

Linguistics of Hypnotism – an expansion on the subject

by

Dennis K. Chong and Jennifer Smith Chong ©

**Before you can do anything well, you will
have to have some knowledge of what you
do.**

Ormand McGill: *The New Encyclopedia of Stage Hypnotism*
Crown House Publishing Limited, page 9.

We believe that at some logical level, this ‘**some knowledge**’ that Ormand McGill refers to concerns the knowledge about the Linguistics of Hypnotismⁱ.

At the very heart of Hypnotism, stage or clinical, is the use and the application of linguistics. Whilst it is true that you can analogically induce a trance, it also remains true that unless you can speak, you cannot truly do Hypnotism across its full scope. You have to be able to articulate language to really do Hypnotism well.

As a result, in our recent presentation at the 2006 Annual Conference of the National Guild of Hypnotists, we told the registrants that one of the premier goals of the Guild is to ensure that its accredited graduates are the best that are taught anywhere in the world. It is clear that for this to be true, all its graduates must have ‘**some knowledge**’ about the Linguistics of Hypnotism.

**The Linguistics of Hypnotism is
unquestionably linked to what Hypnotism
is all about.**

However, before we can examine the Linguistics of Hypnotism, we have to explore what Hypnotism is about? In doing so, we acknowledge that there are other understandings about what Hypnotism is. Respectfully, we present here one way of looking at it. To do so, we have to introduce the concept of well-formedness and ill-formednessⁱⁱ.

If a person has sight he will be able to see an object in space. However, if he is blind, he cannot do so. We say that the former condition is well-formed and the latter is ill-formed. Now, in Hypnotism it is possible to suggest to a person that he cannot see. In such a contingency, by the logic that is proffered here, then an ill-formed condition has been elicited. To flee in fear when a person comes at you with a knife is well-formed. To remain *in situ* and offer oneself to his/her knife is not well formed. And this happens in surgical hypnoanaesthesia. To feel pain when a knife cuts into a person is well-formed. To feel no pain when a knife cuts into a person is ill-formed. Hypnotism can get this for a person. To consent and allow the knife wielder to continue cutting is not well-formed. Yet this happens in Hypnotism. To sit with fine social poise before a group of people is well-formed. To quack like a duck in front of them, even as part of a Hypnotism stage

show is not well-formed. To know that gas does not escape from your navel is well-formed. To believe that gas is blowing out from your belly button is ill-formed. This happens in a Hypnotism stage show. To be aware of an itch at some part of a person's body, now and then, is well-formed. A person can feel an itch uncontrollably at one site or over all his body in certain medical conditions. This is well-formed. When it is induced in Hypnotism it would be considered ill-formed.

This then is the distinction:

1. a response or action is well-formed when a culture or a society determines that it is appropriate-to-context.
2. a response or action is ill-formed when a culture or a society determines that it is inappropriate-to-context.

The shift from a state of “normalcy” to a hypnotic state is a shift from the potential for well-formed behaviour to one for ill-formed behaviour. The Hypnotist evinces this transit.

Now logically, well-formed linguistics would determine well-formed responses and actions. Ill-formed linguistics will determine ill-formed responses and actions. The question now is, “How does the ill-formed linguistics of Hypnotism work in Clinical Hypnotismⁱⁱⁱ?”

Now, let us consider this example of linguistics:

Go and kill Dennis Chong!

Indeed, the linguistics of this utterance is extremely ill-formed; it would fall into the category of criminal incitement. In life, when such a sentence is said to another, he might carry it out. The evidence for this is reflected in the papers of various court trials. Ill-formed linguistics, in life, works; and it does so in Hypnotism. This being so, it raises the question about the part played by the subconscious or unconscious^{iv} in people's lives.

What is the role of the Linguistics of Hypnotism? It is to shift the response by a person, from the potential for:

well-formedness → ill-formedness.

What is the structure of the Linguistics of Hypnotism that can bring this about?

Whatever it is, the linguistics has to be concordantly ill-formed in its structure to evince a correspondingly ill-formed response and action.

From our research we now know that the Linguistics of Hypnotism consists of:

1. the Aristotelian linguistic system of Cause and Effect.

In 1933, in his seminal work *Science and Sanity*, Alfred Korzybski, the father of General Semantics indexed the Aristotelian linguistic system as “unsane”. In 1975, Richard Bandler and John Grinder in their foundational work to the field of Neuro-Linguistic Programming, *Structure of Magic*, confirmed Korzybski's finding by describing that the linguistic system of Cause and Effect is semantically ill-formed. To describe Cause and Effect in this way is to say that if a person uses this system then the system will determine for him/her meaning that will be warped, bent, twisted, gnarled and perverted. Alas, he and everyone will have no awareness of this because everyone is adapted, habituated and accommodated to it and its consequences. To put it in another

way, when we are all mesa to a system we shall have no awareness of its derivatives. In 1991, in the work, *Don't Ask WHY?!*, the authors, mapped out the entire linguistic sub-systems that comprised the Aristotelian Linguistic system of Cause and Effect

The Aristotelian Linguistics system of Cause and Effect is **universal**. Therefore, currently it is an integral part of our spoken word, known in Linguistics as Natural Language.

Therefore, with unconscious ease, fluency and automaticity we have used the Aristotelian Linguistic system of Cause and Effect in Hypnotism^v to secure trance and the incredible but ill-formed phenomena of trance in stage work. Those of us who have attended the stage performances by the Hypnotic artists at the Annual Conferences of the National Guild of Hypnotists will bear witness to this.

2. the inversion of the formats of the Modified Meta Model of Neuro-Semantic Programming.

It is necessary to invert the above formats because to use them as they are will entail well-formedness in response and action in a person. However when they are inverted they will compel an altered state of ill-formedness in response and action in a subject.

We now know that normally we do not use the formats of the Modified Meta Model. We use its inverted forms and as a result the verbs in our sentences are invariably incompletely specified; we freely use our modal linguistic operators and as a result we are invariably imposing our expectations on others; we are fuzzy in the way we quantify things and as a result we are inexact in what we say; we consistently simplify the complexity of things resulting in mismatches between our conclusions and actuality.

We now know that top stage hypnotist use this kind of linguistics.

The original Meta Model was delineated in *Structure of Magic*. However, all its linguistic formats were constructed within the Aristotelian Linguistic system. As a result, it became contaminated with the intrinsic ill-formedness of the Aristotelian system. Therefore, it was critical to extract it from the Aristotelian system and reconfigure it in the linguistics of Non-Aristotelian system. It was also critical to supplement it with subsets of linguistic formats that were missed in its original form. As a result, it was renamed the Modified Meta Model.

3. the inversion of the linguistics of Non-Aristotelian system^{vi}.

Under normal conditions, the linguistics of the Non-Aristotelian system will evince well-formed responses and actions in a person.

Therefore, when a hypnotist inverts the linguistics of the Non-Aristotelian system on a person he will evince ill-formed responses and actions in a person provided he is already in trance.

In *Science and Sanity*, Korzybski, in a frank and robust way admitted that he failed to uncover the linguistics of the Aristotelian system. This was finally achieved and published in 1992 in the work, *Power and Elegance in Communication*, PEOPLE, PARADIGMS AND PARADOXES.

4. the linguistics of Informal Logic.

Formal logicians had known for a very long time that the rigour and semantic well-formedness of Formal Logic simply had no utilitarian function in life with the single exception of syllogisms. They were finally forced to examine the form and manner of the logic used by the ordinary Joe - the representative in a State House, or in Congress or Senate or in the Upper and Lower Houses of Parliament, the plumber, the butcher, the fishmonger, the lawyer, the doctor, the nurse, the housewife, the bartender and so forth.

From their research unfolded the whole field of the linguistics of Informal Logic.

Since it is ill-formed (as in contradistinction to the rigour and well-formedness of Formal Logic), and it is a part of Natural Language, hypnotists have been using it with fluency and ease in an unconscious way in their work regardless of whether it is in a clinical or stage setting.

In summary, we can say that every student of Hypnotism has already in place these critical components of the Linguistics of Hypnotism derived from their Natural Language:

1. Aristotelian linguistic system of Cause and Effect
2. the linguistic inversions of the Modified Meta Model
3. the linguistics of Informal Logic

As it turns out, the above three categories comprise seventy five per cent of Natural Language. This is enough to do Clinical and Stage Hypnotism. However, there is a missing twenty five per cent of the Linguistics of Hypnotism. It is this missing portion that is in part the mother for the forewarning that Ormand McGill cited:

Just keep this in mind that a good hypnotist might possibly try ten persons and not hypnotize one of them for a variety of reasons depending on the situation.

Ormand McGill: *The New Encyclopedia of Stage Hypnotism* Crown House Publishing Limited, page 9.

This failure can only be explicated in this manner. Those ten are unique like everyone else. And for them, trance can only be achieved by and through the missing Linguistics of Hypnotism that is indexed here.

Ormand McGill was a master of his art and in our view, he was an intuitive master of the Linguistics of Hypnotism. The problem is of course whether Ormand McGill was able to teach what he intuitively knew. Based on the quote we cite below, we conclude that there is a possibility that he probably was not able to:

To effect change is one thing; to communicate *about* this change is something else: above all, a problem of correct logical typing and of creating an adequate metalanguage. In psychotherapeutic research, it is very common to find that particularly gifted and intuitive therapists think they know why they are doing what they are doing, but their explanations simply do not hold water. Conversely, many gifted writers are astounded and even annoyed at the deeper meanings that others read into their works. Thus, while the former believe

they know, but apparently do not, the latter seem to know more than they are willing to acknowledge - which brings us back to Laing: “If I don’t know I don’t know, I think I know; if I don’t know I know, I think I don’t know.”

Paul Watzlawick, John Weakland and Richard Fisch: *CHANGE* Principles of Problem Formation and Problem Resolution W. W. Norton & Company Inc. 1974 p79.

To put this in another way, we are never aware of what we are meta to. It is only when we are meta to a domain, can we ever talk about it and teach about it.

We therefore say, that to be a master of Hypnotism:

**Before you can learn to do anything well,
you will have to have some knowledge of
what you do.**

Ormand McGill: *The New Encyclopedia of Stage Hypnotism* Crown House Publishing Limited, page 9.

It is therefore, critical that the Linguistics of Hypnotism is to be part of the curriculum of accrediting students.

Endnotes:

ⁱ **The Linguistics of Hypnotism as discussed here is of course only a part of a much larger view of language in our lives:**

We human beings are human beings only in language. Because we have language, there is no limit to what we can describe, imagine, and relate. It thus permeates our whole ontogeny as individuals: from walking to politics.

Humberto R. Maturana & Francisco J. Varela: *The Tree of Knowledge* The Biological Roots of Human Understanding Shambhala Publications, Inc. 1987 page212.

ⁱⁱ **well-formedness and ill-formedness** of a thing has no links to connotations about whether it is right and wrong or good and evil; they are about the semantic form of the thing and hence whether its form fits or not.

ⁱⁱⁱ **Clinical Hypnotism:**

The linguistics in Clinical Hypnotism may be well-formed to secure the conversion of the ill-formed problem state into its well-formed analog.

However, the linguistics can also be ill-formed since two negatives by virtue of its oppositional effects can neutralize the ill-formed problem condition.

^{iv} **the part played by the subconscious or unconscious in our lives:**

There is a claim that is subscribed to a large number of hypnotists that the subconscious or the unconscious is protective over a person. We hold the view that there is no evidence to support this. Where is the protective function of the subconscious or unconscious for the person who cannot stop his smoking, alcoholism, wife abusing and so forth. There is the famous case of the hypnotist who dehypnotized the patient that he would awaken as if a million volts of electricity coursed to him when he counted to five. Given the known fact that in Hypnotism the subject accepts things literally . . .

Then there is the case cited in Ormand McGill's work on *the Encyclopedia of Hypnotism* of the case of a young man undergoing a fraternity initiation. The point comes when he is told that his head will be cut off. He head is now on the block. It is only a wet towel that is flicked at the neck. He dies from heart failure. So, where was the protective function of the subconscious or unconscious mind?

^v **Therefore, with unconscious ease, fluency and automaticity we have used the Aristotelian Linguistic system of Cause and Effect in Hypnotism:**

It is excellent that we have been able to do this. However, we have done it only at an intuitive level and in an instinctive way. In other words, we have articulated our wording in Hypnotism by winging it. It is not likely that, unless we have been taught the entire linguistics of this system and all its sub-sets that we were able to deliberately plan with forethought our wording and why we would choose the words we say. And, if we wing it, sometimes we can fall flat on our face because to wing things is can be very chancy.

^{vi} **Linguistics of the Non-Aristotelian system:**

This paper does not allow us to detail the linguistics of this or any of the other systems cited here. However they can be found in the References.

References

Alfred Korzybski: *Science and Sanity* The International Non-Aristotelian Library Publishing Company, 1933

Dennis K Chong & Jennifer K. Smith Chong: Don't Ask WHY?! C-Jade Publications Inc., 1991

Dennis K. Chong & Jennifer K. Smith Chong: *Power and Elegance in Communication*, People Paradigms and Paradoxes, C-Jade Publications Inc., 1993

Dennis K. Chong & Jennifer K. Smith Chong: *Manual of Power Seminar, Part II*, C-Jade Publications Inc., 2006

Paul Watzlawick, John Weakland and Richard Fisch: *CHANGE* Principles of Problem Formation and Problem Resolution W. W. Norton & Company Inc.

Richard Bandler & John Grinder: *The Structure of Magic* Science and Behaviour Books Inc., 1975