



Coaching resources from www.bobski.com

The “4-Tuple” model of consciousness, applied to ski coaching.

PART II

[This technical note expands on Part I and begins an investigation into language representation of experience]

If you have not already read Part I of these “4-tuple” papers, you are strongly recommended to do so before continuing.

One of the many problems in ski teaching, and a key reason for so much ski teaching being so ineffective, is the plethora of bad language that is used. I am not referring here to the cursing that follows a crash into the powder; I am referring to the very many ill-chosen words used by a high proportion of ski instructors and other teachers.

Just as “the map is not the territory”, so the word is not the experience. In order to make sense of our experiences, and also to attempt to communicate them to others, we use language - words. However, even a brief consideration of part 1 of these papers will render it obvious that every human being experiences the world in a unique way. Even apparently very similar experiences, say the same ski run done at the same time, will be very different experiences for each individual who does it. Yet the same *words*

may be used in an attempt to describe the experience. If everyone really enjoyed it, all may say the run was “exciting”, but the word may imply considerable stress for one skier, and nothing but mindless “yee-ha” for another.

So in order for your words as an instructor or even a coach to be of real use for your client, you need to give some consideration to what the key words may mean for them, and this brings in the concept of **Complex Equivalence**.

Complex Equivalence is the term given in Neuro Linguistic Programming to the relationship between the experience itself $\langle V, K, A_t, O \rangle$ and the language used to represent it. [A_t here represent audio-tonal inputs, i.e. “sounds. This language is expressed as A_d . This stands for “Audio Digital”, or language. This operator, associated with the 4-tuple, is an indicator of the experience which is summed-up by the word. In this regard it is important to recognise that a word is simply a *label*, it has no meaning of its own, and only acquires meaning in so far as it accesses a past experience for the user or the listener. Since the experiences associated with it are constrained to be different experiences, then the meanings of the word are constrained to be

different for each individual - at least until some agreement is reached, however tacitly, between them as to what it is going to mean.

Expressed in “4-tuple” nomenclature it appears thus - $A_d \langle V, K, A_t, O \rangle$, and here is an example of a possible represented experience using the oft-employed and much overworked word “edge”.

A_d {edge} $\langle V$ {the picture that comes into the client’s mind when the word is employed}, K {the feelings associated with that image which could anything from the soreness of a cut finger, to a stabbing fear felt when on the edge of a cliff}, A_t {the sound of cutting perhaps, or perhaps the hissing of a ski in the snow}, O {In this instance this will probably be a null value, but in a bad instance it could be the smell of blood!} \rangle

Fortunately, many of the words we employ in our communications are not contentious, in so far as they often represent quite similar experiences, were this not the case then daily communication would indeed be extremely difficult. But when *teaching* especially when teaching skiing which is a risk sport and associated often with quite high levels of stress, we must not take lightly our responsibility to question and to consistently question our choice of words. In instances (and teaching is suffused with them) where a word - only a *label* remember - is so likely to access experiences from a very wide and varied spectrum then use of an inappropri-

ate word is likely to cause not just confusion but quite possibly a damaging perception.

Imagine when as a child you first saw the colour red, and your parents pointed to it in your learning book and said “that’s red”. Simple enough, and fortunately repeated by millions of other parents to millions of other children. What fun might have been had if yours had pointed to the colour red, and said “that’s blue”! Such confusions are not the stuff of nightmares, they are oft the stuff of ski teaching!

Now consider a client who comes to you and expresses the desire for you to help them “ski with more *control*”. Because the use of words accesses experiences for **all** of us, your own mind will immediately seek out a complex equivalence for the word “control”. **But you have no way at all of knowing how closely *your* link equates with *theirs*.** Until you find ways to access the experience *they* seek (and words alone are likely to be a very poor methodology for doing this), you will not be able to help them in their search, except by luck. And nobody is that lucky. You will need to begin to understand the wanted experience in their terms of V.K.A.and O.

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