behaviors, ranging from the mild to the severe, has become routine in classrooms where students and teachers are expected to collaborate, have good relationship, and help each other. Hence, the teacher has applied rapport to ensure that he could manage and control students well.

## **1.4 Logical Level**

In this research, Teacher B explained that he had applied logical level strategy by saying that:

“Logical levels are a model of identifying where a learning problem originates. Often, we are tempted as educators to see the surface level of problems only, when we see students are struggling in their learning, looking 'below the surface' is more important in creating rapport with students, to see what had happened to him. The keyword to apply this technique by asking them the question 'why?'. It will lead you to far more useful interventions with longer term effects. We will see the true colour of our clients or students”. Ok let me explained to you an example of

logical levels. There are 6 levels in a hierarchy. As a teacher, when you see a student in trouble, try to listen to their words, it is important to diagnose at which level the problems are and try to talk and let them think according to their level.”(Teacher B)

The researcher found that the explanation given by Teacher B is in line with the research done by Dilts (2010) as he explained,

“...Logical levels is an internal hierarchy in which each level is progressively more psychologically encompassing and impactful. Humans normally work with five levels: (1) The basic level is your environment, your external constraints. (2) You operate on that environment through your behavior. (3) Your behavior is guided by your mental maps and your strategies, which define your capabilities. (4) These capabilities are organized by belief systems. (5) Beliefs are organized by values and identity.” (P77)

### ***1.5 Metaphors***

One of NLP strategies is metaphors. The researcher found that Teacher C had applied NLP to his students in classroom. Teacher C said that:

“Metaphors is stories. Tell stories to them. Tell stories that you read. Tell stories of yourself, share with them. Share with them. If you have story that you can relate it with the syllabus, it will be perfect. Students love to hear stories. I am always share with them stories of my life. It is not difficult the syllabus with the story. You must select the story that could give impact, and they will ask, what happen next? What happen next? Metaphors is also means analogy, giving example in easiest way. If the theory is quite complicated to explain, you must ready with the analogy so students could understand.”(Teacher C)

According to Badley and Hollabaugh (2012), metaphors is used to reaffirm the theory that has been taught by teachers. Metaphors also could help students to stay focused on the learning process, as well as create a structured and productive learning environment.

### ***1.6 Milton Models***

Teacher B applied Milton Models strategy in the classroom. He explained the history of Milton Models and gave an example on how to apply it in the classroom. He said that:

“Milton Model in NLP is a number of magic words used by Erickson in his hypnotherapy sessions. Using Milton Model helps you to lead the communication. This is very important in teaching and learning, to ensure the students will always get involve, to hear what teachers are going to say and teach. For example, to instill curiosity in students’ mind, I always use, “I know all of you want to know what is happening before independence day, let me tell you the truth” or maybe, “I think you should have this kind of information”. These phrases are so important to lead the communication. Students will stay focus and awake with what are you going to say after that. Milton models helped me a lot to communicate well, controls the class, and deliver knowledge with more exciting.” (Teacher B)

## **CONCLUSIONS**

This research has elaborated thoroughly the implementation of NLP in the Malaysian classroom context to answer the question of how is NLP implemented in the classroom.

The results of this research indicated that the teachers had applied NLP strategies in their pedagogical approaches. The researcher found that NLP-trained teachers applied VAK representational system and building rapport, logical levels, milton models, as well as applied building rapport,

anchoring, and metaphors. The teachers described how they practised NLP as their pedagogical approaches in order to attract students to learn. The teachers adapt and adopt the framework to fit their classroom context. This research showed that NLP is a viable means to be applied in the Malaysian secondary school.

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