

# IMPROVE YOUR MINDSET IMPROVE YOUR LANGUAGE

## THESIS

By

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This thesis highlights reasons why sometimes we react negatively in certain circumstances and what we can do to change that. It also covers how we use some “stealth” negative language without even realising it and what alternatives we can use.

I have spent the last 8 years learning and understanding how the brain works, getting to grips with how we can take control of some of the reactions we have and learning tools to not only help myself but to help others too. I now work as a professional hypnotherapist helping clients to deal with fears, phobias, PTSD and any other automatic reactions to events.

During my time learning these skills I have also managed to change much of my own language when I teach Taekwon-Do as we tend to use a lot of negative words unintentionally which when used regularly enough can start chipping away at our students confidence and self-belief and can eventually deflate them. Now some students will interestingly react positively to negative language (as if it's a challenge) and it's important to recognise when that happens as these students can be pushed, however it's not the same across the board with every student.

As instructors we must have tools to deal with all personalities which is generally based on the students upbringing and the environment they are surrounded in, as Taekwon-Do professionals we must treat each student as an individual. From an instructors' perspective, what may be well intentioned encouraging words to one student may be experienced as bullying behaviour by another, as the student feels picked on and compounds their own thoughts that they are not good enough.

This thesis covers common negative language patterns that many of us use daily, by simply changing a few words it's possible to get the same message across and change their reaction from possibly one of feeling deflated to one of possibility.

Having implemented these changes in my class it has helped to elevate the mentality of the club and also bring the students together as a strong unit.

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# INTRODUCTION

Since 2015 I have been studying about the power of our mind, on this journey I have learnt about gratitude, acceptance and forgiveness. Areas where up until 2015 I had struggled to fully understand, this in turn affected both my professional and personal life.

I have always been a positive minded person and used visualisation many times whilst competing and umpiring to train my brain into creating positive habits that I wanted to make automatic behaviours. However, I still allowed negative events and comments people said to influence how I felt which could result ultimately in my negative thoughts and reactions, this is called “cause and effect”.



Through my study I began to understand that many of the stimuli that were influencing my negative thoughts were based on my reaction to the language I was hearing from others and in some cases my own self-talk rather than the individual themselves. This led me to study further into language patterns and how we subconsciously deal with a suggestion be it a direct or indirect one, if said whether with the intention to harm or not.

I learnt how to meditate and enrolled in a Mindfulness course, eventually leading me to become a mindset coach and teacher of various meditation techniques. During the lockdown of 2020 I ran regular Mindfulness and Meditation sessions for 3 months online helping many people through an extremely challenging time in their lives where everyone felt disconnected through the pandemic whilst being locked down in their homes.

In 2017 I enrolled in a year-long course of study to become a Hypnotherapist at Brighton University in Sussex, this opened me up to a new realm of understanding in how our unconscious mind works, leading me to discover new ways of listening and conversing to create positive influence with those around me. From my studies I have learnt that if there is a point that I would like to get across to someone, instead of taking the lazy shortcut and just telling them how I felt without any care for their reaction, I would construct my



sentences differently giving the listener an opportunity to alter their stand on a viewpoint by creating the feeling of autonomy in their response.

As it becomes their choice to make the change, there's less resistance even though it was the result that I was encouraging. Importantly I ensure I don't point out to them that it's what I wanted, I simply go along with their decision knowing deep

down I instigated the change and would then agree with their new stance on the issue, I continue to use this technique today and I can also recognise when someone else is using the same technique with me.

This is one of many skills I have learnt over the years including appropriate positive reinforcement, helping to eliminate negative self-talk from others. I have been implementing these skills in my Taekwon-Do classes now for the last 5 years with some brilliant results. When you stand in front of a class you take on the responsibility of being a main influencer in students' lives, especially when they are under the age of 18 years. We must be very careful in how we speak to children, in particular, as we can end up unintentionally reinforcing negative thoughts and reactions within an individual, instead of empowering them to a positive change in their behaviour.

This thesis will cover how we can change our mindset. Some of these skills I have learnt, where not only what we say matters using the appropriate words for each situation, but also how we say it matters so much, ultimately to get the result we are looking for when we discuss someone's choices, decisions, motives and also the language they use towards us.



With children in particular, they mimic or copy behaviours as they are like a sponge learning how to communicate. So if we are able to be in to speak using positive language patterns that can in turn assist them in learning similar behaviours. We only spend a short time with our students, so the more we can show them positive actions/reactions/language the more we can positively influence them.

# MINDSET

## WHAT IS MINDSET?

If you look it up in the dictionary the definitions of Mindset are:

Fixed, innate, genetic, predisposed, determined, set patterns, behaviours and responses to the outside world, events and people that define who we are.

Mindset is actually more about your current state of thinking rather than any fixed state.

Mindset is in fact thought of as a garden, if you neglect it then you will find nothing but weeds which are fully responsible for your outlook on life. If you look after the garden, water the plants, trim the hedges and cut the grass then you will see the flowers bloom, the beautifully tendered lawn bursting with colour and healthy plants. I have been inspired by Stephen Aish, a friend of many years who got involved with Mindset work a few years ago and thanks to him I feel my life has changed direction and I understand so much more about the human mind.

The brain is exposed to 4 Billion bits of information every second, of which we are only able to process about 2000 bits so that we do not overload, this also includes about an incredible 60,000 thoughts a day. Our mind uses filters so we discard information once we realise that it is not useful to us or a threat, many of us keep the filters locked in so that we can only see a fraction of what is actually happening around us.

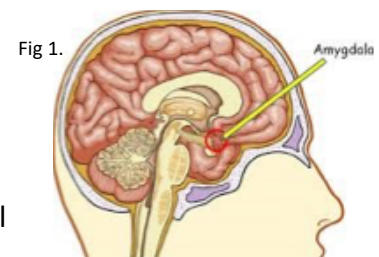


In an accident, everything seems to slow down as our minds become open to more information and we see every detail of the incident happening, at this point some of our filters are removed which is why you get the impression that everything has slowed down.

We have consciously plugged ourselves into a system that is like a groundhog day of action and reaction without actually taking the time to appreciate or be grateful for what we have, the people around us, our experiences and our lives. This is not a rehearsal for another life, this is it, our one chance. Do you want to be on your deathbed wishing you had done something another way, spoken to someone differently, rebuilt a broken relationship. You are absolutely in charge of your actions and can make a difference to your life and that of others. We can actually unplug ourselves (like in the film "The Matrix") and experience life for what it really is and make a difference to our world.

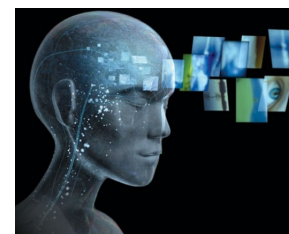
Our brain cannot differentiate between what is real and what is not, our thought processes can define our beliefs and if you say you are not good at something, then you are right, you are not good at it. The same works in a positive way and we are able to convince ourselves about how our feelings can be at any given time which then in turn can influence others around us. We spend hours exercising our bodies especially in our TKD training, however how long do we spend innercising? That is to say training ourselves internally, training our minds. If our mind has such an enormous influence on how we deal with life then why wouldn't we train it as much if not more than our bodies?

We spend far too much time thinking about the bad things that have happened to us in the past (like a bad movie we replay over and over again), the bad things people have done to us or thinking about the bad things that could potentially happen in the future, how things could go wrong, rather than thinking about the here and now and making a positive influence on the outcome of our future. If you taught a class and 99% of the class went to plan and you had a great response from the students, however just 1% went bad, something went wrong and the class didn't flow for that one part, what will you remember? The good 99% or the bad 1%? This comes down to the Negative Bias that we all have as humans, this is a small area of the brain called Amygdala about the size of an almond (see fig. 1) and it developed to evaluate whether or not something was a threat way back in the time when we were cavemen and evolved through hundreds of thousands of years identifying any threat not just to ourselves physically but also to our ego. This comes from a time when we first saw a vicious animal outside our cave and we had to decide if it was going to kill us and we would either kill it, run away or become paralysed hoping the animal would not see us. This is where the phrase "Fight, Flight or Freeze" has come from.



We create habits easily as this becomes our "safe practices" this can be how we react to situations as well as physical habits that in many cases are positive like driving a car, opening a door, brushing our teeth or sparring drills, however sometimes if we allow our negative bias to take over and non-stop negative thoughts come into our head, we then remove ourselves from positive interaction and withdraw ourselves from what is currently happening, allowing time to drift by without seeing it happen; minutes, hours, days, months and years just float by instantly and we are not aware of it due to the barrage of negative thoughts constantly working out how to solve issues, how to pay bills, why someone hurt us, how to protect our ego, how not to lose, etc... One way we can bring ourselves into the present moment is to change our routine, for example brush your teeth with your other hand, drive a different way to work, use a different hand to open a door etc... this exercise makes you think more about what you are doing and brings you into the present moment.

Another example would be someone who has a very short temper, the reason this can happen is due to their unconscious mind that has a belief stored as to how things "should be" or how people "should behave in general towards them". These beliefs will trigger the "fight, flight or freeze response" in the brain from the Amygdala and this part of the brain works 100 times faster than the pre-frontal cortex, which is the logical part of the brain. By saying "I am angry" the person is saying that the anger and person are one, whereas a better way to deal with it would be to label the emotion rather than the person by taking a moment to say something like "Anger is here or Anger has arrived" at that moment. This engages the pre-frontal cortex as that is where the labelling occurs. At this moment the person has space to diffuse the situation or recognise they are on an "automatic pilot" of reacting from the habitual anger pattern and a chance arises to choose a better response.





Our mind is full of movies/experiences that we play constantly, you can have one side that is the horror section (which we watch more than the others) with all the bad things that have happened. Another side that is the fiction section which is all unreal and pure guesswork as it hasn't happened yet, finally you have the feel good movies which we would all prefer to play all the time that represent our happy experiences, however this section always seems to gather dust as we never seem to watch them in our minds. All these movies define how we can feel right now in the present or how we react to situations. Controlling what movies we play in our mind is an extremely important part of mindset training.



We cannot control things that have already happened in our lives, decisions that either we have taken or the decisions that others have taken for us that affect us. We also cannot control the future. It hasn't happened yet and there are many variables that can either make the future good or bad, we cannot have control over that. At the European Football Championships 2016 in France, the England Team would have prepared themselves the best they could have believing they would beat minnows Iceland in the quarter finals, who have a total population of 323,000 which is just about the quarter of the size of London. England lost 2-1. So although it was expected for them to win, they didn't as they did not have control over the future.

What we can control is what is happening right here and now in the present time, we can control our current actions including what we decide to say to others and how we say it. This is extremely powerful and in most cases will come down to our current mindset as to how we respond to people. If you react over emotionally to something that happens without thinking deeply about the consequences of your actions then you can end up with regret and in the worst case a breakdown in a relationship with someone.

**Mindfulness**, in my opinion, is a part of mindset as mindset is a part of mindfulness. Jon Kabat-Zinn, the founder of Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) and co-founder of Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT), defines Mindfulness as:

**"Paying attention in a particular way; on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally."**

This is all interesting information, however who would use such skills if they were able to tap into them? Well, mindfulness is currently being taught in the UK Parliament, European Parliaments, Health Service, prisons, schools, in Harvard University leadership courses and to CEO's and corporate leaders in large organisations such as Google and London Transport. Many people may confess to knowing about Mindset and Mindfulness as I have witnessed over the years, however how many people actually practice it? Also, how can we practice it?



### **THE PAST**

What happens when we think about the past?

- We replay old movies/experiences hoping for a different ending
- We beat ourselves up over things that have happened and cannot change, a mistake we made etc... and we therefore do not accept it
- We believe we are failures when things have not gone right
- We reinforce self-doubt when others impact our lives negatively
- We stop taking action through fear of repeated failure

### **THE FUTURE**

What happens when we think of the future?

- We have a fear of failure
- We are worried that we will humiliate ourselves
- We are concerned we will let others down
- We feel we may hurt ourselves or others
- We are not good enough to reach our goal

### **THE PRESENT**

We hear people say “be fully present” or “live in the moment”, what does it actually mean though? Being fully present means you accept:

1. Where you are right now, non-judgmentally (as in not upset or angry with yourself for being where you are)
2. You can only influence this moment
3. What you do now CAN influence your future

So what can we do to resolve these three places in our minds?...



## **DEAL WITH THE PAST**

How can we deal with these negative experiences and movies? There are three steps we can follow. We say this:

1. I fully accept this event is in my past
2. I understand it can never change
3. I choose to live in the present moment

Finally you forgive yourself for carrying this burden, this is what is dragging you down and making you question who yourself and contributing to turning you into the negative person you are not.

## **ACCEPT THE FUTURE**

What are the steps that we can take to deal with these thoughts and turn them into positive experiences? Repeat these three points whilst playing your future movie:

1. I fully accept this event has not happened yet
2. I understand I can make it possible
3. I choose to live in the present moment

Finally forgive yourself for carrying this burden, never allow any burden to drag you down, you cannot control something that hasn't happened yet, so it doesn't make any sense to let it play on your mind and add additional pressure to you.

## **BECOMING PRESENT**

How can we get into the present when our mind drifts from things that have happened in the past or the anxiety that comes with what may happen in the future? There are a few ways, for example here are just three examples:

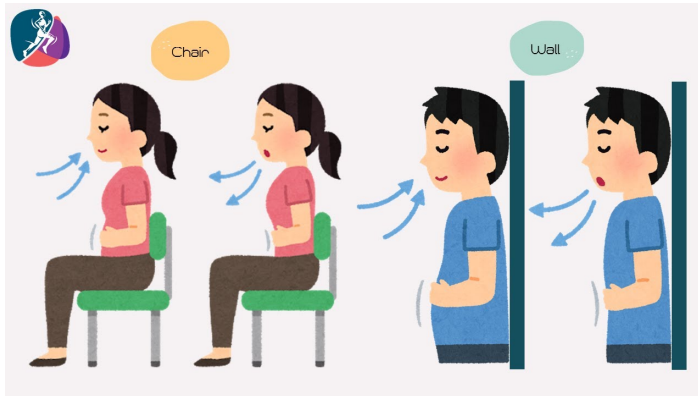
1. Breathing techniques
2. Meditation
3. Cold water therapy

Read on to see a breakdown of the above 3 points.

## BREATHING

Of course everyone breathes, however by simply changing the rate in which you breathe you will positively affect your response. My “go to” technique is diaphragmatic 7/11 breathing.

This technique is using your diaphragm to breathe rather than just your lungs, this means



expanding your stomach on the in breath and deflating your stomach on the out breath, you can check this by gently placing your hands on your stomach. As you breathe in you count to 7 on the in breath and count to 11 on the outbreath. By breathing out longer than you breathe in you are expelling more carbon dioxide, this in turn affects your vagus nerve which then calms down your amygdala (which responds to any threat through the fight, flight &

freeze response). There is a direct link from your brain to your large intestines via the vagus nerve.

By simply practicing this for 3 minutes and focusing on the numbers as well as how your breath moves in and out you will feel an instant difference if feeling anxious. You can have your eyes closed or open, you can be sitting, kneeling, lying or even walking.

## MEDITATION

People spend lots of money learning how to meditate yet it is the simplest practice to learn and can be easily self-taught. The reason is, you just cannot get meditation wrong. Following a few simple steps can help you to get an experience:

1. Sit, kneel, lay down or walk
2. Breath in and out slowly
3. Become an observer of your thoughts as if standing on the pavement watching cars drive by

If your mind wanders simply accept that it has happened without judging yourself and bring yourself back to your breathing. Practice for 30 seconds, 3 minutes, 10 minutes or more. The more practice the better you will get at it. You can add to this by thinking of something you feel grateful for, maybe something you did for someone, something someone did for you, the people you have in your life, how you affect people through your work, then notice how you feel about that.



## **COLD WATER THERAPY**

There are many health benefits to cold water therapy including and not limited to:

- Feeling fully present
- Resetting your nervous system
- Healthier for your skin
- Better for sleep
- Aides with weight loss
- Increase focus
- Calms the Vagus nerve



The cold water therapy expert Wim Hoff has not only changed his own life for the better, but that of many others. His courses have encouraged many people to take up all three of the above techniques throughout the world. You can practice cold showering each morning, immerse yourself in a bath of cold water, lake swimming or people even purchase ice baths to practice in. Always start slowly with a short amount of time, gradually building up to longer durations. Practice your breathing exercises whilst performing the cold water therapy.

# LANGUAGE

## THE POWER OF LANGUAGE

Generally, most people do not bother to think about the language they use when they speak, they simply create an instant response reaction, enforce their opinion or even listen to respond which means not taking in the information, simply waiting to say what they want to as it is their opinion which is more important than the information being communicated to you.

Of course, if we spend too much time thinking about what we want to say then we would probably miss the moment or simply say nothing or overthink the answer.

There can be many examples of unintentional use of negative language. This generally can be down to an emotional response that can come from:

1. A reaction to something that has happened or something that has been said
2. A habit, for example, this is how you had been spoken to in the past or even when growing up and so it's a learnt behaviour
3. Unknowing the consequences, honestly thinking what you are saying is doing more good than harm. We know this is like anger, it only ever benefits one person and that's the one who is angry, no argument can be resolved in anger

Once you are able to regulate your own response to stimuli then it becomes far easier to take the next steps in changing your language. So how do we digest what someone is saying and then create an appropriate response?

## RAPPORT

The first point in good communication is rapport. This means opening a friendly dialogue with someone, helping them to feel that you understand them. The techniques used here are mirroring, pacing and leading and non-verbal communication.

Mirroring means you will copy their mannerisms, the rate in which they breath, perhaps the way they talk, if they cross their legs or the movement of their arms. It's essential to not make this too obvious as the mirroring can be "similar" and not exactly the same or you can be found out. The idea behind this is the person feels connected to you as we always feel more comfortable around people we feel are similar to us and understand us.



Pacing and leading is when you match the listeners experience and then lead them towards a certain direction by stating a truism then onto the next step. For example saying: "As you feel yourself land in the walking stance you can accelerate both arms to create opposite and equal reaction force with more power than before." Going from where they are and leading them to where you want them to go or to achieve.

Non-Verbal communication is what you do with your facial expressions, gestures and body language. For example nodding your head when someone is talking is positive, fiddling with something or looking away is negative. Making a surprised look when you don't agree with something someone says can end up making the conversation go downhill as the speaker will be on the defensive and you haven't even said anything. Understanding this can be really helpful in how you create a positive rapport with an individual. For example it's possible to nod your head when listening, feed-back what the individual has said and then question something in such a way that it can help the individual to look at the situation differently.

If a student comes to you with an injury, not simply just accepting the information, perhaps firstly thanking them for telling you about it and then asking them how they feel about it and to ensure they let you know if it keeps hurting. This can happen with younger students who want to tell you they have hurt their knee from falling over. I thank them for telling me, then ask them to do their best in the class and then let me know if it's still causing them problems. Kids generally just want to tell you the ailment they have so acknowledging them is essential for them to feel listened to.

## **DON'T**

It's important to realise that the brain doesn't understand a negative. So many times instructors tell their students to "don't do this..." So here's an experiment, in a moment I would like you to close your eyes and then say to yourself "DON'T think of a green polar bear" and see what happens. The brain doesn't understand the negative, if it did you simply would not be able to see the green polar bear or even say the words green polar bear.

In fact, what happens as soon as someone tells you to DON'T or NOT do something it simply brings your attention to it. If you have just painted a room and 6yr old walks in, you say DON'T touch the wet paint, what do you think they are going to be drawn to do?

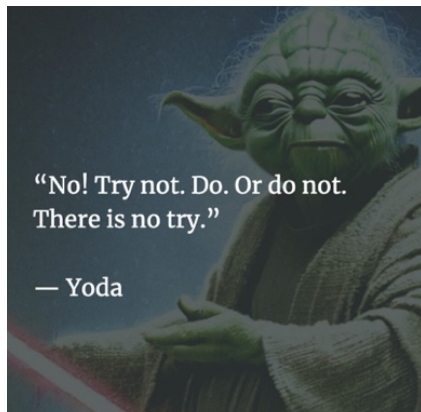


How many times in class have you told one junior student "DON'T do something" and then suddenly one or two of the other children start doing that same thing? "Don't spin around on the floor", "Don't run", "Don't go near the punch bag". You are pretty much bringing their attention to it and therefore risking them actually doing that thing.



### Reframe

The solution here is instead on focussing on what you DON'T want the student to do, focus on what it is you want them to do. For example instead of saying "don't bend your back knee in walking stance", say "Point your back foot forwards 25 degrees and push your footsword into the floor to get your leg straight". Or instead of "Don't go out of the ring" say "Move to the side, get control of the centre". The exception is when we use the "don't" in the first person as we own that statement rather than putting it on someone else for example "I don't tell someone not to do something".



### **TRY**

This can be a very unassuming negative word. I used to use this word in my classes years ago as I thought it was a gentle way to encourage people to do things, in fact I was just setting them up for failure. What I mean is when you ask someone to "Try" something, you are telling them not to give 100%, to just dip their toe into the experience and not go for it.

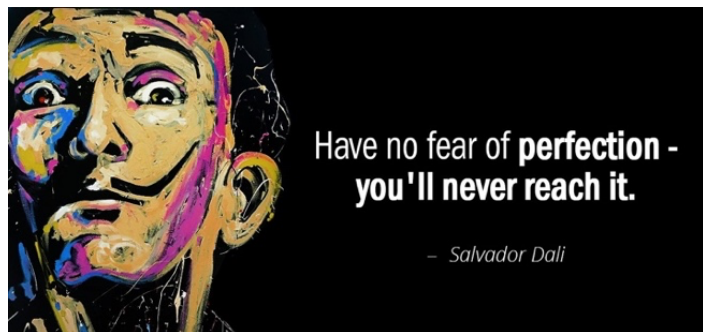
If you have a teenager at home and you ask them to tidy their room, their response being "I'll try" pretty much means it won't be tidy. Try means an excuse for failure: "I tried, but it didn't work out" By asking the student to try something we are asking the student to not commit to it.

### Reframe

The language I use instead instead is "Do your best" so replace "Try to jump as high as you can over the hurdle" say "Do your best jump over the hurdle", this encourages the positive action and as instructors we can only ever be proud of our students when they give their all and do their best.

### **PERFECT/PERFECTION**

This is another very negative word that goes under the radar. My theory is that perfection does not exist. If I ask someone to write a thesis and they spend 3 months writing it, they hand it in saying "it's perfect", I take it and hold onto it, when I show them that same thesis 6 months later I guarantee they make at least one change. So if they change it then it was never perfect. Perfection means it cannot be changed, it will never change, it will never require fixing.



When we place our happiness in perfection, for example, "I will be happy when my pattern is perfect" then it means I am not happy now. When we perform patterns, confidence in the presentation is almost as important as the performance itself, if we don't believe the



pattern we are performing is the best we can do then our faith in our own ability can be questioned.

The other way to look at it is if you tell your student that their pattern is perfect, then they may feel they don't actually need to do anymore work on it, it's perfect. But we all know as instructors there are no perfect patterns as we can always find something. Telling a student that their sparring is perfect may in fact hold them back from their development as the challenge as just disappeared. So we must be careful not to say this.

Being perfect or even worse TRYING to be perfect puts an enormous burden on students to achieve something that is completely unacheivebale.

### **Reframe**

I stopped using the word "perfect" a few years ago and wouldn't consider using it as a compliment to anyone on anything. If I'm complimenting someone I would talk about the effort they have put in to achieve what they have rather than saying something is perfect. It's always about the effort someone puts in rather than the thing itself.

Instead of asking for something to be perfect I would suggest the student to "give their best attention to detail". This is very personal and rather than perfection which is across the board, it then becomes very personal as each individual has their own attention to detail. This now becomes a positive way of giving the same message.

### **INTENTION IN OUR WORDS**

This is to do with how your words are intended, we can all say the same words however each individual will say them differently and so it's possible to get a completely different response. For example if a child does something wrong and you tell them to apologise, if they just say "sorry" because you've asked them to then it's very likely they will repeat that



behaviour again as they've not said it with any feeling or understanding. I would never recommend just telling a child or an adult to say sorry to another. I would explain the reasons why I am or (or the individual) are upset and then lead them to the point where they can understand the consequences of their actions. In most cases people would say sorry in this case and actually mean it, if they don't say sorry then it's pretty much the same as being told to say sorry.

In the 1960's Professor Albert Mehrabian and colleagues at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), conducted studies into human communication patterns. They concluded that when we speak, only 7% comes down to simply the words. The other 93% is down to non-verbal communication, this is split further into 55% being from the persons body language and gestures and then 38% to the tone and music of their voice. Although this experiment was conducted based on a single word it highlights to importance of how we say something compared to simply just saying a word.

Saying that, it is absolutely possible to inspire people by writing a speech or letter that removes all non-verbal communication. My personal view is you can actually feel the non-verbal communications that the author was using whilst writing the piece and it therefore comes through the writing where you can almost imagine the way they are making the speech.

What can also be an influential factor on reading a speech or letter can be your own mood if what has been written is vague and has the ability to be interpreted in a variety of ways. I still believe that the research from Professor Mehrabian has relevance and we can learn much from it as we as instructors are in influential positions, standing at the front of our classes and delivering sometimes inspirational words. These can be more powerful through understanding our non-verbal behaviour.

## CONCLUSION

All change starts from within, it begins with our own perceptions. Blaming others for our negative emotional state or reactions is what we call "Projection". According to Psychology today the meaning of "Projection" is:

"Projection refers to attributing one's shortcomings, mistakes, and misfortunes to others in order to protect one's ego. Blaming others (i.e. projection) is more common in those who are experiencing negative feelings and are unable to regulate their emotions."

In essence, if we are able to learn to regulate our own emotions then we can change our perception of the world, become more aware of ourselves and what we say including the consequences of our language and words.

The next step is realising how powerful our words are and to construct them in such a way to promote positive outcomes. As Taekwon-Do instructors we are in a position of responsibility not just in the way we train our students physically, but mentally. Using the appropriate language for each student is essential and can be the difference between someone simply quitting and believing they are not good enough or that very same person growing and becoming a positive influence in other peoples' lives.

By following the simple steps in this thesis, it will be possible to create some positive change that will ultimately affect the reader and those around them. The hardest part of this entire process is accepting that perhaps the reader could do better than they currently are.

Disregarding this information may not affect the reader per say, however if ignored it could absolutely continue to affect the students and those around the reader without them realising it. We as instructors only see one side of an individual in class, we rarely get to see the positive and negative effects there are from an activity like Taekwon-Do outside of the Dojang, so if we as instructors can begin to take more control over what and how we give information or speak with individuals then we can only improve the chances of our students and those close to us benefitting in the long term with the potential of having a more positive outlook on their own lives.

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