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**NEURO-LINGUISTIC PROGRAMMING AND AURAL SKILLS PEDAGOGY:
A PARADIGM SHIFT FROM TEACHING TO LEARNING.**

A Thesis in

Music Theory

by

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Abstract

Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) is a form of psychotherapy first developed in the 1970s. Used often as a tool for management training and personal self-development, this approach can be adapted to the process of one-to-one tutoring in the development of preliminary listening skills as part of the basic musicianship curriculum. Through study of the current approach to musicianship teaching and tutoring, as well as a detailed examination of core NLP techniques, the two disciplines become interwoven in a new NLP-based tutoring methodology. The intention is to highlight inadequacies of current tutoring techniques and to draw attention to an individual student's learning style and development, rather than the common focus on curriculum-based attainment goals in the group classroom. The method I have developed is process based, rather than content based and this represents a significant change in the way that basic musicianship is commonly taught, and tutored.

Table of Contents

| | |
|---|-----|
| List of Tables | v |
| List of Figures | vi |
| Preface | vii |
| Introduction | 1 |
| Chapter 1: Learning and education | 6 |
| Learning about learning | 7 |
| Learning outcomes | 9 |
| Music education, a broad overview | 11 |
| National Standards for Music Education | 12 |
| Basic musicianship within music education | 14 |
| The United Kingdom, A Levels, and the ABRSM | 15 |
| Karpinski's order | 19 |
| Chapter 2: An introduction to Neuro-Linguistic Programming | 26 |
| Richard Bandler and John Grinder, Joseph O'Connor, and Kate Spohrer | 26 |
| Language | 28 |
| The Meta Model | 29 |
| Ambiguity in language | 31 |
| Self-limiting behavior | 36 |
| Reframing | 37 |
| Rapport | 38 |
| Representational systems | 39 |
| Predicates | 41 |
| NLP and Learning | 42 |
| Unconscious Incompetence to Unconscious Competence | 43 |
| NLP criticism | 44 |
| Chapter 3: An NLP approach to pre-melodic dictation tutoring | 45 |
| Suitability of NLP | 45 |
| Rapport | 47 |
| Establishing learner type | 48 |
| Superlinks | 49 |
| The quiz | 50 |
| Language clues | 52 |
| Removing the ambiguities | 56 |
| Grading | 57 |
| Conclusion | 59 |
| Bibliography | 63 |

List of Tables

| | | |
|----------|---|----|
| Table 1: | The twelve forms of ambiguity in language | 34 |
| Table 2: | Examples of the twelve forms of verbal ambiguity | 35 |
| Table 3: | Common predicates | 41 |
| Table 4: | The four stages of learning | 43 |
| Table 5: | Examples of the twelve forms of verbal ambiguity, applied to aural skills | 56 |

List of Figures

| | | |
|-----------|--|----|
| Figure 1: | Reproduction of Figure 5.2, Susan Hallam’s “Learning in Music,” | 9 |
| Figure 2: | Depiction of learning – the brick wall model | 20 |
| Figure 3: | Karpinski’s ‘preliminary learning skills,’ applied to brick wall model | 22 |
| Figure 4: | A Damaged example of Karpinski’s ‘preliminary learning skills’ wall | 23 |
| Figure 5: | Learner type assessment | 50 |

PREFACE

*“Happy are the individuals who have so painlessly acquired their musicianship”*¹
Melville Smith

Based on my experience of teaching basic musicianship classes I have reached a number of conclusions regarding the students, the materials, the course structure, and the efficiency of my own teaching. This thesis is borne of frustrations I and other tutors have experienced as a result of being often unable to accomplish assessable progress in each individual student at the rate we desire. The cause of this lack of progress is, I believe, a common inability to truly individualize the tutoring style to fit the needs of the student.

When I received the responsibility of instructing a basic musicianship class, my immediate concern was about my teaching – what to teach, when to teach it, how to teach it. It was some time later that I discovered that what would make my class more successful was discovering less about how I teach, and more about how the students learn. These two things are less synonymous than I originally thought.

By proposing a unique diagnosis-system, followed by a structured tutoring approach based on learner type, I advocate that positive enhancements can be made to the way a student’s musicianship is honed during one-to-one tutoring.

¹ Smith, “Solfege: An Essential in Musicianship.” *Music Supervisors Journal* 20/5 (1934), 16.

INTRODUCTION

The ability to ‘think in music’ is the definitive goal for a range of courses undertaken by undergraduates at universities and schools of music across America. The development of music students’ analytical, aural, notational, and theoretical skills are commonly addressed during the first two years and usually are separated into written and aural music theory. The latter of the two holds the focus of this thesis, and this course is taught under a variety of guises. At my current institution, freshmen and sophomore music majors develop these skills over four consecutive semesters in a course named ‘basic musicianship.’

The purpose of this thesis is to put forward an alternative method of one-to-one basic musicianship tutoring, a method that is based on the techniques found in Neuro-Linguistic Programming (or NLP). Basic musicianship courses involve practicing a variety of different tasks, including sightsinging, melodic and harmonic dictation, intervals drills, etc. I have chosen to concentrate on the set of skills that must be developed before a student is ready to approach melodic dictation. These will later be referred to as ‘preliminary listening skills.’ Melodic dictation itself is an extremely transferable skill, and once proficiency is gained, it becomes an essential tool in a musician’s metaphorical toolbox. I have also chosen to focus on the one-to-one tutoring of the pre-melodic dictation skills, rather than a classroom pedagogical approach, as Neuro-Linguistic Programming is more suited to individual application.

Although basic musicianship is most commonly taught in class-sizes of fourteen to twenty students, learners that struggle to master the material are often subject to

individual tutoring, most commonly from teaching assistants. By working with the student in isolation, tutors are able to diagnose specific areas of weakness and establish which distinct skills need to be strengthened. However, a common complaint of both tutors and tutees is that after much focused individual attention, students fail to make significant improvements in the regular classroom. My speculation is that by the time a student requests (or are advised to seek) tutoring not only has the student failed to understand a significant number of concepts, but his / her confidence has received such a setback that a wholly unique approach is required to enable him / her to start learning once again. Instead of drilling the student in the hopes that enough feedback and repetition will cure his / her problems, I propose employing a method to discover how it is that the student is learning, or in some cases, failing to learn. This will allow a tutor not only to work out how to be best recap previous material in a manner most conducive with the student's specific learning style, but will also help the student learn how best to approach new material in the future.

Neuro-Linguistic Programming was formally conceived in the mid-1970s by two University of Santa Cruz academics who were studying the work of psychotherapy practitioners Fritz Perls, Virginia Satir, and Milton Erikson.² These three therapists fascinated the young Richard Bandler and John Grinder due to their successful manipulation of language, which enabled rapid results in the individual therapy of clients. Not only did the three have a high success rate, but the speed at which they were able to achieve this change appeared to be significantly faster than their unnamed colleagues. Bandler and Grinder became intent on identifying the verbal patterns of Perls, Satir and

² Joseph O'Connor and John Seymour, *Introducing Neuro-Linguistic Programming: Psychological Skills for Understanding and Influencing People* (San Francisco: Thorson, 1995), 2.

Erikson.³ They initially focussed on verbal communication, and later developed a model involving other nonverbal modes of communication – such as posture, and breathing rate.⁴ The title of the theory, Neuro-Linguistic Programming, demonstrates Bandler’s and Grinder’s interest in the interaction between the mind and language, and the possibility of reprogramming this relationship to achieve desired results.

The most concise synopsis of NLP might be “It is the science of how to run your brain in an optimal way to produce the results you desire.”⁵ There is a certain optimism, a life-holds-no-barriers quality to NLP. Undoubtedly, because of this, NLP is often used in life-training coaching, management coaching and the self-help industry. Bandler and Grinder choose not to rely on any specific scientific evidence to quantify their research, instead taking a “We’re not saying it’s true, but if it works, use it!” approach to criticism.⁶ NLP is concerned with process and result.⁷ It is akin to arguing that the quality of a cake is determined only by the baking procedures and the final taste, rather than the raw ingredients used to make it. While this analogy may satisfy the customer, it is unlikely to satisfy the baker. In my development of a method that combines NLP techniques with the one-to-one tutoring of basic musicianship, I suggest that it is essential to establish that the processes are well matched to the ingredients on hand. Just as one would not attempt to bake a cake using a rotten egg, neither should tutoring be attempted when previously taught information has been incorrectly processed by the student. It is

³ Ian McDermott and Wendy Jago, *Brief NLP Therapy* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2001), 48.

⁴ Alan Petroski, *Representational Systems in the Neuro-Linguistic Programming Model* (Ph.D. Thesis, Kent State University, 1985), 6.

⁵ Anthony Robbins, *Unlimited Power: the New Science of Personal Achievement* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1986), 27.

⁶ Matthew George, *A Neuro-Linguistic Programming Approach to Trumpet Instruction* (M.A. Thesis in Music Education, Southern Methodist University, 1989), 18.

⁷ *Ibid.*

therefore important to return to the foundation of a student's knowledge, and to work to ensure that all future teaching builds on a solid foundation.

To structure my study I shall first introduce current trends in aural skills pedagogy in Chapter 1, explore the foundations of Neuro-Linguistic Programming in Chapter 2, and in Chapter 3 set out how one might directly execute these NLP techniques in delivering one-to-one tutoring of preliminary listening skills.

In 1987 a British classical guitar teacher named Joseph O'Connor wrote *Not Pulling Strings*, a book aimed at demonstrating the application of "accelerated teaching and learning techniques of NLP to making music."⁸ Primarily concerned with practical instrumental instruction, O'Connor discusses his experiences of NLP techniques such as Meta Modeling, finding a student's lead representational system and the benefits the said discovery had on a student's progress. The book's style is mostly anecdotal, and it is not made clear whether O'Connor learned of NLP before or after he began his instrumental teaching career. Despite its colloquial style, it is an important text as this was the first study of NLP and its application to music making and since then there have been no significant publications linking the two disciplines.⁹

Another NLP based source I shall make reference to is Kate Spohrer's *Teaching NLP in the Classroom*.¹⁰ Written in a different manner than O'Connor's *Not Pulling Strings*, this text is a practical guide on using NLP techniques in the classroom. Spohrer

⁸ From the book jacket of: Joseph, O'Connor, *Not Pulling Strings: Application of Neuro-linguistic Programming to Teaching and Learning Music* (London: Kahn & Averill, 1987).

⁹ Matthew George's *A Neuro-Linguistic Programming Approach to Trumpet Instruction*, Masters of Music Education thesis (1989) centers on the instruction of trumpet with the use of NLP techniques. Although George experimented with different NLP techniques during private instruction, he was unable to definitively prove that the techniques were the cause of progress in his students, rather than other external factors – such as increased preparation, better concentration, etc.

¹⁰ Kate Spohrer, *Teaching NLP in the Classroom* (London: Continuum, 2007).

is a behavioral consultant and has developed a method of using NLP when working with children with ADHD.¹¹ In *Teaching NLP in the Classroom*, Spohrer separates her text into Advice and Application, providing exercises and specific examples of implementing her interpretation of NLP techniques. This is a similar approach to that which I shall use.

My experience as a classroom teacher and one-to-one tutor, and also as a practicing musician myself, enables me to have a close understanding of the difficulties in both learning and teaching musicianship skills. Although the parameters of this thesis do not include human-subject studies, it would be impossible for me not to be led by my experiences in the classroom, and I see this as a strength of my research, rather than a weakness.

This study addresses both basic musicianship teachers and instrumental tutors. The development of musicianship skills in a student are, I believe, the equal responsibility of both parties. Unlike literacy skills, which are used throughout education, musicianship skills are not practiced in classes outside of the music building.¹² It is imperative that any time a student is making music they are working on their musicianship, and it should not be solely reserved for the basic musicianship classroom.

¹¹ Information gathered from her personal website, www.katespohrer.co.uk (accessed February 26, 2010).

¹² Susan Hallam, "Learning in Music: Complexity and Diversity" in Chris Philpott and Charles Plummeridge eds. *Issues in Music Teaching* (London: RoutledgeFalmer, 2001), 72.

CHAPTER ONE

LEARNING AND EDUCATION

For the purpose of this study I will assume that musicianship and instrumental / vocal proficiency should be developed in a symbiotic manner. My experience as a basic musicianship tutor has shown me that this has not been the case for many incoming freshmen. By studying the American method of music education, and comparing it with that in the United Kingdom, I will demonstrate the significance of the differences in young instrumentalist / vocalist musicianship development. This chapter explores the difficulty that first-year college students have with such varying degrees of musicianship competency, and the problems this presents both for classroom teaching, and one-to-one tutoring.

There is no blueprint of student that requires or requests one-to-one tutoring. Some are highly proficient instrumentalists, others have had limited experience in a high school band or choir. Since the range of student's ability is so wide, the ability of the teacher to teach in a number of different manners must be equally expansive. A number of studies of aural skills pedagogy have appeared in the last couple of decades, the most substantial of which is Gary Karpinski's *Aural Skills Acquisition: The Development of Listening, Reading and Performing Skills in College-Level Musicians*.¹³ In it, Karpinski draws together recent research in music perception, cognition, and pedagogy and sets forth a discussion of psychology against the background of theoretical music pedagogy. The second part of the book explores the psychology of reading and performing music,

¹³ Gary Karpinski, *Aural Skills Acquisition: The Development of Listening, Reading and Performing Skills in College-Level Musicians* (London: Kahn & Averill, 2000).

including the measuring of eye movements and the effects these movements appear to have on proficiency. But it is the first part that is most relevant to my topic, where Karpinski explores the various stages of developing one's musical ear. I will address Karpinski's work in greater detail after a synopsis of the way in which musicianship pedagogy is currently delivered.

Learning about Learning

As human beings, we are all born as naturally gifted learners.¹⁴ We learn to walk and talk within the first few years of life, we learn our likes and dislikes, we learn to read and write, we learn how to socially interact, etc. Our life is spent learning. How is it that at an institution of higher learning we will find students ready to be taught, but seemingly unwilling or unable to learn? Susan Hallam echoes this query in her article "Learning in Music" saying "Given the natural human propensity to learn and create, the question that educators need to consider is why, in our institutions of learning, the process is often far from optimal and in some cases goes drastically and irretrievably wrong."¹⁵ Hallam argues that, in education institutions, "The problem is not that students do not learn, it is that they do not learn what teachers want them to learn."¹⁶ This suggests that many educators rely on a content learning approach rather than a process learning approach. Content learning is set out in curricula – what to teach. Process learning is concerned with how a student achieves the results that he does.¹⁷

¹⁴ O'Connor and Seymour, *Introducing NLP*, 179.

¹⁵ Hallam, "Learning in Music," 62.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 63.

¹⁷ John Biggs and Ross Telfer, *The Process of Learning* (Sydney, Australia: Prentice Hall, 1987), 11.

Learning to learn is a higher level skill than learning any particular material.¹⁸ But sharing this skill is the greatest gift that a teacher can give. Learning to learn is perhaps the most important skill in education. Unlike many topics and skills in freshmen year subjects, melodic dictation simply is not a matter of becoming information enabled. For many classes students will learn how to complete reading, how to write papers, how to study for tests, how to cram, but not many classes require students to truly learn and practice skills. This can be problematic idea for students to understand. It often takes a difficult adjustment period during which students discover that simply attending the classes will not be enough to complete tasks successfully. If a student can embrace the challenge and thrive on it, they will do well. If they shy away from the challenge, they are likely to fall behind.

Hallam suggests that “it is students’ emotional responses and their attempts to cope with them” that can prevent them from learning. She refers to the ‘block’ in learning caused when the learning situation creates anxiety. Anxiety can manifest itself in a number of ways in the basic musicianship classroom. Students get nervous about the testing process as well as fearing being put on the spot in the classroom. Other students feel that a weakness in musicianship signifies a weakness as a musician, and can be deterred from seeking assistance. Nervousness and a lack of confidence are mutually dependent – a lack of confidence can bring about nervousness, and nervousness can cause a lack of confidence.¹⁹ An NLP technique that works with nervousness is the idea of internal modelling – using the physicality of a time when the student was in complete control, and engaging that physicality during a period of anxiety. Nervousness affects the

¹⁸ O’Connor and Seymour, *Introducing NLP*, 72.

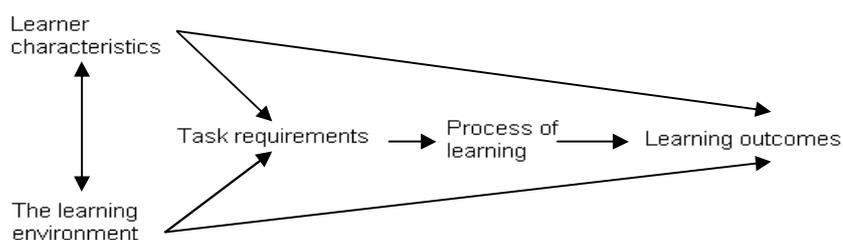
¹⁹ George, *A Neuro-Linguistic Approach to Trumpet Instruction*, 82.

environment in which a task is to be performed, and therefore can inhibit the outcome of the task.

Learning Outcomes

The old-fashioned belief that learner outcome may be predicted simply by observing the skill level being brought to the task has, over time, been replaced by a more complex picture. In Figure 1 below we see a number of different factors that control possible learning outcomes.

Figure 1: Reproduction of Figure 5.2 from Susan Hallam’s “Learning in Music”²⁰



The environment in which learning is to take place is equally important as the individual characteristics of the learner. Learning environment refers to cultural climate, people, and place. These must all be conducive to learning. The specific requirements of the task are affected both by learner characteristics and the learning environment. From this the process of learning is affected, and finally the learning outcome attained. It is a dynamic model – changes in one phase will affect the immediately following phase as well as the final outcome. Implicit in the diagram is the understanding by both student

²⁰ Susan Hallam, “Learning in Music,” 63.

and teacher that his / her responsibility is to be accountable for all phases. Both must ensure the learning environment is conducive to the task, and that the process of learning is suitable to both the environment and characteristics of the learner. In short, this diagram introduces the idea of an individualized learning system.

I believe that not only should teachers explore the learning style of each student, but they should also encourage the student to be an active participant in understanding his / her own traits of learning. The term 'metacognition' covers an individual's ability to plan, manage and evaluate his / her own learning. It promotes forming pre-emptive strategies and engaging in post-activity evaluation. Progress becomes person oriented, rather than task oriented. Encouraging students to understand their own cognitive processes as they study music is particularly beneficial, since much of the work they will undertake to develop as musicians will be independent. By demonstrating one's own learning process, encouraging the development of problem-solving skills, and allowing open appraisals of process and outcomes, a teacher can show students the significant benefits of metacognition.

Closely tied to achieving learning outcomes is a student's motivation to learn. Motivation depends on an individual's characteristics and the environment in which they find themselves. The best learning takes place when it is intrinsically motivated. But for intrinsic motivation to occur, the learner needs freedom to pace their involvement and a degree of prior knowledge about the task and its context.²¹ In other words, by understanding how this current activity will benefit his / her life or his / her learning, a student is more likely to be able to self motivate. A completely new task with no

²¹ Biggs and Telfer, *The Process of Learning*, 211.

references to tasks already completed or long-term goals is unlikely to garner much interest. Using only extrinsic motivation, such as maintaining a grade point average, tends to be short-lived and unfulfilling for both teacher and student. Great teachers find ways to inspire intrinsic motivation in their students. Intrinsic motivation carries forward from one task to the next, even when a learning goal is achieved. Since achieving musical excellence is an unending task, students should be encouraged to gain intrinsic motivation that will last them a lifetime. By tailoring tasks so that students are highly likely to succeed, or will instead gain extensive constructive feedback from failing, teachers can help raise their positivity towards a discipline, and therefore their likelihood of the student achieving intrinsic motivation.

Music Education, a Broad Overview

Space does not permit a detailed discussion about music education at the pre-college level, nevertheless it is important to understand why an individualized learning approach is so apt to the field of musicianship. One's experience and exposure to music arguably begins before we are even born.²² Musical enculturation, which mostly occurs unconsciously, takes place throughout our early-years development.²³ By the time a child reaches elementary school they will already have been exposed to a wholly unique collection of sounds and music, incomparable to their peers. As Figure 1 demonstrated, learning outcomes are built around not only environment, but also characteristics inherent to the individual – it is no wonder that the 'one-size-fits-all' approach to music in

²² Idea discussed by Jean-Pierre Lecanuet in "Prenatal auditory experience," in I. Deliège and J. A. Sloboda, eds. *Musical Beginnings: Origins and Development of Musical Competence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 3-34.

²³ The term 'musical enculturation' is that of Susan Hallam's, in "Learning in Music," 64.

elementary/middle and high school curriculums does not fulfil the needs of those training to become professional musicians and music educators.

National Standards for Music Education

In 1994, the National Standards for Arts Education were released in the United States by the Consortium of National Arts Education Associations.²⁴ These are content standards, designed to guide educators in determining distinct objectives in their teaching. This was a move away from individualized and localized (both school district, and state-wide) directives. The goal was to homogenize the manner in which music is taught, before students begin university study. The standards aim to give national uniformity to the level of competency achieved by music students. Although the standards are voluntary, not federal mandated, they are used by the majority of schools. Below are the nine national standards specified by the National Association of Music Education, as listed on their website.²⁵

1. Singing, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music.
2. Performing on instruments, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music.
3. Improvising melodies, variations, and accompaniments.
4. Composing and arranging music within specified guidelines.
5. Reading and notating music.
6. Listening to, analyzing, and describing music.
7. Evaluating music and music performances.

²⁴ Music Educators National Conference, *Aiming for Excellence: The Impact of the Standards Movement on Music Education* (Reston, VA: Music Educators National Conference), 1.

²⁵ <http://www.menc.org/resources/view/national-standards-for-music-education> (accessed April 12, 2010).

8. Understanding relationships between music, the other arts, and disciplines outside the arts.

9. Understanding music in relation to history and culture.

These standards reflect a comprehensive vision that includes the music curriculum itself and the implementation of that curriculum. Students are encouraged to perform, compose, listen to and understand music. At first glance, this vision seems worthy of praise. There is a heavy emphasis on participatory activities. These activities are a positive way to encourage large numbers of participants to gain musical experiences. Despite all these advantages, however, for those who choose music as a career it is not, in my view, the greatest way to build a solid foundation of rudiments and theoretical concepts. When students begin to study music at university they suddenly encounter a different format of music instruction, one that is centered on theory, with varying degrees of practical application. Thorough grounding in the academic regiments of music is essential in developing musicians capable of excelling in the collegiate classroom. I will further discuss this in my synopsis of the British music education system.

Some high schools offer Advanced Placement (AP) Music Theory classes, in which students develop the skills to recognize, understand, and describe the basic materials and processes of music that are heard or presented in a score.²⁶ The AP course seeks to instill mastery of rudiments and terminology, including hearing and notating basic elements such as pitches, intervals, and chords.²⁷ This course prepares the student much better for the rigors of freshmen music classes, and particularly the basic

²⁶ http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/ap/sub_music.html?musictheory (accessed April 12, 2010).

²⁷ Information taken from the course description PDF download from the College Board website, http://apcentral.collegeboard.com/apc/public/repository/ap08_music_coursedesc.pdf (accessed April 12, 2010).

musicianship class. Commonly a freshmen basic musicianship class will be made up of a mix of students that have completed AP theory, and students that have not. Immediately there is a significant difference in their learning backgrounds.

Basic Musicianship within Music Education

Over seventy years ago Melville Smith, writing in the *Music Supervisors Journal* (later to become the *Music Educators Journal*), noted that a musician must be able to ‘hear with the eye, and see with the ear.’²⁸ This concise philosophy is central and fundamental to the teaching of basic musicianship. A primary focus of the basic musicianship program (the multiple semesters of courses), is to develop within students the ability to recreate aurally what they view on the page, and to notate accurately on paper what they experience aurally. Development in this area is paramount to a musician, as music is a phenomenon that exists fundamentally in the aural domain.

Yet at admission to the university, the aural ability of incoming freshmen is seldom measured; the admission process focuses primarily on instrumental / vocal performance. When aural or musicianship testing does take place, allowance is made for the fact that for some students this will be their first experience of such a test. The in-house testing that occurs is often insufficient in discovering a student’s ability to understand their own musical ear and how to best make use of it.

Since many students who choose to major in music at university make their decision based on their enjoyment of high school and regional bands and choirs, it becomes the responsibility of the university music faculty to fill in the gaps of theoretical

²⁸ Smith, “Solfege: an Essential in Musicianship,” 55.

knowledge in students that are already sufficiently proficient at their chosen instrument. While this has become common practice, there is another way.

The United Kingdom, A Levels, and the ABRSM

As a case study, let us look at an alternative system in the United Kingdom, where admission into higher education music courses almost always depends on a high level of achievement in a standardized test known as a Music Advanced Level (A level) exam. During the final two years of high school, students focus on a just a handful of subjects that are most relevant to their higher education plans, and take A level examinations in these subjects only. Music A level material consists of performance, composition (theory), history, and analytical elements; essentially the same things the National Standards in America require. Along with the Music A level many institutions will require that instrumental proficiency has been achieved in line with the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music (hereafter called ABRSM) examination system.²⁹ For over ninety years the ABRSM has provided a nationally recognized performance examination format that also includes an element of aural skills testing. For instrumentalists and vocalists there are eight graded levels, (Grade 1 to Grade 8), which increase in difficulty both in terms of repertoire requirements and in the demonstration of technical abilities in scales, sightreading, and the aural tests.³⁰ The aural testing portion of the ABRSM exam deserves further discussion in context of this thesis.

²⁹ For more information on the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music, its philosophies and the intricacies of its testing format view www.abrsm.org

³⁰ For reference, Grade 8 is the minimum expected standard of entrants to conservatoires and, commonly, to music majors at academically strong universities.

Although the aural test segment accounts for just eighteen points of the one hundred and fifty available in the full examination, its inclusion in the syllabus demonstrates the firm ABRSM philosophy that listening lies at the heart of good music-making.³¹ The aural test is designed to be no more than an extension to the natural aural training that might take place during the course of learning repertoire during one-to-one instruction. In actuality, many teachers set aside lesson time in the lead up to exams to prepare students for the specifics of the aural test. This would suggest that either the ABRSM goals of attainment are not unified with the repertoire required for that particular level of exam, or that instrumental teachers are shying away from incorporating aspects of aural training as they methodically teach the repertoire. At the lowest level of instrumental proficiency, Grade 1, students are required to:

- 1) repeat simple rhythms (tapping) and recognize duple and triple meter
- 2) echo (singing) three-pitch phrases, in a major key
- 3) recognize a rhythmic change in a melody, and accurately describe the alteration
- 4) identify features such as dynamics and articulation, in a short piece played by the examiner, using Italian terminology where appropriate.

As the student progresses through the instrument grades, their aural abilities are expected to increase in tandem with their performance expertise and the complexity of the repertoire they are undertaking. Many students choose to work their way systematically from Grade 1 towards Grade 8 on their instrument and it becomes the responsibility of their instrumental teacher to ensure that the student's aural awareness development is symbiotic to that of technique and musical awareness. Grade 8 repertoire

³¹ ABRSM publishes their complete aural test syllabus, and introductory notes, at http://www.abrsm.org/regions/fileadmin/user_upload/syllabuses/auralComplete10.pdf (accessed February 6, 2010).

includes technically demanding solo works, including sonatas and concerti.

Consequently, by Grade 8 standard, the aural test requires students to:

- 1) sing/play from memory the lowest part of a three-part phrase heard twice
- 2) identify a cadence at the end of a phrase as perfect, imperfect, half or plagal
- 3) sing at sight (on a neutral syllable) the lower part of a two part melody with the examiner playing the upper part
- 4) identify two modulations as part of a phrase in major/minor keys from the following: dominant, subdominant, relative major or minor, or minor supertonic
- 5) discuss matters of any musical features in a piece played by the examiner

By comparing these requirements with those of the Grade 1 student it is clear that the musician is required to develop their ear considerably during the course of their studies. Along with the ability to comprehend more advanced textures, the student must engage with elements of written theory and recognize their application in music heard for the first time in the exam room. Yet there is one more factor that makes the task of learning written theory all the more manageable.

One final, but crucial, idiosyncrasy of the ABRSM system is that students are not able to enter Grade 6, 7 and 8 examinations on their instrument until they have passed a Grade 5 Theory or Grade 5 Practical Musicianship examination.³² Again, the ABRSM are emphasizing that music performance is, and should be, completely intertwined with music theory and musicianship. Developing the skills that interpret the written symbols of music and being able to translate these into sound becomes the focus, right from the earliest stages of learning the instrument. Holistically, the aim of the Theory exam is to give the students the opportunities to acquire:

³² The syllabi are once again available online. The ABRSM Theory syllabus can be found at http://www.abrsm.org/regions/fileadmin/user_upload/syllabuses/theoryComplete10.pdf and the Practical Musicianship syllabus at http://www.abrsm.org/regions/fileadmin/user_upload/syllabuses/pracComplete10.pdf

- 1) knowledge of the notation of western music
- 2) an understanding of fundamental musical elements such as intervals, keys, scales and chords
- 3) skill in constructing balanced rhythmic patterns or completing given melodic or harmonic structures
- 4) an ability to apply theoretical knowledge and understanding to score analysis

The newly introduced Practical Musicianship exam focuses on performance aspects not associated with learning pieces by rote. By offering the opportunity of preparing for the Practical Musicianship examination the ABRSM hopes to develop well rounded musicians, able to perform spontaneously through a greater understanding of printed music, or by improvisation. This is in contrast to the practical instrumental examinations, which focus on preparation and fine detail. The practical musicianship examination measures immediate responses to aural and notational stimuli. The format of the examination requires students to:

- 1) internalize music and reproduce it
- 2) interpret written music with a minimum of preparation
- 3) explore possibilities inherent in a short motif
- 4) detect differences between what is heard and what is written

Much can be learned from the ABRSM goals and methods of assessment. Smaller examination boards than ABRSM also exist, but a large majority of young instrumentalists in the UK and in various other countries across the world follow the ABRSM form of evaluation. It has produced a recognized benchmark for students, parents, and schools. It allows for goals to be set and met by all three parties. The importance of goal setting and recognizing achievement is crucial to the philosophy of NLP. The ABRSM approach is therefore extremely amenable to be incorporated into a one-to-one NLP tutoring method such as that I propose for pre-melodic dictation tutoring.

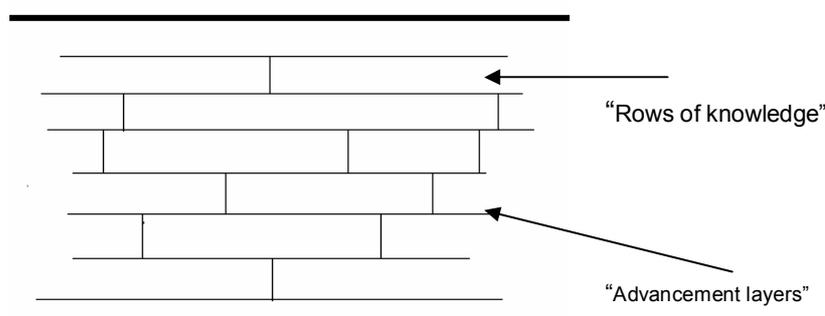
The comparative lack of standardization in music education in American high-schools results in a lack of standardization in the expected abilities of freshmen music students. Removing the individual tuition that students on the ABRSM track receive reduces the chances that aurally and theoretically the student has had focused development of key skills and concepts. One of the first hurdles the basic musicianship teacher encounters is the discovery of what musical training the student has experienced, and what material has been well comprehended. Although the National Standards specify nine important areas of music for teachers to explore, there are insufficient attainment targets in these areas to enable most colleges to require a certain standard of their incoming freshmen. If the Standards were structured in a way that encouraged step-by-step development, such as in the ARBSM approach, then they would be more pliable to applying NLP techniques to their teaching.

Karpinski's Order

In the second chapter of his book, *Aural Skills Acquisition*, Karpinski lays out his model for the beginning of a freshmen aural skills curriculum. It is an approach that mirrors a mathematical textbook – starting with fundamental concepts and skills, building with few assumptions on any external knowledge and developing each idea from previously assimilated ones.³³ I think this similarity to the mathematical approach is important, as it demonstrates what I call the ‘brick wall technique,’ where developments are uniform and logical in nature, separated only by a thin layer of advancement.

³³ Karpinski, *Aural Skills Acquisition*, 19.

Figure 2: Depiction of Learning, in a brick wall model



This advancement layer is where the neurological processes take place in the student to make sense of new information being present, in relation to information previously received and understood. The crucial point is that if one row (of knowledge), or in fact the advancement layer, is insufficiently formed then the structure becomes unstable. In musicianship, as in mathematics, if one stage of the development is missed or misunderstood, the result can produce an unstable structure of knowledge. The difficulty for the teacher comes in dealing with a class full of students, recognizing when a student is not fully developing one layer, before attempting to move on, or be moved on, to the next. Once a student arrives in tutoring, the tutor must establish which stage in the knowledge development is less securely in place, and work at re-securing this area, before working back up to the current standard required. Karpinski's mathematical approach is, I believe, correct. And it will work for the majority of the students in a class, if presented in a clear and systematic manner. This thesis is concerned with the students who lose their way, who miss a step and cannot keep up.

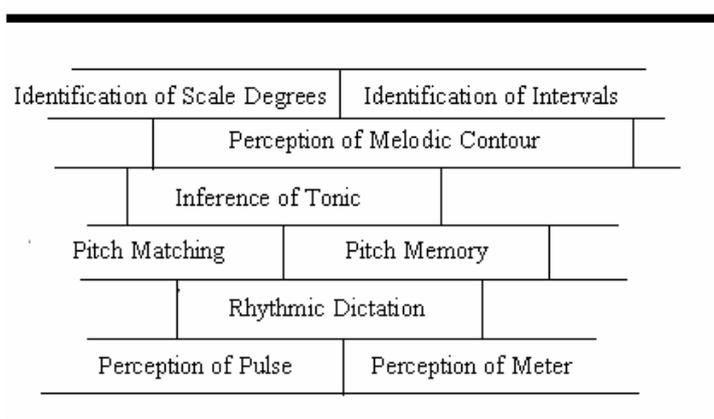
Take for example the ordering Karpinski lays out for “preliminary listening skills.”³⁴ This is the order in which he deals with the various elements of listening that need to be developed in the early stages of approaching melodic dictation. All of these individual skills need to be honed before students will have a reliable foundation to approach full melodic dictation exercises. Here is a list of the nine skills Karpinski suggests; they should be approached in order, beginning at the bottom of the list.

Identification of Intervals
 Identification of Scale Degrees
 Perception of Melodic Contour
 Inference of Tonic
 Pitch Collections
 Pitch memory
 Pitch Matching
 Rhythmic Dictation
 Perception of Meter
 Perception of Pulse

While this list is a good point of departure, I would argue that not all these topics take place on different levels, some are in fact horizontal movements. For example, Perception of Pulse and Perception of Meter can be developed side by side, but the task of Rhythmic Dictation requires the knowledge to accurately notate a rhythmic pattern, either by traditional notation, or a system of lines / dashes. In the figure below (Figure 3) you will see that I have therefore arranged Perception of Pulse and Perception of Meter on the same horizontal plain, and Rhythmic Dictation is placed a level above. It is the stages that actually move up a level where it is most important to check that all students make the necessary neurology connections from one part to the next.

³⁴ Ibid., 20-58.

Figure 3: Karpinski's 'preliminary listening skills' applied to brick wall model



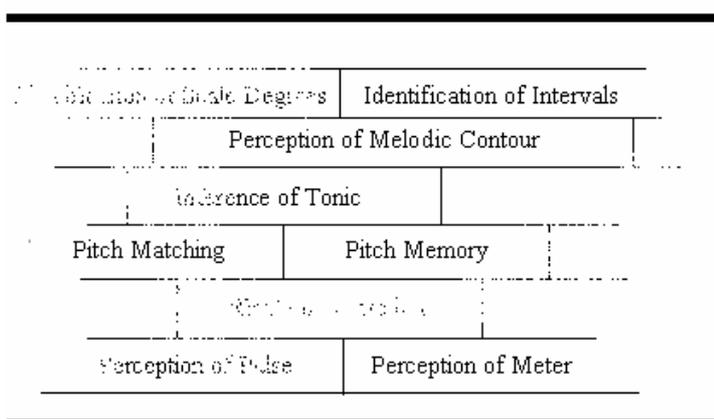
Similarly to Perception of Pulse and Perception of Meter, both Pitch Matching and Pitch Memory should be developed together before the concept of Tonic Inference is addressed. As mentioned, the separation between the layers is the most crucial part of the learning process. The neurological connections between previous information assimilated and new information received represents the layers of cement of a physical brick wall. Without these connections a student is simply receiving information, without forming the necessary associations with tasks already completed. This metaphorical cement must be securely in place for the student to be fully ready to progress. Without the advancement layer a student becomes information enabled, but learning disabled – information is given, but the crucial learning connections do not take place.³⁵

Figure 4 (below) is an example of where a student is missing important parts of the wall, both in terms of knowledge, and advancement layers, and would no doubt find

³⁵ O'Connor and Seymour, *Introducing NLP*, 191.

themselves requiring tutoring to address these issues.³⁶ Gaps along the learning path are depicted by damaged or illegible bricks.

Figure 4 – An incomplete version of Figure 2



The student depicted in Figure 4 has an understanding of meter, but not always of pulse – they know how correctly to fill a measure with the correct number of beats, and understand subdivision, in notational terms, but would not always be able to decipher the pulse in terms of strong beats, and stress. For example, they may be unable discern an anacrusis in a 3/4 pulse, and thus metrically displace a complete rhythmic dictation task. Although they are able to match pitch and retain pitch information for a short period of time, they are unable to consistently infer which of the pitches presented is the tonic. This means that the later stage of correctly identifying scale degrees is significantly impaired. So while the student can correctly interpret contour, and has a good sense of intervals, without a clear starting pitch and 100% accuracy with their intervals they are unlikely to be entirely accurate with pitches, in a melodic dictation exercise.

³⁶ In Chapter Three I will discuss the most effective way for a tutor a student with these deficiencies.

As you can see, this student's "learning wall" is damaged. Although some of the higher level skills are intact, the wall itself is unsteady. I think that when a curriculum is designed, quizzes should be carefully placed at moments in the semester where it is imperative that all students have a minimum level of proficiency. Without this, the concern is that a given student may not have a solid foundation for learning. It may not be until later stages of the development (or required courses) that this foundational weakness becomes truly apparent.

Along with these relocated tests comes the need for more stringent measures when a student does perform poorly. Rather than allowing a couple of lower test scores to be accrued, and then wondering why the student does below par on the midterm, it is important to determine why. If a student has specific learning blocks and advancement levels that need further attention, a strategic use of aural skills assessment can help diagnose where they are.

Karpinski states that it is important to correct the basic causes of aural difficulties, rather than simply address the symptoms.³⁷ Gaps higher up a wall may be the symptoms of concerns in areas of the foundation. This supports my hypothesis that subjecting a student to the common practice of aural skills pedagogy – repetitive drilling – may be enough to correct a specific skill weakness, but will help neither student nor tutor establish what caused the deficiency in the first place.

A student must have confidence in all levels in order to keep building the wall higher. If this means reworking significantly lower levels until their confidence is raised, then this is the action that must be taken. Confidence (in relation to nervousness) was

³⁷ Karpinski, *Aural Skills Acquisition*, 7.

previously addressed, but its consideration in the wall model is important as a considerable, yet invisible, structural support.

CHAPTER TWO

AN INTRODUCTION TO NEURO-LINGUISTIC PROGRAMMING

I propose that one can improve the progress of a basic musicianship student by changing the way in which the student approaches the task in hand. To do this I will look at on particular epistemology that deals with neurology, language, and programming, Neuro-Linguistic Programming. A parallel to cognitive behavioural therapy, NLP focuses on successful patterns of behaviour, modeling such patterns and generating change. With a heavy emphasis on language, other NLP techniques include the reading of eye movements and “reframing” to enable a person, be it psychotherapist, teacher or salesperson to achieve a desired response from a subject. This chapter introduces the key characters behind NLP and also those who have shaped this research, as well as presenting some of the key NLP principles on which my own methodology is founded.

Richard Bandler and John Grinder

Neuro-Linguistic Programming, or NLP, was formally conceived in the mid 1970s by University of Santa Cruz student Richard Bandler (b. 1950) and an assistant professor of linguistics, John Grinder (b. 1940). Bandler and Grinder initially began studying the work and, more specifically, the use of language in the work, of psychotherapist Fritz Perls, family therapist Virginia Satir, and hypnotherapist Milton Erikson.³⁸ Essentially they were looking for patterns in the language being used by the therapists.³⁹ Bandler and

³⁸ O'Connor and Seymour, *Introducing NLP*, 2.

³⁹ Joyce Mills and Richard Crowley, *Therapeutic Metaphors for Children and the Child Within* (New York: Brunner/Mazel, 1986), 106.

Grinder's task was straightforward: create the beginnings of an appropriate theoretical base for the description of human interaction.⁴⁰ Psychotherapy is, after all, a technique dependent on the ability of individuals to communicate with and understand each other.⁴¹

A basic tenet of NLP is that we do not function in the world directly, but rather in our sensory experiences of that world, which are then represented through our communication systems. By better organizing the components of these sensory representations in different ways, we affect our communication, and therefore our results or output.⁴²

Joseph O'Connor

Joseph O'Connor's *Not Pulling Strings* is highly important to my research as he was the first author to write about NLP techniques and their application to music pedagogy. Although sections of his book are non-transferable to aural skills, such as his study of Alexander Technique, much of his understanding about methods of communication may be readily applied. His reading of Bandler and Grinder's explanation of sensory experience comes straight from a musician's understanding and is therefore extremely similar to my own conclusions. O'Connor is also co-author of another useful text, *Introducing Neuro-Linguistic Programming: Psychological Skills for Understanding and Influencing People*, one of the more approachable introductory guides to NLP that is available.⁴³

⁴⁰ Richard Bandler and John Grinder, *The Structure of Magic 1: A Book about Language and Therapy* (Palo Alto, CA: Science and Behavior Books, 1975), ix.

⁴¹ Petroski, *Representational Systems in the Neuro-Linguistic Programming Model*, 1.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 6.

⁴³ O'Connor, Joseph and John Seymour, *Introducing Neuro-Linguistic Programming: A Psychological Guide to Understanding and Influencing People* (San Francisco: Thorson), 1995.

Kate Spohrer

As a behavioral consultant Kate Spohrer's application of NLP is primarily using it to problem-solve the educational difficulties of children with behavioral complications. Focussing on communication, Spohrer uses NLP to empower teachers into believing that, through language, they will be able to make the necessary changes in instructing their students to become better learners.⁴⁴

Language

When humans communicate, the actual task of selecting language is most commonly unconscious, unless one is trying particularly hard to provoke a specific emotion from the audience or listener. However, despite being an unconscious action, one's word choice can communicate a huge amount to the skilled listener. Language can be the clearest way to express oneself, but it is also a way in which we can hide much of our true meaning, either consciously or unconsciously.

Language serves as the primary representational system for our experiences.⁴⁵ Representational systems will be further explored shortly; suffice it to say, they are the way we process information that is received through our primary senses. How one uses language is dependent on his / her internal representation of the idea or emotion he / she is trying to express.⁴⁶ Language can also be a powerful filter of our experiences.⁴⁷ What begins as a strong sensory experience can be diluted through ambivalent or ambiguous expression. The opposite is also true, in that a slight sensory response can gain untold

⁴⁴ Paraphrased from her website, www.katespohrer.co.uk (accessed February 26th 2010).

⁴⁵ Bandler and Grinder, *The Structure of Magic 1*, 24.

⁴⁶ George, *A Neuro-Linguistic Programming Approach to Trumpet Instruction*, 23.

⁴⁷ O'Connor and Seymour, *Introducing NLP*, 89.

importance if communicated strongly through verbal language. By understanding more about language, how we use it and how other people use it, we become more efficient communicators.

Communication skills are particularly important in the relationship between student and tutor. A student must learn how to express accurately, among other things, his / her emotions towards learning, his / her anxieties and his / her reactions to new stimuli. Encouraging students to become more accurate in their language, through a variety of the NLP techniques discussed below, will aid the relationship between student and tutor, and the rate at which the student is able to assimilate new information.

The Meta Model

The Meta Model was one of the first patterns developed by Bandler and Grinder. They described it as “a representation of a representation of something.”⁴⁸ It is essentially a map of language. It uses language to clarify language.⁴⁹ After all, language is merely a symbolic representation of something, not an actual representation.⁵⁰ Bandler and Grinder worked under the principle that in the journey from deep level thoughts to the surface level style in which we describe them, a number of unconscious processes take place that devalue the accuracy of the language we use to express ourselves. At the deep level, a specific thought or idea is generated. Through generalization, distortion, and deletion, the idea presented verbally has often lost much of its original potency. This

⁴⁸ Bandler and Grinder, *The Structure of Magic 1*, 216.

⁴⁹ O'Connor and Seymour, *Introducing NLP*, 90.

⁵⁰ Lewis and Pucelik, *Magic Demystified: A Pragmatic Guide to Communication and Change*, 68.

transition ironically takes place when we colloquialize or shorten our ideas, in order to be “understood” by our peers and colleagues.

Making a generalization is one of the main ways in which we simplify a mass of data; it is also one of the most common causes of ambiguity in language.⁵¹ Distortion occurs when an incorrect assumption is applied to a statement, and consequently taken as fact upon which further statements are based. When important information is simply omitted, deletion occurs. Any of these processes devalues the authenticity of our message. Sometimes when these amendments occur they are caused by an individual’s incorrect perception of reality, rather than reality itself.

The Meta Model is designed to challenge and expand the limits of one person’s model of the world.⁵² Meta Model questioning, when used in therapy, is a precise way for a therapist to connect with the sensory responses of their client.⁵³ It can also be used by a teacher to connect with their student. By examining sensory responses, we can better understand a person’s true interpretation of a stimulus, rather than their reported observation, that may be subject to generalization, distortion or deletion. The roles of teacher and student can also be reversed here. For example, by asking the student to describe in detail how a mistake was made, a teacher is able to encourage the student to understand exactly which process caused the error, rather than simply writing off the complete exercise as a failure.

⁵¹ McDermott and Jago, *Brief NLP Therapy*, 120.

⁵² Terry Elston and Kate Spohrer, *Using NLP to Enhance Behavior and Learning: A Handbook for Teachers* (New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2009), 87.

⁵³ O’Connor, *Not Pulling Strings*, 29.

Ambiguity in Language

The use of ambiguous statements can suggest a lack of responsibility in pinpointing the true area of discomfort or confusion. Ambiguous responses are common in young people who fear saying the wrong thing, and can be used in an attempt to shift the focus of attention from the true source. As a teacher it is extremely important to address these ambiguities. In most cases they should be responded to by asking for further clarification. When a student becomes aware that further clarification will always be requested, they become less likely to answer questions with ambiguous statements. Here are the twelve main ways in which language can be ambiguous:⁵⁴

1) *Unspecified verbs* – An unspecified verb offers only a vague description of human action. It should be countered by asking for clarification: “How..?” “What..?” “Where..?” “When..?” “Why..?”

2) *Comparisons* – It is important that comparative adverbs are quantified by stating what the current action or result is being compared with in order to measure its relative success. In day-to-day speech this is often omitted. For example, Q: “How are you today?” A: “I am well.” In this example “well” is being used in comparison to a previous day’s wellbeing, or against a person perceived to be unwell.

3) *Lost performatives* – With lost performatives the source of the judgment is omitted, information is presented as fact rather than opinion. For example, “It is not a good restaurant.” Questions should be asked to determine from where or whom the opinion comes.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

4) *Unspecified referential index* – These are statements in which the noun needs clarification. For example, a “How” question is asked but the response given is, “It is...”, without explanation.

5) *Generalizations / complex equivalences* – With generalizations a whole category of experience becomes limited to one particular label. This is particularly negative when it results in self-limiting behavior towards a whole string of activities, connected by a generalization. Complex equivalences occur when two experiences are linked together and one is taken as the equivalent of the other. It is similar to a non sequitur. The connection between the two subjects must be questioned in order to gain more information.

6) *Universal quantifiers* – Similar to generalizations, universal quantifiers are words such as “always” and “never” that are used to incorrectly couple a statement that applies to a specific moment in time, with a certainty about its position in the past or the future.

7) *Nominalizations* – Nominalizations occur when a verb is changed into a noun. A verb should require action or be an ongoing process. Nominalizations can create a feeling of passivity that can be removed when the speaker understands his / her influence on the verb.

8) *Modal operators of possibility* – These are closely tied in with self-limiting behavior. They define what the speaker considers to be possible, based on their individual map of the world. Modal operators of possibility should be challenged by asking what a situation would be like if the opposite were to be achieved. For example,

“I can’t practice every day” should be countered with “What would need to change in your life in order for you to find time to practice every day?”

9) *Modal operators of necessity* – Words like “should”, “must” and “ought” imply a code of conduct that cannot be broken. As with modal operators of possibility, by using a “What if..?” line of questioning towards these unwritten rules, we can help a student see whether their modal operators of necessity are based on stable or unstable reasoning.

10) *Presuppositions* – Presuppositions are assumptions based on our personal beliefs, some of which may be need to questioned. Teachers also need to be careful not to use presuppositions, such as assuming a student will require criticism, even before the task is attempted.

11) *Causal modelling* – Using an unspecified verb (such as ‘causes’ or ‘makes’) to link an external event to a subjective response is an example of causal modelling. The student should be questioned as to how exactly the event produces the response. Causal modelling suggests that the individual is not assuming correct responsibility for the response, particularly if it is negative. Examples of causal modelling would be: x means y , x makes me y or x makes y happen.⁵⁵

12) *Mind-reading* – In mind-reading, the subject is imposing a presupposition upon another person. Often this will involve projecting their own emotional response on the third party, assuming they will respond the same way.

These twelve types of ambiguities can be divided into three primary categories.⁵⁶ The first group are all examples of missing information in the statement, mostly to be countered by “Who..?”, “What..?”, “How..?”, “Why..?” lines of questioning. The second

⁵⁵ Elston and Spohrer, *Using NLP to Enhance Behavior and Learning*, 91

⁵⁶ Found online at http://www.soulwork.net/projects/meta_model.htm (accessed March 4, 2010).

group suggests that a person is relying on their “map of the world.” A key NLP principle, originally presented by Alford Korzybski in 1958, suggests “the map is not the territory.”⁵⁷ Although we each see our bit of a reality, it is not the same reality seen by the person standing next to you, or the person next to him. Reality changes, and we have to be prepared to change with it. Otherwise it is akin to travelling with an out-of-date map. The final grouping is characterized by when associations are incorrectly formed, of people, or by people.

Table 1: The 12 types of ambiguities, separated in generalization, deletion and distortion

| Deletion (Missing information) | Generalization (Our map of the world) | Distortion (Semantic error) |
|--|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unspecified verbs • Comparisons • Lost performatives • Unspecified referential index • Nominalizations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generalizations • Universal quantifiers • Modal operators of possibility • Modal operators of necessity • Presuppositions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Causal modelling • Mind-reading |

When a student uses ambiguous statements to describe their performance or ability they should be challenged in order to discover the true meaning of their words. If a teacher is able to improve their own ability to notice these ambiguities and quickly resolve them, they are likely to help the student become clearer in understanding their own actions, both positive and negative. By encouraging the student to preface comments with “I think...” or “I believe...” it reinforces to the student that this is their opinion, and not common fact – which is the manner in which they often presented the information.

⁵⁷ Korzybski, *Science and sanity: an introduction to non-Aristotelian systems and general semantics* (Lakeville, CT: International Non-Aristotelian Library Publishing Company, 1958), 750.

The table below presents a mixture of examples given by O'Connor in *Not Pulling Strings* and some of my own, showing how ambiguous statements may occur in an instrumental lesson, and what should be asked in response (R) to these statements (S).⁵⁸ In Chapter Three we will look at how to address these ambiguities in the context of preliminary listening skill tutoring.

Table 2: Examples of the 12 types of verbal ambiguities

| | |
|--------------------------------|---|
| Unspecified verbs | Question: How was your performance? S: It went really badly. R: What about it went badly? |
| Comparisons | S: I played badly. R: In comparison to what? |
| Lost performatives | S: This piece is hard. R: Who says this piece is hard? |
| Unspecified referential index | Question: How do you find this piece? S: It is hard. R: What about it is hard? |
| Generalizations | S: Music is hard. R: What is it about music that is hard? |
| Universal quantifiers | S: No-one can play this piece. R: So no-one has ever played this piece? |
| Nominalizations | S: I just need to think when I play. R: What specifically do you need to think about? |
| Modal operators of possibility | S: This piece is impossible. R: Is there a time when this piece might be possible for you? |
| Modal operators of necessity | S: I mustn't play a wrong note. R: What would happen if you do? |
| Presuppositions | S: After I play, you can tell me what I mistakes I made. R: How do you know you will make mistakes? |
| Causal modelling | S: Performing makes me uncomfortable. R: What exactly about performing causes you discomfort? |
| Mind-reading | S: If I make a mistake, my mother will be angry. R: How do you know that she will be angry if that were to happen? |

⁵⁸ O'Connor, *Not Pulling Strings*, 29-40.

Self-Limiting Behavior

In the earlier discussion about learning outcomes and factors which have influence on learning outcomes, the idea of mental ‘blocks’ that limit behavior emerged. It is a teacher’s responsibility to help students overcome their limiting beliefs.⁵⁹ This can be done by questioning the rationale behind the belief. Plenty of “Why..?” and “How..?” questions will lead to a narrowing down the true cause of uncertainty towards a task. Positive beliefs give us permission to awaken our own capabilities. Naturally, this is not an absolute guarantee of success, but keeping positive beliefs, according to O’Connor, is enough to encourage oneself to remain resourceful towards achieving positive results.⁶⁰ In a similar vein, opportunities are more likely to appear as opportunities if one is in a state of positivity.⁶¹

Self-limiting beliefs and self-fulfilling prophecies go hand in hand. Bandler and Grinder recognized that a person’s generalizations or expectations filter out and distort his / her experiences to make a situation consistent with these expectations.⁶² In other words, expectations can become self-fulfilling prophecies, both good and bad.⁶³ This concept suggests an innate human instinct to prove an expectation, even when the prophecy might result in one’s own disappointment and failure. And the cycle of transforming expectation to reality can be a hard thing to modify. If the subject never experiences a result differing from their generalization or expectation, the expectation will not be challenged and therefore the expectation will remain the same. Until such a

⁵⁹ Spohrer, *Teaching NLP in the Classroom*, 18.

⁶⁰ O’Connor and Seymour, *Introducing NLP*, 84-85.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁶² Bandler and Grinder, *The Structure of Magic 1*, 16.

⁶³ O’Connor and Seymour, *Introducing NLP*, 64.

challenge takes place, the norm remains the norm. When this expectation or norm is the standard at which a student believes he / she can perform academically, it causes a number of problems in the learning process. For example, a student that consistently scores in the 75-85% range on tests will no doubt begin each new test knowing that they are likely to make several errors. Using NLP techniques this student would work at acquiring the confidence to believe that, despite previous performances, they are fully capable of achieving 100% on the next test. They would no longer be heard to say “I always score around 80%,” as that in itself is a limiting belief. Although the statement may be true, its iteration is unhelpful to the process of succeeding. By changing the language they use, the student can start to change their expectations and beliefs. Effectively, one can program oneself to feel positively or negatively about a situation.⁶⁴ To achieve success, at an individual task or on a broader scale, we must use only positive affirmations, in speaking to oneself, and in speaking about oneself.

By looking at ambiguities in language, Bandler and Grinder were effectively looking at ways people stop themselves from changing, stop themselves from succeeding.⁶⁵ By dismantling these ways, and reframing them as ways to cause change, they were able to build the structure of their theory.

Reframing

The notion of Reframing, like modelling, has been around long before the development of NLP.⁶⁶ Bandler and Grinder describe it as a way for your conscious

⁶⁴ Spohrer, *Teaching NLP in the Classroom*, 21.

⁶⁵ Bandler and Grinder, *The Structure of Magic 1*, Introduction.

⁶⁶ George, *A Neuro-Linguistic Approach to Trumpet Instruction*, 47.

mind to communicate change with the rest of you, your subconscious mind. Similar to positive thought, reframing can be used proactively in teaching to encouraging a student to always consider the possibilities, rather than the previous outcomes. The common saying “we must learn from our mistakes” is also an example of reframing.⁶⁷

Reframing is simply rewording the way we talk to oneself when representing an experience that has taken place. So rather than “I failed that test miserably,” one can digitally reframe to “I made several mistakes from which I can learn a great deal.” Whereas the first statement focuses on disappointment and dejection, the latter focuses on learning, and will encourage a more resourceful state from which progress can be made. Resourceful states are imperative to NLP. Reframing allows resourceful states to be reached by altering the internal representation of the difficulty or problem, through speech.⁶⁸ Although reframing is a powerful internal tool, its application can also be prompted by teachers / therapists. In order for the student / client to respond positively to these prompts, there must be a sound relationship between the two people.

Rapport

Those whom we deem to be highly successful communicators are in fact, first and foremost, talented listeners who respond in a manner most in tune with what the other party has said. In Neuro-Linguistic Programming this skill is known as Rapport. Establishing rapport is standard practice in psychotherapy.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ Ibid., 49.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 84.

⁶⁹ Philip Barker, *Using Metaphors in Psychotherapy*, (New York: Brunner/Mazel, 1985), 188.

Rapport not only increases the efficiency of communication, but it also builds trust.⁷⁰ Both of these factors are essential in proficient pedagogy. By successfully establishing rapport with a student, a teacher is able to enter into the world of the learner, and from there guide them to towards the desired area requiring growth. The manner in which this is done is, in NLP terminology, referred to as Pacing and Leading. Pacing signifies the building of rapport, while Leading is the practice of changing one's own behavior so that the other person follows.⁷¹ Pacing and Leading are examples of positive action, using mutual understanding to trigger change. The act of Pacing must be kept carefully distinct from mimicry, which is a cruder form of observational behavior, and can result in embarrassing the learner.⁷² Pacing is the process of feedback to the student, through your own behavior, the behaviors and strategies that you have observed in them.⁷³ Entering into the world of the other party taking part must be approached with sensitive modelling, of breathing rate, posture and predicates. To determine in what specific way the teacher must change their behavior it becomes necessary for the teacher to have a strong understanding of the learning style of their student.

Representational Systems

When the brain receives information it is received, stored, and eventually relayed, most commonly through speech. There are three principal ways in which the information is received: visually, aurally, and kinaesthetically. These are the representational

⁷⁰ O'Connor and Seymour, *Introducing NLP*, 19.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 21.

⁷² McDermott and Jago, *Brief NLP therapy*, 99.

⁷³ Robert Dilts, *The Study of Subjective Experience* (Cupertino, CA: Meta Publications, 1980), 107.

systems we rely on in day-to-day living.⁷⁴ Although all three are continually in use, at times we may become more aware of one over another.⁷⁵ This is known as our primary representational system. Later we will see that determining an individual's primary representational system is essential for maximizing his / her learning potential. Here is an example of the representational systems at work: as we rehearse a speech or generate answers in an argument our auditory system will be aware of internal dialogue while our kinaesthetic system may be less active, if we are doing this while sitting absolutely still. Of course, at times various representational systems combine. Many performers try to visualize their performance using as many representational systems as possible, before taking to the stage, in a bid to subdue nerves. In my view, this need not be limited to performance. Visualization is an equally valid practice for developing better aural skills. Students can run a mental imagery of hearing a melody, and being able to successfully notate it. Questions they should ask themselves include: How does this feel, physically and emotionally? How do they see their posture in this picture? What is their primary focus? It is much more powerful to encourage the students feel these things, than it is simply to ask them questions about a hypothetical experience.

Trying to understand communication by focussing on the words of the speaker alone is akin to following a game of tennis by watching only half the court.⁷⁶ In order to get the full picture, it is imperative that we should understand the actions of the other participant(s). Therefore when we communicate with another individual it becomes extremely useful to understand both their verbal and non-verbal communication. More

⁷⁴ Olfactory (smell) and gustatory (taste) make up the five senses; however these are in less frequent use outside of meal times.

⁷⁵ O'Connor and Seymour, *Introducing NLP*, 28.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 67.

and more people are becoming aware of basic body-language signals, such as open and closed postures, but there are many more subtleties that can be understood to gain further insight into the internal thoughts of a listener or participant. In NLP these include monitoring breathing rates, and the pitch of the speaker's voice.

Predicates

A person's language gives us information on how they are representing their conscious experience, through their primary representational system. By creating our own internal, sensory-based responses to the words we hear, we understand what is being said. If a person misrepresents their meaning by inaccurately describing their sensory responses, then the listener will infer incorrect information. Here are examples of some of the most common predicates used when presenting our three primary representational systems:

Table 3: Common predicates

| Visual | Auditory | Kinaesthetic |
|----------|---------------|--------------|
| • see | • listen | • feel |
| • look | • hear | • grasp |
| • watch | • sounds like | • handle |
| • notice | | |
| • focus | | |

Although these words are extremely common in our vocabulary, it becomes extremely interesting to see how people use a particular pattern of them to describe one specific experience. Great literary authors, on the other hand, incorporate a rich and

varied mix of predicates, giving their work a universal appeal.⁷⁷ In common speech, we are less likely to apply this method.

One way in which to build rapport quickly with another person is through matching predicates. By using predicates from the same category as the person we are communicating with we are able to show that we are thinking within the same realm, from the same angle. It will allow conversation to flow more smoothly, even in disagreement.

NLP and Learning

I stated earlier that the most successful communicators are those who are quickly able to enter into rapport with their audience. This is also entirely true for teachers. Rapport enables the teacher to enter into the world of the learner and become quickly aware of how the learner will most effectively be able to comprehend the material being covered.⁷⁸ In this vein, it is important to remember that students must be the starting point of learning.⁷⁹ When planning a course, it must be approached as how and what we want the students to learn, rather than how and what we want to teach. When tutoring, we have the opportunity to become very aware of what the student responds well to. This can be in terms of the pacing of the session, the amount of praise / criticism given, the number of successful repetitions of a task required before the student feels confident that they have “got it.”

⁷⁷ Ibid., 31.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 21.

⁷⁹ O'Connor, *Not Pulling Strings*, Introduction.

Unconscious Incompetence to Unconscious Competence

According to O'Connor and Seymour, there are essentially four stages to learning a skill.⁸⁰ By understanding at which stage the student currently is, it will become more apparent what the next goal should be. To get a clearer picture, here is an example using a beginner instrumentalist as the participant.

Table 4: The four stages of learning

| Stage of learning | Action |
|-----------------------------|--|
| 1. Unconscious Incompetence | Learner is unaware that they do not have the knowledge required to play the instrument. |
| 2. Conscious Incompetence | Learner becomes aware that playing the instrument is a skill that must be learned and practiced. |
| 3. Conscious Competence | Learner can play basic melodies, but with much concentration. |
| 4. Unconscious Competence | Learner is able to perform more complex melodies, with greater ease. They have developed greater technical fluency, and are able to focus less on basic instrumental technique, and more on musicality and expression. |

Initially the student is unaware that they cannot complete the task. Once they discover this they have Conscious Incompetence, in which they are aware they will get no closer to their goal unless they can gain competence. The fourth stage, Unconscious Competence, is usually attained through experience – over time, or through repetition. It is acquired unconsciously. The crucial step, as a tutor, is to move students forward from Conscious Incompetence to Conscious Competence. (The very fact that the student is receiving tutoring is the conscious discovery has been made that they are currently incompetent at the task or tasks.) But the course, as a whole, is designed to move students between Conscious Competence and Unconscious Competence – developing and honing the students' skills to become more natural and instinctive. The incongruence

⁸⁰ O'Connor and Seymour, *Introducing NLP*, 7.

between these two realms – the level at which the course is designed, and the level which students needing tutoring require – causes much frustration to students and tutors alike. Because of the wide variety of levels in the classroom, the students who are moving between the second and third stages (in Table 4) are commonly overlooked in favor of those capable of moving between the third and fourth stages. The method of tutoring I have developed that involves NLP is designed to pay attention to identifying even stage one weaknesses, and moving methodically through stages that so that the student is at all times aware and confident of their progress from Unconscious Incompetence to Unconscious Competence.

Criticism of NLP

A small word about some of the criticism directed with at NLP. Direct empirical proof about many of their theories is less important to Bandler and Grinder than the fact that people say that it works. Even if the study of NLP only ends up giving one person a renewed sense of self-awareness, then it has in fact proven a success.

CHAPTER THREE

AN NLP APPROACH TO PRE-MELODIC DICTATION TUTORING

By applying strategies of neuro-linguistic programming to aural skills, I hope to demonstrate that, by matching the right instruction techniques to each individual learner, a teacher can significantly improve a student's capacity to learn and improve. The ability to listen carefully and selectively in music is not easily taught.⁸¹ It is a process-based skill, not a content-based skill. By connecting students with the processes involved in their learning, the aim is to increase students' confidence in their abilities, and thus inspire them to reach ever higher goals. NLP helps to analyze processes, and uses language to demonstrate clearly the goals and results of the analysis.

Central to my NLP-inspired method of one-to-one tutoring, is the assessment of learner type. Once this has been established the tutor is able to tailor discussions around the representational system most favored by the student. This facilitates the strongest connections between stimuli and understanding, enabling the student to learn more quickly and more confidently.

Suitability of NLP

One of the major purposes of NLP is to enable people to understand their internal communication processes in order to facilitate their most resourceful states of mind. It provides a framework from which we can direct our own brain.⁸² I think a common

⁸¹ Charles Hoffer, *Teaching Music in the Secondary Schools* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1964, rev. 1983), 133.

⁸² Robbins, *Unlimited Power: the New Science of Personal Achievement*, 27.

classroom misconception among students is that a teacher will be able to cause the student to learn. The old adage “You can lead a horse to water, but you can’t make it drink” is particularly apt in this case. What a teacher can do, with the assistance of NLP techniques, is assist the student in understanding how their brain performs tasks at its most optimal level, its most resourceful state.

In teaching basic musicianship classes I have discovered that one of my roles in the group classroom is to demonstrate as many different approaches as I can in tackling a task. In completing a melodic dictation exercise I will describe in detail how I would have listened, what my strategy would have been and any difficulties I think I would have encountered when using that strategy. I will ask the class to offer their own approaches, and often there will be a variety. By sharing approaches, students not only develop the skill of communicating their own learning processes, but they are also exposed to what strategies “work” for others students in the classroom, therefore expanding their overall learning experience. The teacher must facilitate these discussions. During one-to-one tutoring it is important that the tutor and student should have an equal voice, the tutor’s viewpoint is no more correct than the student’s. If the student is unsuccessful in their approach, then they should be led towards a better solution, rather than taught the correct answer. This is a shift from teaching a student, to helping the student learn.

By definition NLP is about an individualized approach, individual calibrations.⁸³ Whether these individual strategies are self-originated, or are prompted by listening to or observing a colleague or teacher, is not significant. The person with the greatest number

⁸³ Elston and Spohrer, *Using NLP to Enhance Behavior and Learning*, 2.

of choices is most likely to succeed.⁸⁴ It is a principle central to NLP and should, I believe, be central to teaching.

The purpose of NLP is to provide useful techniques whereby one can help directly and influence change systematically, in oneself and in other people.⁸⁵ A purpose of one-to-one tutoring is to influence change systematically, in the way a pupil understands material being presented in the classroom.

Rapport

Without a doubt, the relationship between teacher and student is central to learning.⁸⁶ Grinder argues that if the relationship is strong and constitutes a stable personal context, not only will the student learn, but they will learn how to learn.⁸⁷ If one does not establish rapport, then the process of teaching becomes significantly more difficult, as you are constantly trying to “reach them.”⁸⁸ Elston and Spohrer suggest that Rapport Reduces Resistance.⁸⁹ It breaks down initial communication barriers, so that the processes of learning can more easily be discussed.

Mastering NLP techniques can present a teacher with a greater number of tools towards building rapport more effortlessly. By being better at understanding unconscious communication, from body language to predicate use, a teacher is better equipped to master conscious communication with their pupil.⁹⁰ We can train ourselves to monitor a

⁸⁴ Ibid., 9.

⁸⁵ Petroski, *Representational Systems in the Neuro-Linguistic Programming Model*, 1.

⁸⁶ Hallam, “Learning in Music,” 69.

⁸⁷ Michael Grinder, *Righting the Educational Conveyor Belt* (Portland, Or: Metamorphosis Press, 1991), Foreword.

⁸⁸ Dilts, *The Structure of Subjective Experience*, 153.

⁸⁹ Elston and Spohrer, *Using NLP to Enhance Behavior and Learning*, 30.

⁹⁰ Spohrer, *Teaching NLP in the Classroom*, 8.

student's unconscious feedback by using our own visual, auditory and kinaesthetic senses to observe their visual, auditory and kinaesthetic responses.⁹¹ Signs of anxiety may include lack of eye contact, an increased breathing rate, a higher pitched tone to their voice, and stiff, closed posture. One of the major causes of anxiety is a fear of "doing badly," or what students perceive this to be. Although basic musicianship is a highly skill orientated class it is still commonly assessed in the same manner as a variety of information-based classes.

Establishing Learner Type

Visual, auditory, and kinaesthetic are also means of defining what type of learner that someone is.⁹² Once this has been established, teaching should be customized to best suit the learner. It is important to not neglect the other learning representational systems, we must encourage our students to be adept at receiving information in every manner, but by recognizing which method is most likely going to allow this particular student to succeed at this particular moment in time we are able to tailor the presentation to suit the student. As teachers, we must be careful that our own learning style does not overly influence the way that we teach. It is important that we expand our horizons and manage some discomfort as we work on previously undeveloped sensory approaches of our own.⁹³

Visual learners have heightened sensitivity to motion, color, shape, and size. They will often use hand motion to demonstrate their point, as this is a way of communicating

⁹¹ Elston and Spohrer, *Using NLP to Enhance Behavior and Learning*, 17.

⁹² D. Annamalay Sundardas, *Awakening the Genius in Your Child: NLP Strategies in Education* (Singapore: SNP Publishing, 1998), 34-37.

⁹³ Sundardas, *Awakening the Genius in Your Child: NLP Strategies in Education*, 38.

that they respond well to. Visual learners will be more adept at reading and identifying intervals, than hearing them.

Auditory learners have a preference for sounds but this does not signify that they will be the strongest in aural skills tasks. The strong connection between auditory learners and language suggests that these students will be able to describe in words the melody that they have heard more accurately than visual or kinaesthetic learners.

Kinaesthetic learners prefer hands on learning. This would appear to be the farthest removed representational system from music, which as I previously stated, exists primarily in the aural domain. It may therefore be important to try and steer the student towards a more auditory based approach.

Superlinks

The study of representational systems in relation to learning style is not exclusive to NLP. Many theories of accelerated learning focus on discovering a learner's best method of receiving information, the method that will subsequently result in the most effective recall. In *How to Learn Anything Quickly* Ricky Linksman refers to this as a "superlink" – a combination of one's best learning style, and the side of the brain used to process and store the information.⁹⁴ The added element of hemispheric preference further refines the superlink, so that each learning style is further divided into left-brain / right-brain categories. Linksman suggests that left-brain learners are process information in a sequential, linear manner, thinking in symbols, words, and numbers, while right-brain learners see a bigger picture, connecting seemingly unrelated ideas, commonly with

⁹⁴ Linksman, *How to Learn Anything Quickly: An Accelerated Program for Rapid Learning* (Secaucus, NJ: Carol Publishing Group, 1996), x.

sensory images rather than words. Not just focusing on visual, auditory, and kinaesthetic learners, Linksman includes an additional learner type, tactile learners. For the purpose of my study I suggest this is highly similar to kinaesthetic learning and will remain focused on three types most commonly discussed in NLP literature – visual, auditory, and kinaesthetic.

Linksman provides an assessment method, in the form of a multiple choice quiz, to identify learning style and another for identifying brain hemispheric preference. I have adapted these two into my own quiz to diagnose learner type (Figure 5).

The Quiz

The ‘Learner type assessment quiz’ is designed to show if patterns in a student’s learning behavior relate to his / her primary representational system – be it, visual, auditory, or kinaesthetic. There are a mix of general questions about learning and musical learning based questions. One would expect that a student would respond with the same learning style across all fields. If not, the student should explore why he / she uses one learning style in one field, and a different one in another.

Figure 5: Learner type assessment quiz

Instructions: Circle the option which is mostly commonly true, or feels the most instinctive in terms of your behavioral patterns. If none of the answers ring true, circle the one which you feel most comfortable with. Circle only one option, and leave no answers blank.

1. You most commonly learn facts by
 - A. reading them in a book.
 - B. being told them by another person.
 - C. finding answers physically, by trial and error.

2. In most of your classes you
 - A. take extensive notes.
 - B. listen carefully to the professor, but write only essential points.
 - C. like to further explore the material following the class.

3. Which physical environment would you be most comfortable to learn in?
 - A. A tidy room.
 - B. A quiet room.
 - C. An interactive classroom.

4. You prefer when the teacher
 - A. writes the solution on the board.
 - B. tells the class the solution.
 - C. explains how to approach the exercise at the same time as revealing the solution.

5. Your favored method for giving a presentation is
 - A. with the aid of a PowerPoint, including key points and diagrams.
 - B. to present all information verbally.
 - C. with practical demonstrations and audience participation.

6. To memorize music you
 - A. spend a lot of time studying the score.
 - B. repeatedly listen to recordings.
 - C. 'program' your muscle memory through repetition.

7. Can you easily learn a tune by ear?
 - A. No, I have to read the pitches.
 - B. Yes, on most occasions.
 - C. I can rarely pick up a tune by ear.

8. When an interval is played you
 - A. try and visualize it on a staff
 - B. often recognize it instantly.
 - C. imagine playing it on your instrument.

9. You perform scales on your instrument by
 - A. imagining a piano keyboard in your head.
 - B. hearing where the minor and major seconds fall.
 - C. knowing fingering patterns associated with each scale.

10. If you could choose only one activity to complete for the next hour it would be to
 - A. read a book.
 - B. listen to music.
 - C. make something using arts and crafts.

The results:

- If you circled mostly answer A then you are a predominantly a visual learner. You learn mostly by seeing things written out for you, or by writing things out yourself.
- If you circled mostly answer B then you are mostly an auditory learner. You learn by listening, either to others or to your own internal thoughts.
- If you circled mostly answer C then you display the qualities of a kinaesthetic learner. You learn best by getting actively involved in the learning process.

It is highly unlikely that someone will have answered the same letter for all 10 questions, but if a significant pattern is evident I suggest that he or she has developed a preference for one particular learning style – the learning style that allows them to assimilate information most rapidly. Although this exact quiz has yet to be tried on students, it is closely modeled on Linksman’s design, and is therefore expected to be successful.

Language clues

The assessment method should not be considered a one-time diagnosis. By listening for the predicates, in a student’s commonly used vocabulary, a tutor is able to understand which representational system the student is using to complete a particular task. Here are some hypothetical examples of students’ responses to a question after a melodic dictation listening; the sensory word or phrase is underlined:

Q: What did you consider during that hearing?

- Visual learner: *A: I was focussing on the third measure.*
 A: I just blanked.
 A: I could see the pattern between the measures.
- Auditory learner: *A: I could hear that it went up again.*
 A: It was clearly a fifth at the end.⁹⁵
 A: I couldn't tell what the rhythm was.
- Kinaesthetic learner: *A: I could feel the pulse strongly.*
 A: I can't put my finger on the big interval.
 A: Next time I need to tackle the pitches.

From here the teacher is able to base further questions either using the same representational system, or, if the student has ceased to make progress through further listenings, by trying to encourage they engage a different representational system on the next listening. Here are some examples of continuing along the same representational system:

First, with visual predicates:

Q: What did you consider during that hearing?

A: I was just focussing on the third measure.

Q: What did you notice in that measure?

A: That it appears to be the same pitches as in the first measure.

Q: Why don't you examine that more closely on the next hearing?

A: Okay.

⁹⁵ Clarity is discerned to be a sign of auditory understanding, according to NLP theories.

And then with kinaesthetic predicates:

Q: What did you consider during that hearing?

A: I can't put my finger on the big interval.

Q: Do you feel it goes higher than the pitch in the previous measure?

A: Yes, I just can't grasp the exact size.

Q: See if you can get a solid handle on that the next time round.

It is important that the opening question put to the student should be neutral, unless specifically trying to lead the student towards a particular representational response.

Examples of neutral questions are:

Q: Did you recognize the final pitch from anywhere else in the melody?

Q: Did you decide to attend to pitch or rhythm first?

Q: What process did you use to come to that understanding of the phrase?

The tutor may wish to lead the student in a particular manner, using a form of the Pacing and Leading discussed earlier. This can be achieved by communicating with the student within their preferred predicates and gradually leading them towards the desired representational system. Below is an example:

Q: Okay John, you have just had two listenings to the dictation exercise. Can you describe your strategy so far?

A: Well, the first time through I just tried to get the shape of the melody, its contour.

Q: And what did you feel was the contour of the melody?

A: I felt it starts at its highest point, gets lower in the middle and something happens in the middle, I'm not sure. But it goes back up again at the end.

Q: Good. So we still need to grasp what happens in the middle, but we have a good hold on the contour at the beginning and the end.

A: Yes.

Q: Great. What about if we talk about the rhythmic elements of the melody? Did you hear anything that caught your attention?

A: I heard that there was some repetition. There was a rhythm that I clearly heard more than once.

Q: Okay, can you tell me about that rhythm. How did it sound?

A: I think it went (demonstrates rhythm).

Q: Good, and do you know exactly where that rhythm occurs in the melody?

A: I think so... but not exactly. I would need to listen again.

Q: So on the next playing I want you to listen for when that rhythm is audible and then be able to tell me on what beat, in which measures it occurs.

The student's initial response was kinaesthetic, the teacher responds (by pacing) using kinaesthetic predicates, then leads the conversation towards more auditory language. The student is able to engage retroactively his / her auditory senses to understand not only what he / she has already heard, but to also to focus on that representational system during the next listening.

When approaching a task such as melodic dictation, a kinaesthetic learner will visually transfer their initial kinaesthetic responses to see the notes as they would appear on a staff. In the hypothetical example with student John above, the kinaesthetic learner was encouraged to consider what he had heard aurally, as well as felt kinaesthetically. The aural information had occurred on his subconscious channel, while he had been using his conscious channel kinaesthetically. Often, under stress, people revert to the representational system they most trust – this may not always be the most suitable system for the task in hand.⁹⁶

⁹⁶ Lewis and Pucelik, *Magic Demystified: A Pragmatic Guide to Communication and Change*, 43.

Learning styles are remarkably fluid. They develop through a combination of nature and nurture. By repeatedly approaching a task one way we strengthen the passageways between stimuli senses and the brain.⁹⁷ This is another factor that supports an individualized learning system, as proposed by my NLP inspired tutoring method.

Removing the ambiguities

Since students are not always direct in their answers, it is important that a tutor is able to help the student remove ambiguities from his / her responses. Here is the same table as was presented in Chapter Two, but now with examples of how ambiguous uses of language are found in students' reactions to a melodic dictation task, along with my suggested responses. Again, they are separated into statement (S) and suggested response (R). These statements are commonly heard in the tutoring of Basic musicianship students.

Table 5: Examples of the twelve types of ambiguity, as they hypothetically may be experienced in a tutoring session

| | |
|-------------------------------|--|
| Unspecified verbs | S: That was really difficult. R: What specifically did you find difficult about it? |
| Comparisons | S: This one was harder. R: What exercise do you think was less challenging for you than this one? |
| Lost performatives | S: This dictation is too challenging for me. R: Who says this exercise is to challenging for you? |
| Unspecified referential index | Q: What did you listen for on that playing? S: It was too fast to get anything. R: What was it you were trying to get? |
| Generalizations | S: Minor key melodies are always much harder. R: What is it about minor melodies that appears harder to you? |

⁹⁷ Linksman, *How to Learn Anything Quickly*, 23.

| | |
|--------------------------------|--|
| Universal quantifiers | S: I can never do minor key melodies. R: Has there ever been a time when you were able to complete an exercise in a minor key? |
| Nominalizations | S: I don't have a description for the melody. R: What makes you unable to describe it? |
| Modal operators of possibility | S: I can't hear the third note. R: What do you need to do differently in order to be able to hear it? |
| Modal operators of necessity | S: I must not write anything down until I've got it all in my head. R: What would happen if you did write something, that later proved to be incorrect? |
| Presuppositions | S: I definitely don't have the rhythm right. R: How do you know you didn't write it correctly? |
| Causal modelling | S: Bass clef makes it much harder. R: Why does writing in bass clef make the exercise more difficult for you? |
| Mind-reading | S: If I can't do this, I will never pass the final. R: How do you know that you won't be able to do this? |

All of these ambiguous statements actually have the affect of limiting the student's behavior. By making these statements the student has already undermined his / her chance to succeed. With consistent questioning, in line with the Meta Model, a student would learn to not choose such ambiguous statements to describe their processes. NLP techniques, when consistently reinforced, have a conditioning effect.

Grading

In scientific studies there are no right and wrong answers, only feedback.⁹⁸ All results are useful and can be used to propel us to succeed.⁹⁹ The tendency in basic musicianship to drill a student with numerous dictation exercises, returned with red pen and a poor grade, does little to offer the student useful feedback. It is important that the

⁹⁸ O'Conner, *Not Pulling Strings*, 123.

⁹⁹ Spohrer, *Teaching NLP in the Classroom*, 38.

student recognizes whenever an improvement occurs, no matter how small. When this acknowledgement is made on a regular basis the student becomes more likely to succeed at the next task.

The purpose of my approach is to encourage students to feel confident in their abilities, gaining an awareness that their knowledge has grown methodically from a strong foundation. Fear and anxiety towards learning produce a lack of confidence, poor confidence leads to poor self-esteem and poor self-esteem leads towards poor learning.¹⁰⁰ When tasks are seen as learning experiences, and not just about getting things “right,” a student will relax into the habit of getting feedback.¹⁰¹

The combination of recognizing learner type, building stronger rapport (than in classroom teaching) and giving positive feedback are the three key components to an NLP-based approach to one-to-one tutoring. All three elements allow the student to grow in confidence; a student is more likely to be receptive to learning from a teacher who makes steps to truly understand them. What the student may be less aware of is that he / she will also be simultaneously understanding more about themselves. With this comes less fear towards unfamiliar tasks. Confidence is extremely important in learning, particularly in basic musicianship, where a positive approach to tasks is highly likely to yield positive results.

¹⁰⁰ Elston and Spohrer, *Using NLP to Enhance Behavior and Learning*, 3.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 6.

CONCLUSION

Good musicians may be defined as those who are able to easily make connections between music and the vocabulary we use to define music, those who can make intuitive and instinctive links between all the elements we hear in music, those who can “think in music.”¹⁰² In order to allow our brain to “think in music”, we must first understand how our brain is functioning, and the processes required to engage our brain in its most resourceful state – in this case, where it is able to think in music. Neuro-Linguistic Programming is a unique tool for understanding processes of receiving information, and using language (removed of ambiguity) to accurately describe these processes. Links between NLP and music instruction have scarcely been made, and yet they seem to have many commonalities.

NLP is the perfect platform with which to complete the paradigm shift from being a teaching-oriented tutor, to becoming a learning-oriented tutor. Teaching-oriented tutors are proactive; they commit to extensive planning, which requires certain assumptions to be made about the way (or at least the timing) in which a student will respond to material. Learning-oriented tutors are reactive; they respond to the way in which the individual student approaches a task, and are able to guide the student towards their individual learning path. Since NLP is process based, it shares much with a learning-oriented approach.

¹⁰² Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music, *Raising an Amazing Musician: You, Your Child and Music* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1999), 3.

For NLP to work it needs to become part of the daily life of the teacher and eventually of the student.¹⁰³ This can be achieved through repetition and reinforcement of the principles, and by making the conscious effort to incorporate its practices into every aspect of the tutoring process. The tutor must have faith in the method, and the NLP techniques it is based on, in order to guide the student towards gaining confidence in the method. Just as a performing musician trusts his / her hours of labor of fundamentals and routines in the practice room to support them through a performance, a student of the NLP one-to-one tutoring approach must trust that his / her learning has been completed in such a structured and systematic manner that they will be successful at whatever exercise they undertake.

One problem with this study is that Neuro-Linguistic Programming has no definitive guidelines or official practices. Bandler and Grinder set out their initial theories under the guise of Magic and in the intervening years have moved in separate professional directions. Of all the NLP literature that exists, much is written by Practitioners – people who have bought into the NLP training courses, and now make their living from selling its theories and techniques to other people. Scientific studies trying to prove or disprove specific NLP practices, such as Petroski's study of eye movement and representational systems, have shown that there is insufficient evidence to support most of Bandler and Grinder's claims.¹⁰⁴

Since this study has been of a hypothetical nature, it will become yet another addition to the unproven theories of NLP supporting education. However, a human

¹⁰³ Spohrer, *Teaching NLP in the classroom*, Foreword.

¹⁰⁴ Petroski, *Representational Systems in the Neuro-Linguistic Programming Model* (Ph.D. Thesis, Kent State University, 1985).

subject study of this method is very much within reach. It would require a freshmen musicianship class, a number of students to receive one-to-one tutoring all from the same tutor, and some students not receiving any tutoring outside of the classroom (the control group). Of the students being tutored, a number would be given the learner-type assessment quiz, and then be taught according to their primary representational system learner style. When difficulties arise, the tutor and student would work at discovering which layer in his / her wall (of knowledge) is damaged, and therefore undermining the structure of knowledge as a whole. From here they will redevelop the foundation of the wall so that there are no structural weakness or points of unease. The remainder of the students would receive the “traditional” approach to tutoring – most commonly, repetitive drilling of the material being covered in class. At the end of the designated period of study, I would expect the results to show an increase in both attainment and confidence in the students receiving the NLP-based tutoring method. The other two groups (control, and traditional tutoring) might show some improvement, but not to the same degree.

On the other hand, rather than requiring an NLP-based method of tutoring I propose educators could look closer at curricula issues at high school, and the possibility of more rigorous entrance tests for freshmen. This would, I believe, significantly reduce the number of students with ‘damaged walls’ during freshmen basic musicianship classes. Another solution would be to use a form of the learner-type assessment quiz before the start of the first semester, and then separate the different types of learners into classes so that each class can be taught in accordance with their current ability and his / her preferred learning style. This is some sort of compromise between the present system of

no assessment based placement, and the NLP-based tutoring technique. The drawback would be that this approach implies that learning styles are rigid, which they are not.

I hope this study has succeeded in showing the positive benefits NLP techniques can have on the development of young musicians. As well as breaking down the learning process to become more individual-orientated, it aims to propose a method that will leave students more confident in their abilities, and ready to face the next musicianship challenge that they encounter.

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