Neurolinguistic Programming

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Neurolinguističko programiranje

Završni rad

Mentorica: Izv. Prof. Dr. Sc. Tanja Gradečak

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IZJAVA

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Summary

Neurolinguistic Programming (NLP) is a discipline that investigates the thinking process. Although it studies the human mind, it is not a part of psychology. The founders of NLP, Richard Bandler and John Grinder, were studying the most successful methods therapists used in work with their clients. Those methods were the base for developing NLP methods. Namely, NLP uses language as a tool for changing the thoughts of a person. The NLP practitioners believe that every person has their unique experience of the world, according to which they create their model or a map of reality and their every action is based on that map. They also claim that the thoughts create emotions and that emotions inspire a person on the action that is consistent with those thoughts. That is why the main goal of NLP is to change the language of our thoughts in a more useful one. "The meta model" is a pattern that consists of questions that NLP practitioners use in order to make the internal dialogue more precise and avoid any generalization, deletion or distortion. Finally, NLP states that the consequence of practicing NLP techniques is that the person perceives the reality more clearly and starts to see a number of opportunities from which they are able to choose and the subject is not merely a victim or an observer of the circumstances in their life.

Key words: Neurolinguistic Programming (NLP), neuroplasticity, the meta model, the outcome frame

Introduction

The main goal of this paper is to present Neurolinguistic Programming (NLP) as a useful method that may help a person change the way they think and communicate, so that the subject has tools to achieve goals and to create the reality they want. Since NLP is immediately connected with language, the brain, and the mind, in the first chapter of the paper, the language areas in the brain are explained. After that, there is the chapter where the relation between thoughts, emotions, and actions is described. The third chapter is dedicated to the concept of "neuroplasticity" that states that the brain and the body constantly change and are dependent on the thoughts a person thinks.

The final chapter is here to explain the Neurolinguistic Programming. In the first part of this chapter, the history of NLP is presented and some of its basic ideas and concepts. The part of the chapter that is called “The map is not the territory” gives an explanation of the uniqueness of every person's reality they perceive. Immediately after that part, the three mechanisms responsible for creating the model of the reality of every person are presented. Then, there is the part where the “outcome frame” is described. This part consists of six questions and the purpose of each of them is briefly explained. The penultimate part of the fourth chapter is dedicated to “the meta model”. It is the part that presents the main ideas of NLP of what changes in language of a person should be made in order to think more useful thoughts. The final part of the chapter and the paper consists of presentation of the four useful habits one should develop, so that they retain the focus on the goal, enjoy the process of achieving the goal, and do not give up when there are some challenges present.

1. Language areas in the brain

Since the term "neurolinguistic programming” suggests the connection with neurolinguistics, it is necessary to explain some of the main ideas of neurolinguistics in order to understand better the whole concept. Neurolinguistics is “the study of how language is represented in the brain: that is, how and where our brains store our knowledge of the language that we speak, understand, read, and write, what happens in our brains as we acquire that knowledge, and what happens as we use it in our everyday lives” (https://www.linguisticsociety.org/resource/neurolinguistics).

The relation between brain and language has been studied since the nineteenth century, when the centres for language in the brain were discovered. Anatomist Paul Broca was the first scientist who discovered that language centres are mostly located in the left hemisphere of the brain. Namely, Broca studied the subjects with brain lesions and noticed that all aphasic patients had the lesion in the left hemisphere of the brain. Aphasia is a disorder or loss of language; hence Broca located the part of the brain that is responsible for language in the left hemisphere of the brain (Ingram, 2007). His discovery was supported by a series of studies conducted after both World Wars. It was noticed that the soldiers who suffered from language disorders were those who had injury on the left part

of the brain (Caplan, 2003). Karl Wernicke was the second scientist who investigated areas for language. The damage of the Wernicke's area causes the complementary symptoms to those caused by the damage of the Broca's area. The Wernicke's area is also located in the left hemisphere of the brain, more precisely, in "the auditory association area", whereas the Broca's area is close to the area that "controls muscles of articulation and vocalization" (Ingram, 2007), which explains the fact that the Wernicke's area is in charge of language reception, and the Broca's area is in charge of language production.

2. Relation between thought, emotion, and action

Both neuroscience and psychology emphasize that a couple of billion of neurons enable us to see the world as a coherent unit. In other words, there is a great connection between our brain, which receives the impulses from our senses and our mind, which is responsible for the meaning of those signals (Ingram, 2007). A lot of philosophers have tried to understand the human mind, most of which only speculated about it. In fact, Descartes admitted that humans are not intelligent enough to really understand it. However, Descartes observed body and mind as two separate parts and came to the conclusion that the "creative aspect" of using the language is our greatest gift. (Chomsky, 2002). When it comes to language, "it is used not only to convey our thoughts and feelings to others, but also to represent them to ourselves" (Ingram, 2007, p. 5).

William James is one of the experts who investigated how body and emotions are related. His idea is that arousing of a stimulus is followed by physiological changes in the body, after which we are aware of the "subjective experience of emotion". For instance, a person sees a dog approaching them. They start sweating, the heart starts beating faster, which are all the signs that the person is scared. Another theory was offered by Schachter and Singer. They realised that our cognition is also an important factor of experiencing an emotion (Whitaker, 1998).

Nonetheless, Hoobyar described emotions more thoroughly. He agreed that the first phase of this process is an external stimulus. To put it another way, a person perceives something with their senses. Then, the input travels to the brain where this stimulus is interpreted. Therefore, a person assigns a meaning to the stimulus. Immediately after the meaning is assigned, the person becomes

aware of an emotion that is consistent with their interpretation of the perceived. Ergo, although unconsciously, a person creates their feelings. The generated emotion is followed by the reaction consistent with this emotion. (Hoobyar et. al, 2013).

For example, a person hears the alarm clock ringing. This external stimulus is interpreted in the brain and the person knows that it is time to get up and go to work. Maybe the subject is not content with their career and does not want to go to work. After thinking about that, the person becomes angry. The final stage is the reaction that is consistent with those thoughts and feelings. Probably, the person will be impolite to the driver of the bus on their way to work or to the colleagues.

Every day, this cycle happens millions of times and we are mostly unaware of it. What we are usually aware of is the stimulus and the emotion, but the assigned meaning is not in our awareness. Suffice it to say, it is important to recognize the thoughts that occur whilst experiencing an emotion. After a subject recognizes them, they are able to question them and change them (Hoobyar et. al, 2013). Consequently, we are also able to change our emotions into the more preferable ones. This may confirm the fact that we do not have to believe our thoughts to be true (Dispenza, 2007).

3. Neuroplasticity

The term "neuroplasticity" means that the brain is able to constantly change its structure during the whole lifetime (Whitaker, 1998). This term is often used by dr. Joe Dispenza. Dispenza uses this knowledge in order to make people aware of the consequences of the thoughts on the body. This scientist also emphasises that we can use the fact that our brain is able to change in the process of changing our behaviour and even to heal. Dr Joe Dispenza claims that "we are marvels of flexibility, adaptability, and a neuroplasticity that allows us to reformulate and repattern our neural connections and produce the kinds of behaviours that we want" (2007, p. 28). Dispenza also believes that we have been changing with every thought because "every thought produces a biochemical reaction in the brain and the brain then releases chemical signals that are transmitted to the body..." (2007, p. 57). Finally, we start to feel the emotion. For instance, when a person has happy thoughts, he or she starts to feel happy and vice versa. This becomes a continuous cycle.

First, a person has a happy thought, after which the brain produces dopamine, which causes him or her to become excited. Then, the person feels happy and for this reason thinks happy thoughts again. When we think certain thoughts for a period of time, our body starts to change because of the chemicals these thoughts continuously produce. That is the reason why a great number of people who are constantly anxious develop some ailments. Dispenza also states that a person that is ill can improve their state by changing the way of thinking. Hence, when they change it, the body will not produce toxic chemicals anymore and their physical state will improve (Dispenza, 2007).

4. Neurolinguistic Programming (NLP)

All the findings that were mentioned in the previous chapters are connected with a thinking process and serve as the basis for understanding neurolinguistic programming. Neurolinguistic programming is a discipline that investigates the process of thinking. However, its goal is not to explain the physical reactions in the body, but its focus is rather on the thinking as an activity. NLP also observes the mind as a computer in which our every experience has been created and stored. This discipline also puts an emphasis on the way our mind, not our brain, creates the experience. Nevertheless, it is not part of psychology. One of the founders of NLP, Richard Bandler, noticed that psychologists are mostly focused on "ways in which people were broken" and hardly ever considered the fact that our mind may work perfectly. Namely, Bandler also claims that our actions have a structure. If we investigate that structure, we can understand it and change it in order to be more useful. Also, NLP practitioners do not use the same techniques as psychologists. However, a lot of psychologists and social workers use the NLP techniques in working with their clients, because all of these methods teach people to use their brain in a more functional way (Bandler, 1985). NLP techniques are used in communication, psychotherapy, business, sports, and many other fields with the intention to improve one's performance (Hoobyar et. al, 2013). It is a practical "set of models, skills, and techniques for thinking and acting effectively in the world" (O'Connor& Seymour, 1990).

4.1 The history of NLP

NLP was created in 1972 by John Grinder, an assistant professor of linguistics and Richard Bandler, a psychology student at the University of California. They studied Fritz Pearls, the founder of the gestalt school of therapy; Virginia Satir, a successful family therapist; and Milton Erickson, a hypnotherapist. Grinder and Bandler noticed that all three of them were successful in their field because they were using specific techniques in their work with patients. The idea of Bandler and Grinder was to produce models that were useful and could be taught (O'Connor& Seymour, 1990).

It is important to mention that this model did not have the name until 1976. The founders agreed that it had to consist of the word "neuro" because the idea of NLP is that all behaviour is connected with the five senses that are interpreted in the brain. Unlike Descartes, whose theory is mentioned above, they observed body as a unit of body and mind. In other words, the actions of the body are immediately connected with the actions in the mind (O'Connor& Seymour, 1990).

The second part is "linguistic", because language is used in order to think and to communicate with other people (O'Connor& Seymour, 1990). NLP practitioners use the language, more specifically, syntax as a tool in working with their clients. They emphasize the similarity between the syntax - in which a limited number of structural elements are used in order to form a grammatically correct sentence - and the human behaviour - that also has a structure and consists of a sequence of "sensory representations". Therefore, they claim that a type of behaviour that is described as useful can be divided into units and could be beneficial to the people that learn it and practice it (Dilts et.al, 1980).

"Programming" is also part of this term, because of the association of our brains with computers. To say it differently, the computers contain programs and they need to be precisely instructed which operation to perform. It is similar with our brain. We have to instruct our mind what to do, otherwise, we will not get the result we want (Bandler, 1985). This last part of the name, "programming", also suggests that a person can choose how to think, thus have different results (O'Connor& Seymour, 1990). Dispenza explained it by comparing our mind, our thoughts specifically, to computer programs that run continuously all day long. Knowing the fact that every

person operates these programmes, they are also able to change them or even delete the unnecessary ones (2007).

4.2 Basic ideas of NLP

One of the main ideas of NLP is its focus toward "outcomes" and not "problems". When a person starts thinking about outcomes of an action, they are more oriented toward the goal. It means that they will start looking for solutions and resources they have or should have in order to achieve the goal. On the other hand, if a subject describes something as a "problem", they will focus on what is wrong and who is to blame for that, which will only worsen the emotional state of the subject and the "problem" will not be solved (O'Connor& Seymour, 1990).

The second idea is asking "how" rather than "why" questions. The former will bring the person the understanding of a problem as a process. More precisely, the person will understand how the problem appeared. The latter types of questions will only leave the person with reasons and excuses for not changing anything (O'Connor& Seymour, 1990).

Thirdly, NLP as a discipline does not believe in existence of a "failure". NLP practitioners speak only about results that can give some "feedbacks", which are opportunities to learn something a person did not think about. These two words are similar, but they differently represent thinking. Therefore, the word "feedback" enables us to keep the focus on the goal, whereas "failure" discourages us and shifts the perspective to the unwanted result that happened (O'Connor& Seymour, 1990).

The next is looking for "possibilities" instead of "necessities". Similar to the first three concepts, this idea is also related to changing focus. Searching for what is possible to do, a person continues to achieve their goal. If their focus is on what they need, but do not have, they rather observe the barriers of the situation (O'Connor& Seymour, 1990).

The last concept is "curiosity" instead of "making assumptions". A person who knows that they do not know something will be curios and ask questions, whereas making assumptions will be an obstacle for further learning and exploring (O'Connor& Seymour, 1990). This is particularly useful in working through emotional states. In other words, immediately after an emotion arises,

we should investigate the reasons for feeling that way and be curious about it. That means that we become observers and investigators of our state, rather than a person that is overwhelmed by their emotion and is not able to do anything about it. To do that, a person should be able to mentally go back to the moment just before the emotion was triggered. The curiosity will bring the awareness of emotions of a person and, what is even more important, the awareness of the beliefs they have about the world, which cause their world to be the way it is (Hoobyar et.al, 2013).

4.3 "Map is not the territory"

Another idea of NLP is that our operating in the world is tightly connected with the information received through our senses. This means that we make a map of the world that we use and the result of it is our behaviour (Bandler& Grinder, 1975). NLP defines behaviour as "all sensory representations experienced and expressed internally and/or externally for which evidence is available from a subject and/or from a human observer of that subject". To put it another way, both doing an activity and merely imagining oneself doing the same activity are considered "behaviour" in NLP (Dilts et.al, 1980).

This map may be changed in a way that a person creates a different map of the world and thus, changes their experience. Namely, Bandler and Grinder noticed that the problem is not that there are no choices or that the world is limited, but it is that people sabotage themselves from perceiving the other existing options. This happens, because these options do not exist in the map of their world. However, this does not mean that people are bad or even sick, but actually they do choose the best options that are available in their map. (1975).

This idea also suggests that a person perceives only a small part of the world. Nevertheless, there are much more possibilities in the world that a person is not able to see as a result of the filters they put on their perceptions. Language can also be considered a filter. It is especially true for some abstract concepts, like "beauty". When a person perceives this word with their senses, their memories, pictures, and feelings are responsible for making sense of that specific word for that specific person. For some other person, the word "beauty" may have a completely different meaning, because their experience connected with this concept is completely different. This example shows that words are not monosemous, because meaning is immediately connected with

the experience of a person. It also shows that the meanings of words are relative and everybody is right within their own reality (O'Connor& Seymour, 1990).

4.4. Mechanisms for creating the map

In order to create our map of reality, three processes occur automatically in our mind, hence we are unaware of them (Hoobyar et. al, 2013). These mechanisms are also responsible for mistaking our map of the world for the reality. After we create our model of the world, we present our representation of the world to other people through communication (Bandler& Grinder, 1975).

4.4.1 "Generalization"

During this process, our mind searches for the similarities of the experiences. Namely, after we had the same type of an experience multiple times, our mind stores all of these experiences in one place. For instance, there are a lot of different types of doors – sliding doors, revolving doors, etc., but all of them have the same features in common. Ergo, our mind observes all of them as simply doors. This process may be useful, because it simplifies the thinking. On the other hand, generalizations might be limiting. To illustrate, a person meets another person whose appearance reminds her of their unfair and indifferent school teacher. This person could start making assumptions about the person they recently met and think that this person has the same personality as their school teacher, instead of perceiving this person perhaps as a potential friend (Hoobyar et. al 2013).

4.4.2 "Deletion"

This process is responsible for "dropping away aspects of an experience" (Hoobyar et. al, 2013). It happens automatically when we focus on something and leave out everything that is not connected with our immediate experience. For instance, when a person watches television, the process of deletion occurs. This person becomes unaware of all other background noises and everything that is happening around them, because their focus is completely on the television screen. It is useful, since deletion helps us shift our focus only to what is important at that moment

in our experience (ibid.). Nonetheless, this process may not always be helpful. Because of this process, people may not perceive the loving gestures from their loved ones and this might be a reason for some disagreements or misunderstandings (Bandler& Grinder, 1975).

4.4.3 “Distortion”

Distortion suggests that we “perceive and remember people, things, and events based on aspects of the experience: the typical dog, the ideal friend...” (Hoobyar et. al, 2013). An example of this process is when we are familiar with one characteristic of a person and “apply it to all aspects of that person.” (ibid.). If we think that a person is open and shows his or her emotions, we might conclude that this person has a kind and loving family, maybe that their marriage is successful, and some other characteristics based merely on one characteristic (ibid.). This process might be called imagination and is responsible for all the art that human beings have ever created. This is possible, because the reality is being misrepresented during this process, which is crucial for creating something that does not exist yet. Nonetheless, this process might prevent a person from having a richer experience of the world, because the person does everything to find the pieces of evidence that their map of the world that they created is true and avoid their experience to contradict the world created in their mind (Bandler& Grinder, 1975).

4.5 “The outcome frame”

Neurolinguistic Programming emphasizes the fact that, if we want to achieve what we want, we have to be clear about what it is that we want. Otherwise, there is no possibility to attain the goal. That is why we need an “outcome”. To explain, an outcome is something a person wants. The important features are that it is achievable and measurable. One of the processes in NLP is “the outcome frame”, because it serves for questioning the goal and making it suitable for the exact person that goes through this process. Namely, it is a list of questions that serve for maximization of possibility of achieving the goal one wants. During this process, a person perceives their experience as a number of choices. Also, when a person comes across a challenge, they do not search for the reasons why it exists, but rather how to organize their experience around what they want. In other words, they retain their focus on the final goal and do not let the obstacles distract

them. NLP practitioners claim that if one person succeeded in achieving a goal, there is a possibility for everyone to achieve the same thing merely by knowing "how" they succeeded in it. Another point is that the answers to these questions should give a person the feedback that is necessary in order to accomplish what they desire. That is the reason why an obstacle in NLP is considered only as one step more towards the outcome. In other words, a setback is only a signal that a person needs to change something and do something more useful that will bring them closer to the outcome. (Hoobyar et. al, 2013). Hoobyar et al. (2013, pp. 61 - 66) problematise NLP by posing the following questions:

4.5.1 "What specifically do you want?"

The first question is crucial for making sure that a person knows exactly what they want. It is also responsible for shifting our focus to the positive outcome. Namely, "a goal must be stated in positive terms". The reason for this is that thinking about what we do not want takes a huge amount of energy and is useless if we decided firmly what we do want.

4.5.2 "How will you know when you have it?"

This question suggests that a subject should have a deadline for their outcome. To put it another way, a person should imagine what it would be like and feel like if they have already reached their goal. Otherwise, it is only a dream, not a specific goal.

4.5.3 "Where, when, and with whom do you want it?"

The third question is here to make a person aware of the consequences of the outcome. For instance, if a person decides to work in another company, they should think about how it will affect the other areas of their life. Perhaps it would mean that they will spend more time at work and will have less time for their family. If that is the case, the person should consider all the consequences and decide whether the goal they set is right for them.

4.5.4 “What stops you from having your desired outcome already?”

This question confronts a person with their beliefs and feelings about the outcome. If they think the goal is too large and therefore, they feel that it is impossible to reach it, NLP suggests to divide it into a number of smaller outcomes the person thinks are manageable. On the other hand, if an outcome is considered to be too small, for example, washing the dishes, the subject should think about what this outcome would do for them. Perhaps the person will conclude that they do not have clean plates in the cupboard and they need them. Hence, it is wise to wash the dishes in order to attain the outcome.

4.5.5 “What resources will you need to help you create what you want?”

Before explaining the purpose of this question, it should be emphasized that the term “resources” in NLP includes not only material resources, like money; but also: time, experience, support, knowledge, etc. Whilst answering this question, a person should be aware of all the resources they already have. Then they have to consider the resources they do not have yet. To illustrate, a person wants to become a painter. The resources they have are: time for painting, support from their family, etc. The same person may realise that the resource they do not have is the painting technique.

4.5.6 “How are you going to get there?”

Similar to question number one, this question also serves not to have the wanted outcome only as an idea in the mind, but to realise it. Specifically, this question encourages a person to take action toward the outcome. It is also important to mention that the person should be open for a number of possibilities and not limit themselves to only one way of achieving their goal. Hence, the NLP advises to think only about the first step the person is able to make. If we consider the previous example that includes the person with the lack of painting technique, this person might enrol a painting course and attend the first class – this is their first step to achieving the goal.

4.6 NLP and communication

Communicating precisely might be especially important in intimate relationships or business relations. As mentioned above, every person has their own meaning they assign to a word. Thus, we want to make sure that the interlocutor understands what specifically we want to say and vice versa. For example, if a friend asks us how we spent the weekend. We might answer that we were just relaxing. It is possible that they construct mental pictures of us laying on the sofa and watching television. That is their meaning of "relaxation". However, the truth might be that we played football with our friends and attended a lecture on eating healthier. Obviously, our meaning of "relaxation" is completely different from the meaning our friend assigns to the same word. (O'Connor& Seymour, 1990).

4.6.1 "The meta model"

The meta model is a pattern created by Grinder and Bandler. This pattern is based on the questions two psychotherapists, Virginia Satir and Fritz Perls, used whilst working with their clients. It serves for unravelling and reversing deletions, generalizations, and distortions. It is useful to use the meta model in our internal dialogue in order to help us think more clearly, as stated by O'Connor& Seymour (1990, pp. 110 - 123). They suggest the following strategy:

4.6.1.1 Unspecified nouns

If a person tends to use unspecified nouns, they consider themselves as merely "helpless spectator" of the reality. That means that they believe that events happen without anyone being responsible for them. An example might be the sentence: "Pets are nuisance". In order to clarify this statement, the question: "Who or what specifically" is nuisance? To put it another way, a person does not generalize anymore, they rather become aware of the specifics of a problem. Perhaps the answer could be: The neighbour's cat is a nuisance; instead of: Pets are nuisance." (O'Connor& Seymour, 1990).

4.6.1.2 Unspecified verbs

Similar to the previous category, NLP does not recommend the usage of unspecified verbs. A sentence that might serve as an example is: “She helped me.” The solution would be inserting an adverb in order to know how something was done. The appropriate question is: “How specifically did she help you?” (O’Connor& Seymour, 1990)

4.6.1.3 Comparisons

In the sentence: “I handled that meeting badly.” a comparison was made. However, this sentence does not contain the answer to the question: “Compared with what?” Hence, using comparisons might be problematic, because “very often the deleted half of the comparison is unrealistic”. NLP practitioners claim that it only leaves a person with “a feeling of inadequacy” and helplessness (O’Connor& Seymour, 1990).

4.6.1.4 Judgments

Judgments are similar to the previous concept. Again, there is a lack of information. The sentence: “I am selfish person.” does not provide the answer on the question: “By what standard a person judges herself/himself to be a selfish person? Are there good reasons for that judgment?” (O’Connor& Seymour, 1990).

4.6.1.5 Modal operators of possibility

In linguistics, modal operators are words like “cannot” and “must not”. There are two types of modal operators - modal operators of necessity and modal operators of possibility. Modal operators of possibility define what is possible or impossible. Here is important to emphasize that this judgment is done only by the speaker and is based on their experience. Suffice it to say, that might be limiting. An example sentence could be: “I cannot tell him the truth.” Nevertheless, Fritz Perls invented the solution. Perls used to say to his clients: “Don’t say I can’t, say I won’t!” This sentence enables a person to see that they can choose their action. The following questions also have the same purpose: “What stops you?”; “What would happen if you did?” or even: “How do you stop yourself?” (O’Connor& Seymour 1990).

4.6.1.6 Modal operators of necessity

These operators are: “should” and “should not”; “must” and “must not”, and “ought” and “ought not”. For instance: “I must not talk in class.” or “I should be kind.” If a person uses “should” in a sentence, that suggests that there is a rule that is broken. As a consequence of the broken rule, the feeling of guilt arises in the person. In order to clarify the statement, the questions like: “What would happen if you did/didn’t...?” or “Is this expectation realistic? Is the rule an appropriate one?” would be the suitable ones (O’Connor& Seymour, 1990).

4.6.1.7 Universal quantifiers

In linguistics, universal quantifiers are: “all”, “every”, “always”, “never”, and “none”. These words imply that there is no exception. Example sentences might be: “This always happens to me.” or “I never do anything right!”. The problem with the usage of universal quantifiers is that a person is not able to think of a counter example. To put it another way, the mind searches only for instances when the statement is correct and dismisses the opposite experiences. To question universal quantifiers, this question should be asked: “Has there ever been a time when...?” (O’Connor& Seymour, 1990).

4.6.1.8 “Complex equivalence”

This is when “two statements are linked in such a way that they are taken to mean the same thing.” To illustrate: “If you don’t look at me when I’m talking to you, then you are not paying attention.” It usually happens when a person generalizes their experience and does not consider the fact that other people think differently. A question for clarification could be: “How does this mean that?” (O'Connor& Seymour, 1990).

4.6.1.9 Mind reading

“Mind reading” is used when referring to a person who makes assumptions about other people’s thoughts and feelings and does not have any evidence for the assumptions. NLP divides mind reading into two types. The first type is when a subject guesses the thoughts of another human being. For example: “I could tell she did not like the present I gave her.”. The second type is assuming that other people can read your mind. An instance may be: “Can’t you see how I feel?” The both types might be questioned by asking: “How exactly do you know...?” (O’Connor& Seymour, 1990)

4.7. Four useful habits

Navy SEALs experience extremely difficult training. Therefore, they noticed that 76 percent of the candidates were not able to finish their six-week program. This number encouraged them to hire a psychologist Eric Potterat, who trained the candidates to develop four habits that could help them successfully finish the program. The result was that the graduation was increased by 50 percent. These habits could be used in NLP, so that a person perseveres in reaching for their goal (Hoobyar et. al, 2013).

4.7.1 “Focus on right now”

As the first habit to develop, Eric Potterat advises narrowing the focus whilst doing a very difficult activity. The focus of a person should only be on what they are doing at this moment and they should not think about the next activity (Hoobyar et. al, 2013).

4.7.2 “Imagine how good it will feel”

The second habit is connected with recalling the past experiences when a person succeeded. Namely, the key is to remember the feeling they had that moment and allow that same kind of feeling to arise right now. This feeling brings the person positive thoughts, like “how good it feels to be completing this task” or “how good it feels to be making the progress”. Also, Potterat recommends dividing the task into small units, so that the person feels motivated during the whole

process. Since after every finish segment of the task the mind experiences success, this type of feeling will be more accessible when the person needs it in the future (Hoobyar et. al, 2013).

4.7.3 “When all else fails, breathe deeply”

During a panic reaction, a person becomes discouraged and demotivated. They believe that they cannot do anything about the problem with which they confront. Namely, this happens because the part of the brain called amygdala takes over the life of the person. Amygdala is the part of the brain that processes fearful stimuli. Thus, when a person feels that nothing is under their control, a panic reaction happens. Nonetheless, the solution is providing the body with more oxygen. When the body receives more oxygen, the amygdala also receives the impulse to calm down. The third habit is inhaling slowly and deeply and exhaling completely. Potterat claims that three deep breath cycles are enough to slow down the nervous system. NLP encourages developing this habit, because flooding the brain with oxygen improves the ability to react more thoughtfully and not to react out of an emotion or panic (Hoobyar et. al, 2013).

4.7.4 “Cheer yourself on”

Clearly, there are often discouraging and complaining voices in our mind that tend to sabotage us. Potterat advised the Navy SEALs to train their mind to think encouraging thoughts whilst doing a challenging activity. They should think the thoughts like: “You can do it! Forget that mistake. Focus on the next shot and on getting it better.” Ergo, instead of focusing on the wrong things at this moment, a person lists the advantages and the good sides of the activity. NLP practitioners are aware that the negative thoughts will continue to arise. However, the important thing is to immediately notice them and change them into the positive ones. This habit makes a person aware that they are able to change and choose their thoughts, hence they have ability of choosing their emotions. Finally, they are able to choose their actions and experience the type of reality they want (Hoobyar et. al, 2013, p. 119).

5. Conclusion

The aim of this paper was to introduce NLP as a method that uses linguistic patterns in order to help the practitioners change their way of thinking and, consequently, their life. The basis of this method are all previous findings made in other scientific areas, such as psychotherapy, linguistics, and biology. The NLP practitioners believe that our mind and our body are connected. Therefore, when a person changes their way of thinking, their actions will follow that change. For that reason, NLP offers some linguistic patterns that might commence this process and transform life of a person for the better. However, the literature on the topic is scarce. Also, it is not a part of a science, it is merely a method. Hence, it is still vague how much helpful it really is.

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