

## Cambs NLP Practice Group – Milton Language – 24<sup>th</sup> January 2008

*Note: I have used various web sources for the information contained in this document.  
The Milton Language patterns information is supplied with kind permission of Alan Jones,  
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### The Milton Model

Milton Hyland Erickson, MD was an American psychiatrist in the 20<sup>th</sup> C specializing in medical hypnosis and family therapy. He was an extremely important influence in the development of clinical hypnosis and psychopathology. Erickson made extensive use of metaphor and story in his therapy, and believed that the unconscious mind was essentially self-generating and positive. His life work was focused on utilising anything about a patient that could help them change; their beliefs and values, their favourite modes of expression, their history, their habits and so on. He developed the clinical use of language in a non-specific and conceptual way, to subtly influence his patients in a way that distracted the conscious mind, and encouraged their unconscious mind to explore ideas.

In the early days of NLP, his use of language was modelled by Richard Bandler and John Grinder. They found that Erickson was using the language patterns of the Meta Model, but in reverse. He was also using patterns that they had not identified in the Meta Model. Some of the main things they learnt from Erickson were the importance of establishing rapport, pacing and leading, as well as documenting and categorizing some of Erickson's use of language. These language patterns are in use today in Ericksonian Hypnosis.

Before looking at the names and examples of Milton Model Language I would like to point out that you may also find other patterns in the example given in each category. It's difficult to restrict yourself completely to using only one pattern in a sentence, isn't it? And when you find yourself noticing other patterns within patterns, will you be pleased or just surprised? By changing voice tonality, all, or nearly all patterns can include an imbedded command. An imbedded command is a command which is disguised in the sentence spoken, so it doesn't appear as a command but more like a choice, e.g. "Would you like to **do the washing up** now or in the morning?". The command is "do the washing up", but the sentence gives a choice of when to do it, which takes away the emphasis on the command. There is no doubt that the person will have to wash up, it is just a matter of when!

The main precepts of the Milton Model are described below.

### NLP Milton Model language patterns

#### 1. Ambiguities

Words or phrases that are ambiguous: "Hypnotizing hypnotists can be tricky."

"I wonder if your right arm will relax more than your left so your left arm gets left behind. Or will your left arm be the right one to relax, more than the right. So that the one left is the right one?"

#### 2. Cause and Effect: A causes B

"I'm crap at working with numbers, so that (means) I'll probably fail my Maths test."

*The word "means" is omitted though it could easily have been left in.*

### 3. Comparative Deletions

Statements that make a comparison but do not specify what the comparison is.

“You could learn more about hypnotic language on this course than any other you might have gone on.”

“The best hypnotherapist in the world gains conscious and unconscious rapport using NLP skills whether they know it or not.”

### 4. Complex Equivalent

Statements that attribute a cause and effect, where there is none.

“Now that you’re here, you’ll learn well”.

“I don’t like milk, so I must be allergic to dairy products”.

### 5. Conversational Postulate

Questions that could be answered as either yes or no, but when taken literally, act as a command. Young people catch on to this very quickly and often answer .. ‘...yes I can, or could if I wanted to.”

e.g. “Can you shut the door?”, “Would you bring in the washing?”

### 6. Double Binds

A question that appears to give choice but that actually presupposes something.

In the example below the choice is which story, however, “go to bed” is presupposed.

- “Would you like to read this story about Goldilocks, or that one about Red Riding Hood, before you *go to bed*?”

- “You can have five minutes on the trampoline, or on the swing, before you *come in for dinner*”.

- “Will 4.00 p.m. or 5.00 p.m. be better for you *on Tuesday*?”

### 7. Embedded (also known as Imbedded) Commands

These are phrases or words that are marked out as a command in a sentence. You can mark them by change of voice tone.

“And would you prefer to have hot chocolate or cocoa before *you go to bed*?” (*also a double bind*)

“When you put the cat out, could you please *close the door behind you*?”

### 8. Extended Quotes

Where, in telling a story, you bring in something that someone else said.

A woman in the street just came up to me and said, “I think what you’re doing is totally unreasonable. I don’t know how you can live with yourself!” Great for being rude to someone indirectly, as you can attribute the quote to the person in the story!

### 9. Lack of Referential Index

Is where the person or thing, who/that does or receives the action of a verb, is missing. This, that and it are examples of lack of referential index.

“It’s important that you allow language patterns to develop in their own way.”

### 10. Lost Performative

The speaker or originator is lost. "It's good to relax." According to whom?

### 11. Mind Reading

Claiming to know what is going on in someone's mind

"And I know you are wondering what changes you can make."

### 12. Modal Operators

Words that suggest something is, or is not, possible. These words often define the edge of a person's model or their beliefs and identity. "Someone from my background and upbringing should not have those thoughts."

Modal Operators have two forms, that of Necessity/Impossibility and that of Possibility.  
*You can also recognise these as a Meta Program.*

**Necessity:** have to, must, got to, should, ought, suppose to, need to, can't do, would not

**Possibility:** could, can, would, try, might, allow, choose,

Possibility words and phrases are more *permissive*; and you could allow yourself to use as many as you can think of, "And you *could choose* to *allow* yourself to relax now or you *might* let it happen all by itself."

Necessity; "You may think that you are *supposed to* do something to relax, isn't it nice to know you don't *have to* do anything, you can just let it happen all by itself."

"You don't have to become familiar with all the names of the various patterns but it will help your understanding if you recognize the patterns, won't it?"

### 13. Nominalizations

Where a process has been frozen into an abstract noun.

*Educating*, becomes *education*

*Exciting* becomes *excitement*

*Relaxing* becomes *relaxation*

*Being happy* becomes *happiness*

*Being afraid* becomes *fear*

*Relating* becomes *relationship*.

### 14. Pacing Current Experience

Any comment of what is seen or heard by you.

Colleague sighs, ... "that's a deep sigh, and so I'm wondering if you're tired?"

### 15. Presuppositions

Every sentence in the English language presupposes something. There are thirteen categories of presupposition. Feel free to look them up!

"The cat sat on the mat" presupposes that there is both a cat and a mat, and that it was not sitting to start with.

### 16. Selectional Restriction Violation

Giving animals and things human qualities.

"And the chair feels relaxed." "And plants can have feelings just like a person."

“My cat was sad today”

### 17. Tag Questions

A question added to the end of a statement

“.. won't you?” “.. haven't you?” “.. you could, couldn't you?” “.. you do, don't you?”

“You have made changes in the past, and so you know now how easy it is for you to change, don't you?”

### 18. Unspecified Verbs

Verbs that do not have a phrase that describes how, or what action, takes or took place.

“People can learn to make changes quickly and easily if they want to.”

How do they learn? What changes?

### 19. Universal Quantifiers

Words that state or imply absolute conditions - all, every, never, always, everyone, nobody, everybody.

e.g. “Everybody finds that, as they start to relax, their breathing pattern changes.”

### 20. Utilization

Hypnotists use this technique, using any and everything that occurs during trance work.

Sound of an aeroplane, “And it's plane to see that you are relaxing, changing etc.”

Client cries in trance, “And those tears are a physical sign that things are been washed away and a cleansing is taking place.”

Client smiles, “It's good to smile when you're in trance.”