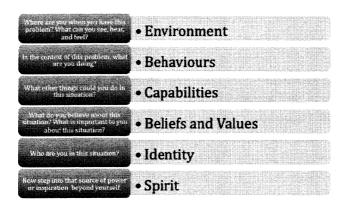# Applying Dilts' Model of Logical Levels to Language Learning

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In this short paper, I would like to present Robert Dilts' model of Logical Levels and briefly explore how it may be useful in conceptualizing and facilitating language learning.

1. Introduction

In this short paper, I would like to present Robert Dilts' model of Logical Levels and briefly explore how it may be useful in conceptualizing and facilitating language learning. The six steps of Dilts' model of Logical Levels are shown in the chart below.

The model of Logical Levels was initially developed for therapists (see Dilts, 1998) and was shown to act as a powerful tool to help patients

to improve general mental health or to find a solution to a problem or situation with which they were having trouble coping. Dilts and others have used the model in therapeutic situations to help patients to overcome insomnia, addictions, and other disorders. Dilts has also developed the model for use in business consultancy and leadership training seminars (Dilts, 1996).

Dilts' model is not without its critics. For example, Grinder (2001) questions the rationale of the model on the grounds that there is not necessarily a clear logical relationship between the levels if "logical" is understood in the mathematical sense of each level being completely inclusive of all the items in the levels below it. Furthermore, Grinder also criticizes the use of terms such as "Identity" and "Beliefs," noting that they are nominalizations which may convey entirely different meanings to different people. These criticisms will be further examined in future research, but for the purposes of the current paper, Dilts' model is being considered without regard for these shortcomings.

2. Using the Model in Therapy

When using the model to solve a specific problem, the therapist literally walks the patient through the model by taking five physical steps across a room in which each step takes the patient to a higher level. So for example, beginning at the Environment level, the first step takes the patient from Environment to Behaviours, and the next step takes the patient onto Capabilities.

At each level, the patient is asked to imagine completely stepping into the problem situation. The therapist then asks a question corresponding to that level (some examples are shown in the figure above), and the patient can answer the question, either to the therapist or just within his or her own mind. After Capabilities, the patient steps through Beliefs and Values, Identity and onto the final level, called Spirit in Dilts model. Depending on the belief systems of the patient, this can be explained as God, the infinite

power of the universe, the possible support of a wider community, or the power of the unconscious mind.

When the patient has walked through all of the steps, the therapist then guides him or her back through the levels one by one, maintaining the new learnings and perspective that were achieved at the higher levels. For example, as the patient steps back from Spirit to Identity, the therapist can say "Maintaining that feeling of infinite power and love, step back into Identity, and notice how this changes who you are in that situation," followed by "Maintaining that feeling of infinite power and the new sense of identity that you have achieved, step back and notice how this changes your beliefs and values about that situation that used to be a problem." In this way, the patient is able to use resources from a higher level to bring positive change at lower levels.

3. Possible Application of the Model to Language Learning

The purpose of this short paper is to speculate whether Dilts model of Logical Levels could provide useful insight into learning a language and possibly even be used directly with language learners to allow them to develop beliefs, values, and identities that could help them to learn more efficiently.

It is clear that most of the levels of Dilts model can be applied directly to language learning. For example, if we imagine a typical Japanese female university student, she could learn a language in the Environment of a university classroom, in an English conversation school, at home using CDs, and considering it on a more macro-level – in her own country or in a foreign country. Her Behaviours could be primarily passive (e.g. listening to a teacher's grammar explanations) or active (e.g. deliberately seeking out opportunities to interact with speakers of English). These Behaviours are dependent on her perceived Capabilities. For example, if she is not aware that she can learn English effectively through listening to English songs, she will not carry out this Behaviour. At a higher level,

these Capabilities are controlled by her Beliefs and Values. If she believes that English can be used effectively, for example by being exposed to near-peer role models (Murphey, 2001), then this belief will support her capabilities. Similarly, if she values English as an important communication tool that may enhance her future career, this positive value will support her efforts and encourage Behaviours that help her to learn efficiently. Going one step further up to Identity, if she sees herself as only "Japanese," this may inhibit her from developing positive beliefs and values. On the other hand, if she sees herself as a person who can play an active role internationally as well as within Japan, this identity is much more likely to support language learning. At the highest level, Spirit is a rather new-age term that may not seem directly applicable, but if we stress the value of communication with a wide community of people internationally, perhaps through the Internet, it is possible to use the concept of Spirit effectively when we talk about language learning.

4. A Brief Personal History of Language Learning

To give the reader a more concrete example of the model applied to language learning, I have summarized my own experience in learning two languages, Irish and Japanese, in the table below.

   As can be seen, the higher levels of the model, particular at the levels of Beliefs, Values, and Identity were much more positive for my learning of Japanese than for Irish and this influenced the lower levels strongly. For Irish, it is sad to report, but my identity never required a fluency in the language. While the Irish government made a strong effort to encourage Irish learning through a suitable environment such as the classroom and special Irish homestay programs, it did not succeed in developing a strong link between Irish identity and learning the Irish language.

Logical Level	Irish	Japanese
Environment	Classroom	Classroom, home study, work environment, daily social interaction with Japanese native speakers.
Behaviours	Learning grammar and vocabulary from textbooks with a primary focus on the written language. Occasional listening and speaking practice.	Learning grammar and vocabulary from textbooks. Learning to read for practical work purposes. Deliberate social interaction with native speakers.
Capabilities	Listen to teacher; study textbook.	Learn from textbooks and teachers, as well as able to learn from everyday interactions.
Beliefs and Values	My teacher uses little Irish in the classroom, so it is not important. Irish is a "dead" language that is not useful.	Japanese is essential for living effectively and happily in Japan. I can learn it quickly because I am exposed to it everyday.
Identity	I am a modern Irish person who uses only English in his life.	I am a foreigner living in Japan and to live harmoniously in society requires a strong command of Japanese.
Spirit	I have no connection with a genuine Irish-speaking community.	Living in Japan is to be immersed in a vibrant Japanese-speaking community that enriches my life.

5. Future Research

In the next few months, I plan to interview students using Dilts model of Logical Levels and to use it to identify ways in which language learning and language could be more effectively achieved.

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