

## NEUROLINGUISTIC PROGRAMMING IN THE PROCESS OF SELF-MANAGEMENT

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### **Abstract:**

*This article shows the most important aspects of linguistic programming (NLP). It is a set of communication techniques and methods of working with ideas, images, emotions, etc., leading to the modification of behaviour patterns, self-motivation, perception and thinking of people. Today NLP is considered controversial, for some it is a great collection of therapeutic techniques that help people change their attitudes to life and thus achieve their life goals. For some, although there is an increasing number of publications on the book market in this field, it is a collection of non-scientific techniques, which have not gained wider support in the world – maybe not yet.*

### **Keywords:**

*neurolinguistic programming, motivation techniques, modalities, presuppositions, metaprograms*

## INTRODUCTION

In the 70's of the 20<sup>th</sup> century John Grinder, a linguist, and Richard Bandler, a computer scientist and mathematician, developed techniques supporting self-management and called them Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP). Based on their knowledge and using some elements of system thinking, psychotherapy, cybernetics, neurology and general semantics they created a type of science combining particular models, principles of behaviour pertaining to the field of *applied psychology*. In their opinion and also in the opinion of numerous practitioners who deal with NLP in their daily practice

and during NLP trainings supporting the improvement of human personality and human development, NLP is a perfect way of modelling human personality and at the same time a kind of therapy helping to improve performance and achieving personal and professional goals.

Regardless of the growing popularity of NLP, mainly in the West, there are relatively few publications on this subject in Poland. Most of the articles related to this field of knowledge can be found in Internet sources. There are numerous organisations and associations in the world dealing with NLP and NLP related trainings, e.g. the Association for Neuro Linguistic Programming (ANLP) – an independent organisation promoting NLP and NLP related practices. Another example is the Global Organisation of Neuro Linguistic Programming (GONLP) and the British Board of Neuro Linguistic Programming (BBNLP) – the so called community of trainers, practitioners, masters and authors writing about NLP all over the world<sup>2</sup>.

This article presents only the most important assumptions and aspects related to neuro-linguistic programming because it is impossible to describe everything here, especially a wide range of techniques. However, if anyone would like to use the information from this article in their practice, it can turn out that these fundamentals of NLP can become an inspiration for further studies of this issue and, more importantly, practical use in life.

## 1. INTRODUCTORY CONSIDERATIONS

Neurolinguistic Programming /commonly called – NLP/ is interpreted in a number of ways. There is no explicit definition of this term which, shortly speaking means an *indication, a way or model determining all aspects of activity leading to the achievement of assumed goals as well as satisfaction felt as a result of fulfilment in personal and professional life*<sup>2</sup>.

According to H. Alder and B. Heather NLP (Neurolinguistic Programming) means innovative approach to communication and human development. Additionally, in this process thinking and behaviour are remodelled, relationships and correlations are improved, self-confidence grows in people who want to achieve their social and professional goals faster and more efficiently<sup>2</sup>.

The etymology of the words building the abbreviation NLP is as follows<sup>2</sup>:

- N: *neuro* indicates a connection with neurology, more specifically it means that the information obtained by senses are processed by the brain and the nervous system;
- L: *linguistic* indicates a connection with the language system, i.e. both words and gestures or attitudes – in this case these systems are used for coding, organizing and attributing meanings to our internal representations of the world and internal communication;
- P: *programming* indicates a connection with IT, man codes, organizes and processes experiences in a similar way, in this case the human mind can do



something more, namely delete, update and install “mental programming of man” to later change the ways of thinking and acting.

Hence NLP can be considered a process supporting *self-management* which can be defined as a very important human competence related to “*planning, organizing and controlling pursuing own ventures remaining in agreement with one’s own decisions, priorities and motifs behind actions taking into account opportunities for purposeful, efficient and timely achievements*”.

However, NLP reaches much further, it has started to be treated as a supporting therapy or psychological help which allows to successfully and safely treat various phobias and to eliminate unwanted habits, it is also trauma alleviation. Hence there is nothing surprising that this way of understanding NLP was followed by the appearance of a number of “techniques” which are used in education, healthcare and sport.

In the introduction to his book A. Bradbury states: “*Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) is one of the most powerful tools in the art of communication. It offers techniques and persuasion strategies related to influencing ourselves and others. For the purpose of using it effectively, it is necessary to fully understand real processes during communication. Thanks to NLP it is possible to maximise the benefits of interpersonal contacts in professional and personal life*”<sup>3</sup>.

In the mid-seventies the term NLP was first introduced by Richard Bandler and John Grinder as a result of their work. According to them it meant modelling which leads to success in numerous areas of life, e.g. therapy, business and sport. They successfully gained their experience with numerous professional groups, from the US military Forces, sport teams large corporations, to the US Government. However, the results could be obtained only after significant time – sometimes even two generations. A person who has been using NLP successfully for over twenty years is an American corporate trainer Beryl Heather. She has received the title of the Master Trainer of NLP for her work and contribution to business development<sup>1</sup>.

NLP should be understood in a more complex way, it means learning, process, research and model at the same time, it is also a collection of procedures, systems and techniques and so it can be considered at various levels. NLP is based on various presuppositions which can be treated as life principles.

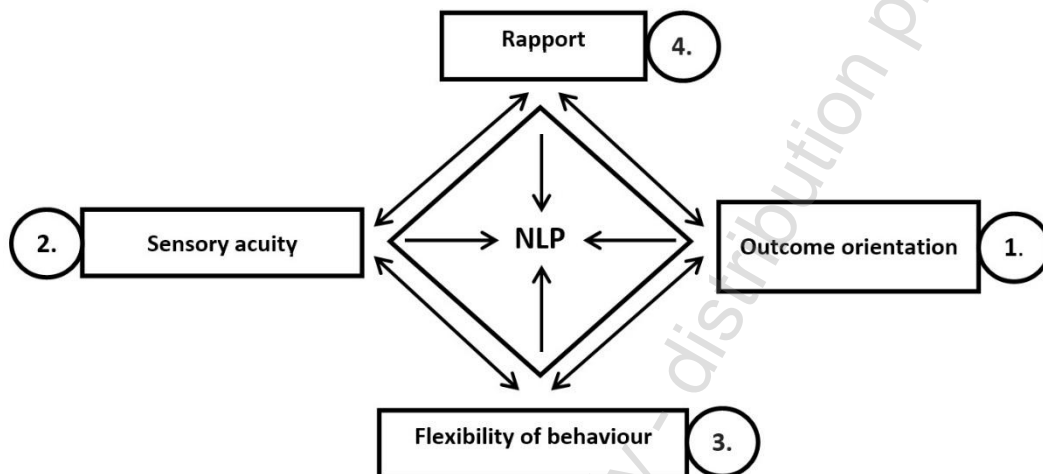
## 2. NLP ASSUMPTIONS

### 2.1. Pillars

NLP is composed of 4 axioms, also called four pillars, which together form a coherent model. Figure 1. presents the NLP pillars.

- The first pillar – *outcome*: Can every person asked about their goal (short- and long-term indicate them immediately? Probably not! The majority of people hardly ever established any perspectives for their aspirations, activities and plans. There is a large number of people who think that life will take care of itself, etc. However, if one sets any goal for themselves, they will try to become involved in achieving it in all possible ways. It often happens that

when we set goals for our actions, we do not give them any particular shape which would allow to visualise it. to see it with the “eyes of our imagination”. This is why the first pillar allows to precisely define the goal and what should be achieved. This enables us to prioritise actions undertaken to achieve this goal and monitor progress pursuing this goal. Then we become more aware of our desires, and frequently specified goals better define the sense of our lives. When goals are specified there are better chances that they will be achieved.



**Fig. 1.** Four pillars of NLP

Source: Author's own study on the basis of S. Bavister, A. Vickers, *NLP w praktyce (...)*, the quoted edition p. 35-36 and <http://brainwaves.pl/4-filary-nlp-cz-2-2/> (1 March 2014)

- The second pillar – *sensory acuity* is understood as the ability to observe and notice details. This allows us to see “everything” that happens around us. Some people find it easier to register various everyday details while others find it much more difficult. Some people have an inborn ability to pay attention to detail and some other people have to take a lot of effort to notice what other can spot immediately. In NLP it is a very important pillar because the point is not noticing everything that takes place around us – especially that sub-consciousness codes millions of stimuli bombarding our senses, without our realisation of this fact – it is more important to perceive facts, events and actions which are most helpful in pursuing our set goals.
- The third pillar – flexibility of behaviour is as important as the previous two pillars. This flexibility is expressed, among others, in the human ability to adapt to new and changeable conditions. Not everyone can quickly and adequately adapt to changing goals - to accept new conditions related to this change. For instance, in business a salesperson uses various types of argumentation to sell a product – if there is no success – most often they should be ready to change their tactics, to use such persuasion that a potential customer will finally be persuaded to buy the product. It is similar in life, if the set goals become too difficult to achieve, one should look at the way of

achieving them from a different perspective. This sometimes requires explicitness in remodelling the “way” leading to these goals.

- The fourth pillar – *rapport* is observed mainly when there is aspiration to achieve a goal (goals) which involves a certain group of people and the cooperation between them can anticipate such a goal which is not only possible to achieve but first and foremost it is perceived in the same way by the members of this group. This is why good relations between all people making a given group should be based on good, constructive cooperation between them, i.e. on appropriate interpersonal communication.

With reference to the above mentioned pillars Harry Alder and Beryl Heather state that<sup>3</sup>:

Setting a goal is a part of a simple and incredibly important four-stage model of success which show how we programme our own goals. It is a basis for efficient learning and defines the essence of NLP:

- Define your expectations (set a goal);
- Take action;
- Observe its outcomes;
- Change your actions until you manage to obtain the expected results”.

## 2.2. Presuppositions

The basis of NLP, apart from the above mentioned axioms, are linguistic structures known as the so called presuppositions, i.e. initial assumptions which are considered true by default so as the whole sentence makes sense. In a word, they limit the choice made by an interlocutor. They are assumption hidden in statements. There is a moral aspect in this context which has to be taken into account by anyone who uses these presuppositions. One hand they can help someone – and this is this most important aspect – on the other hand, they can be destructive to them and frequently this is the negative, harmful aspect of NLP, it is connected with the so called manipulation<sup>1</sup>.

Presuppositions assume that something is true and should be unconditionally accepted. Due to the above, those who want to use NLP should always remember the following motto: “*Helping other, in fact we help ourselves*”, which is a well-known postulate in all philosophical and religious movements.

Presuppositions can be hidden in four various categories:

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<sup>1</sup> Manipulation “*is influencing somebody without their knowledge by misrepresenting or obscuring facts for the purpose of modifying their views and behaviour so as to achieve one’s own goals*” – The new dictionary of the Polish language, PWN, Warsaw 2002, pp. 435-436; manipulation (Lat. *manipulatio* – manoeuvre, a trick or deceit) – in psychology and sociology: *inspiring social interaction for the purpose of deceiving a person or a group of people to make them act against their own best interest. Usually the manipulated person or a group of people are not aware of the means which are used to influence them. The manipulator usually wants to gain personal benefits and achieve their own goals personal, economic or political goals at the cost of manipulated people* 8.

- existence, e.g. *John has a cool, new bike* (the sentence assumes some facts – the existence of a person called John and the possession a cool, new bike);
- possibilities, e.g. *John has stolen my bike* (the sentence assumes some facts – the existence of a person called John and also that John steals bikes and that this bike exists);
- cause and effect, e.g. *John has also stolen a motorbike and as a result he will go to prison* – there is a person called John, John steals things, in this case a motorbike and, as a consequence, it is possible that he will go to prison);
- equivalence, e.g. *John and Kate are kissing, probably they are a couple* – there are two subjects in this sentence and they are equally important (valuable).

It is possible to distinguish the following types of presuppositions:

- time (the following linguistic predicates occur in them: before, prior, during, while, earlier, meanwhile, after, when); sample sentences: *“Prior to making a purchase, please, listen to our offer first”* or *“Before you tell me your name, tell me your telephone number”* or *“When we argue, I have spasms so let’s stop arguing”*;
- changes or lasting states (the following linguistic predicates occur in them: start, stop, finish, continue, continuously, without stopping, permanently, already); sample sentences: *“You must be wondering how beneficial this offer is”* or *“Now is a perfect moment to stop arguing and start talking normally”* or *“I know that somebody constantly makes a new sales offer to you although you have already bought what you wanted to buy”*;
- order, the so called bartender presuppositions (the following linguistic predicates occur in them: another, other, first, second, etc., last, initial, final, next, previous, later); sample sentences: *“This may be your first and last such a beneficial offer”*, or *“The next meeting will definitely be better”* or *“This was our last argument – let’s go to the cinema”*;
- choice (the following linguistic predicates occur in them: or, unless, either, also); sample sentences: *“Would you like to visit the garden now or later”* or *“You can either try to agree with me, or we will continue arguing”* or *“You can either spend time with us, knowing we will always support you, or you can choose them, but be aware that sooner or later they will lead you astray”*;
- awareness (the following linguistic predicates occur in them: know, understand, be aware, notice, realize, bring something to somebody’s attention, feel, smell, taste, hear); sample sentences: *“You have probably notices plenty of opportunities offered by the cooperation with this particular company”* or *“I am not sure if you realize how everything is going well, that everything works”* or *“Can you see how nice it is when do not have to argue and can simply explain everything to understand each other”*;

- adverbial /adjectival (the following linguistic predicates occur in them: happiness – how happy we are, how nice it is, how pleasantly, how well, how honestly, wonderfully, safely, etc., unfortunately, necessarily, indispensably); sample sentences: “The cooperation with company goes so well – *a large number of customers have had this experience*” or “*It is so wonderful when everyone can feel it, when everyone sets off fireworks*” or “It is necessary to find agreement and stop quarrelling, *then, together, we can create something great, something wonderful*”.

To strengthen the message, one should combine the above presuppositions which can be have the form of statements or questions. It is thought that the real power of a presupposition is extended in a question, or when a few types of questions are put together. As a rule, if there are three presuppositions, the mind accepts another one without being aware of it.

People use many presuppositions in their everyday lives, frequently without realizing it. The authors of NLP suggest some presuppositions which can become a practical set of rules for everyone and which can guide us, however, initially not everyone accepts them.

According to Steve Bavister and Amanda Vickers there over ten such presuppositions which can for a theoretical framework for patterns, models, techniques of changes and viewpoints in NLP. According to Robert Dilts[2].they can form the basis of personal development, i.e. also the basis of changes in self-management (Author’s annotation).

The above mentioned authors list the following presuppositions[2]:

- “*The map is not the territory*”, this statement should be understood in the following way: although the human mind map is developed by the mind, it is not identical with the world – the territory which surrounds it. The map shows only the coded world which is perceived by senses. A philosopher would say: “*We perceive the objectively existing world, which exists independent of us, in a subjective way (...)*”. In a word everyone sees the world in a way reflecting their own mind. The internally created image of the world is different from the real one.
- “*Everyone lives in their own, exceptional model of the world*”, this statement is a natural consequence of results from the previous one. If every human sees the world through their awareness, this unique image in their mind can be called a model which reflects this world. A perfect example is the perception of given phenomenon by a few people. Certainly each of them will describe their impressions in a similar, however, not exactly the same way. The reason why is that the impressions received by these people in this experience can be completely different. Quite frequently the reflections of a given situation perceived by various people can lead to conflicts in which each observer will try to prove they are right.
- “*Experience is structured*”, this claim is based the view that thoughts and memories have their own model, structure. Each change related to them re-

sults in a change of human experience. As a result everyone can neutralise negative aspects of their experience and develop the beneficial, constructive ones. In other words everyone perceived the reality with their senses and the received image is filtered by models and only then coded in the mind, so it is a systematised process. Next notions are developed taking into account time and emotions accompanying a given experience. Once we know this scheme, we can influence the shape of this experience.

- “*Life, mind and body make one system*”, according to the concept of Chinese Conceptualism<sup>6</sup> – the universal harmony in the universe is created by all natural phenomena called the *Macrocosm*, which have counterparts in the human *Microcosm*. In view of this statement, one can prove that human life, the body and mind create inseparable unity – one cohesive system. During the whole life a human organism as a system tries to maintain the internal balance of its systems guaranteeing its life, among other these are the following systems: skeletal, digestive, movement, breathing, vegetative, blood, urinary, immunological and finally human psychology. The man also develops a psychological balance with the social system, the “Animal Kingdom”, the “Plant Kingdom” or the “*Mineral Kingdom*”, etc., which guarantees his functioning in the surrounding reality.

The human body is an example of an efficient mechanism in which particular organs function independently and also perform certain tasks for the whole organism. This is why the human life, mind and body make one cohesive system. Treating this system as an NLP presupposition, when making plans or pursuing goals individually or in cooperation with others, one should remember that all part of the system will be involved, most frequently it is expressed in thinking, acting and emotions, etc.

- “*The essence of communication is feedback*”, according to this presupposition each interlocutor takes responsibility for the way of communicating. It is not surprising that in recent years social (interpersonal) communication has gained key significance in interpersonal relations. In supervisor-subordinate relations feedback means offering information to the subordinate about the effects of their work. It should be given in a direct and clear way. This presupposition indicates also that no one (meaning our interlocutor) should be blamed for a lack of attention or “wrong reaction”. Assessment if the message has been successfully transferred can be made on the basis of sensory sensitivity or it is possible to change the approach and use other means of persuasion or eristics.
- “*It is impossible not to communicate*”, being a part of a particular community it is impossible not to communicate. However, one should remember that there are various form of interpersonal communication. There are verbal and nonverbal forms. Few people realize that as much as 70% of information in a message is nonverbal, it is expressed in body language, gestures or a way of speaking. Some essential factors include rhythm, the tone or modula-





tion of voice, these aspects of communication are the ones people pay attention to during a conversation or discussion, etc.

This presupposition is very important because sometimes people do not realize that they can unintentionally offend somebody, express support or its lack while solving a conflict. This is why it is necessary to be especially careful and pay attention to all forms of transferring a message during a communication act. During communication the verbal and nonverbal message should be the same to give a clear impression to the interlocutor.

- *“Behind each type of behaviour there are positive intentions”*, this presupposition is related to achieving goals. Everyone would like to achieve their goals and regardless what kind of goals these would be, people are driven by positive intentions which in turn are influenced by their needs, the system of values. Sometimes to assess the intentions of another person, one should carefully analyse their motifs. Is it possible to change intentions? Yes, but it often requires changing the whole system of values, which will be reflected in positive behaviour, etc. One should try to give emotions positive character and make them result from positive actions, first of all from doing no harm to others. This is often connected with a change of personality and motivation, which means that people will try to do good and do no harm to others. Sometimes it is worth asking people about their intentions before pigeonholing them when we are not sure about their intentions in “suspicious” behaviour.
- *“People make the best possible choices”*, this presupposition assumes that in principle people make the best possible choices. However, when the choice spectrum is larger, then one should expect the choice to be more adequate. Here observation of our own behaviour, views, intentions and ways of thinking should be useful. When one is aware of their own thoughts, can assess them, knows their own mind or even has some knowledge of psychology, they can choose the best way of acting (the best thing to do) without any difficulty. Numerous people depend on their own intuition, however, this requires significant calming down of one’s own mind – disquieting, often disturbing thoughts, to reach the resources of the intellect, which can indicate the best possible choice.
- *“There are no failures – there is feedback”*, this presupposition allows people reach perfection. Usually people learn from their own mistakes when they are young to become mature and be able not to make them or eliminate them as much as this is possible. This will allow to reduce any failures which have various effects on people. They can be a source of stress, apathy or depression, or even in the case of long lasting influence, e.g. at work, they can lead to burnout syndrome. This is why, we should not be failure oriented and take effective actions (conduct) in life, which will always have a positive dimension. However, if the word “failure” has already appeared, it should be treated as a lesson, homework to do so as to change the way of acting and

turn it into success. This, however, requires rational thinking, insight into thinking processes and rational assessment of the situation, taking into account all the pros and cons. The best way of treating failures is considering them as missed attempts and the more of them happen at the beginning the fewer will happen in mature life of they will be completely eliminated.

- *“If your approach is not efficient, try another one”*, this presupposition is based on the trial and error method. One should always make an attempt so as to finally be able to choose the best way of acting (performance) which will lead to achieving a particular goal. Sometimes when the selected way of acting does not lead to the expected solution, it is necessary to ask the question “why”? Maybe a small modification would be enough to make our performance more efficient and effective. However, to do this one needs patience, flexibility and careful consideration. These characteristics lead to success.
- *“You have all the resources necessary to achieve your goal”*, this presupposition assumes a priori that people have all resources needed to achieve success. However, the key is reaching for these resources at the right place and time, as they are the best and lead to achieving success. Frequently in such situations, it is necessary to have previous experience which will help choose the way of using our resources. Another important factor are certain features of character which can facilitate the optimum selection of resources necessary to undertake the right action.
- *“If one person can do something, everyone can learn it”*: this presupposition indicates the fact that if somebody performed a particular action, it means that anyone can do it. It is possible that it requires appropriate conviction and faith in oneself. Maybe it requires only faithful copying of this action to be able to do it one one’s own. Sometimes people incorrectly believe that they would not manage to do it on their own. This is why it is so important to believe in ourselves, in our strength and potential in this respect. Everyone should strive for perfection in everything we do. Then we can be satisfied and motivated to independent, ingenious and creative activity which may seem impossible.
- *“People act in a perfect way”*, this presupposition convinces everyone to believe in oneself and in what they can do, how they should act, and the results will be the best. Only through repetitive actions can we reach perfection. In this case it is worth trusting ourselves and our skills. We should be able to assess our potential possibilities. Striving for perfection is a very positive characteristic which should be maintained.
- *“Every system is controlled by a person characterised by the highest flexibility”*, this presupposition glorifies flexibility as an indispensable feature which, if need be, can allow to adapt to new circumstances to choose the best way of acting. Quite frequently, the more complex the system, the



more flexibility is required. People should have this characteristic so they adapt to new situations as quickly as possible.

- “*Any decision is better than its lack*”, a lack of decision often makes it difficult to choose the best way of acting. It is enough to take into account the criteria which will make such a decision possible. The more opportunities, the higher the chances that the best one will be selected and then it is possible to take control of one’s life much faster. In NLP this is a very important presupposition which allows to increase choice opportunities.

### 2.3. Meta-Programs

Meta-programs are preconceived notions and ways of acting we are not aware of which can influence the way of perceiving the surrounding environment. They are responsible for information processing and hence for its understanding and interpretation.

Steve Bavister and Amanda Vickers<sup>2</sup> claim that the human mind is able to process only 5-9 pieces of information and still they are either deleted later, distorted or generalised. The same authors observed – see Perle and Satire – that a certain way of asking a question, the so called metamodels, helps people regain lost information and understand areas of reality which were earlier unclear and as a result they can act more efficiently. These questions encompass the following categories<sup>2</sup>:

- “deleting” refers to information for the external world which we have to get rid of because it can overwhelm us with its overabundance;
- “distortion” is a simplification of a given experience, e.g. due to insufficient information;
- “*generalization*” means using earlier experience to categorize new information.

Adam Cześniak distinguishes the following programmes as the ones which have the most significant influence on relations between a student and a teacher<sup>4</sup>:

- *Meta-program “external or internal frame of reference”* refers to our concentration on ourselves or on others. People who concentrate on themselves look at the surrounding reality from the perspective of themselves, their benefits and needs. Those who concentrate on others put the benefits of others above their own benefits. It is not difficult to observe that people focused on themselves are perceived as those who “cannot see further than the end of their nose”, while those who focus on others are popular because they are responsible for and thoughtful of other people they communicate with.
- *Meta-program “sorting by self, sorting by others”* the essence of this program is the location of the source of authority for a given person, is it inside or outside them. The people who have an internal program also have an internal authority and thanks to this they act based on their own convictions. Analogically, it is the other way around in the case of the people who have an external program. They usually act based on the opinions and assessments of other people.

- *Meta-program “matcher or mismatcher”* people with the “matcher” program usually ignore all differences. When communicating with such people, we should refer to mutual areas, similar issues and emphasise similarities between situations. On the contrary, in communication with people possessing the “mismatcher” program, we should try to find differences, stress elements which are different from others.

Apart from the above mentioned programmes, Steve Bavister and Amanda Vickers mention a few more:

- *Meta-program “toward or away”*, is people are oriented towards aspirations then their thinking style is “toward” oriented. Sometimes they lose motivation because they do not know how to use their ideas as they have so many of them. This is why in communication with these people, we should use infinitives: to get, to have, to achieve, to obtain, etc. People who avoid difficulties follow the “away” model. Such people sometimes find it difficult to define their priorities and as a result they cannot see what is most important. They will like such words as avoid, overcome, solve, prevent.
- *Meta-program “possibility vs. procedures”*, people with the “possibility” model love variety, they avoid rules although they also make them for others. They are full of life when they have a lot of opportunities and new ideas. They would like to control their future. A characteristic feature which helps to recognize them is starting new things and later rarely finishing them. The people with the “procedures” model like acting step by step. They do not like leaving anything unfinished. In their opinion observing rules is right and any deviations from them are considered non-standard.
- *Meta-program “totality vs. detail”* refers to the level generalisation and specificity in a way of thinking. People with the “totality” model when they are offered too many details by their interlocutors will quickly let them know that they are not all right with this. They love general statements, following sequences step by step is rather difficult for them. People with this program minimise the number of details and prefer a general outlook on a problem or task. On the other hand, people with the “detail” program love details. They perform tasks step by step and like emphasising every part and “cross the t’s and dot the i’s”. Communication with them requires using such words as exactly and precisely when information is given in a linear form, one piece after another.

#### 2.4. Modalities And Submodalities

People recognize the surrounding world with five senses (hearing, sight, touch, smell and taste) – in NLP terminology they are called *modalities*, and in combination with the nervous system they are the so called *representation systems*. In NLP these representation systems are often called VACOG (the acronym is made of the first letters of names of senses: visual, auditory, kinaesthetic, olfactory, gustatory). Usually people prefer one system of representation. Some people think using images, others prefer

sounds or feelings and still others like visualisation (they want see everything with the eyes of their imagination). Using predicates it is easy to recognize the preferred system of representation. A visualizer will say “I can see the light”, an audile will say “I have heard it” and a kinesthete: “I can feel a waft of wind on my cheek”, etc. NLP often uses the so called synaesthesia, i.e. combining particular modalities in pairs so as to increase message persuasiveness.

Submodalities are details which allow to distinguish between particular modalities. They are the way in which people create and code the structure of internal experience. Most often it takes place unconsciously. For instance, if you think visually, you create images with particular colours, brightness, contrast and depth of field. By creating sounds you imagine their volume, location and pitch. Bodily feelings are associated with temperature, time, etc. It is similar with smell and taste.

Thanks to submodalities we can code memories and plans for the future. Submodalities can be used to change their intensity and erase unpleasant and unwanted memories, etc.

## 2.5. Filters

Humans senses are filters, it means that they have a limited ability to pass information. NLP treats filters as the lenses of reality perception which can be divided into the following sub-categories:

- *Sensory filters* (neurological): sensory perception is tainted by a unique set of human experience. It depends even on the mood, on how we react to the current reality which when we are happy can seem pleasant, warm, etc. However, when we are in a bad mood, it will appear to be dark, gloomy. It is true that human perception is possible in a given range of visual light. People are not able to perceive anything in infrared or ultraviolet, certainly this does not mean that there is nothing there, which is widely discussed in contemporary science.
- *Linguistic filters* (language related): language is a strong filter of experience for everyone. Language is used to shape and organize our experience of the world. People using various languages frequently experience different feelings depending on the language they use. This is a consequence of the fact that languages make various cognitive filters of mental models.
- *Social filters*, such as prejudices, ideas, social models, are determined by social systems encompassing, e.g. family, peer groups, associations and other organizations. Each of these social circles accepts and observes certain standards, rules and customs characteristic for a given social group as well as various ways of perceiving the world and social agreements.
- *Cultural filters*: people of various cultures have different laws, standards and customs or rules of behaviour. Some things accepted in one country are unthinkable in another where there is different culture. Sometimes these standards contradict one another. Some people find it easy to adapt to the filters of another culture and society, while other people it is unacceptable. Every-

one lives in a unique reality made of their sensual impressions and individual life experience.

## 2.6. Anchoring

The process in which an emotional reaction is combined with external or internal experience in NLP is called anchoring<sup>2</sup>. Emotions are created in the mind and simultaneously they instigate particular psychological states. Their effect is either positive – pleasant, desired, associated with images which were rooted in human subconsciousness a long time before, or negative – undesired, associated with situations which most often bring bad or even unwanted memories. Both the desired and undesired emotional states in human subconsciousness, although we are not aware of them, act as associations<sup>2</sup>. In a word, they should be treated as the so called natural anchors. These are states which exist in our subconsciousness. Some anchors were left there in our childhood, some other ones later. Some of them can be considered indispensable. Although people do not remember the original experience which led them to its anchoring, emotional reactions remain the same. For instance when we look at photos taken a long time earlier, positive or negative emotions are evoked from the resources of our subconsciousness (the reason why is that particular memories are anchored there).

In NLP a good practitioner can “kinaesthetically anchored” memories, emotional states, emotions, feelings, etc. in the body of another person (client), next they can be used to process problematic types of behaviour (changes of attitudes, establishing and removing an anchor, etc.). In NLP, among others, there are the following types of anchors: *kinaesthetic*, *resource*, *chain*, *zip*, etc.<sup>2</sup>.

## 2.7. Calibration

The so called calibration in NLP is observation of particular models of behaviour in other people, it is a process of signal identification (through observation of attitudes, *gestures and body language*, *breathing*, *voice*, *colour of complexion*, *facial expressions*, etc.). These are the signals which accompany or precede particular emotional states. According to S. Bavister and A. Vickers, everyone can *calibrate* and we use this ability every day, however, most of the time it is unconscious. To calibrate means search for models and repetitive behaviour and we use for this ours or other people’s reactions. However, to do this we need a developed sensory sensitivity, i.e. an ability to observe

<sup>2</sup> Association: *the association theory has a very long tradition. The fact that conscious phenomena were associated was observed by Aristotle who formulated four laws of association: contiguity in space or time, repetition, attention, pleasure-pain. Later empiricists, positivists and psychologists became interested in them. Associations are created mainly thanks to two main factors: closeness in time and strengthening. Closeness in time is a necessary condition to create associations. However, they are created faster and are more powerful if they are strengthened. Strengthening is an important reaction for the organism and positive or negative events taking place after a reaction have influence on reinforcement or weakening of the association affiliation. The establishment of the association affiliation can be recognized when one of the associated phenomena occurs and only this occurrence evokes another phenomenon associated with it – see: Psychologia (ed. Tadeusz Tomaszewski), PWN, Warsaw 1978, p. 186 and pp. 498-499.*

tiny details. Calibration is used to build good rapport and also to build our particular image to be better assessed by others.

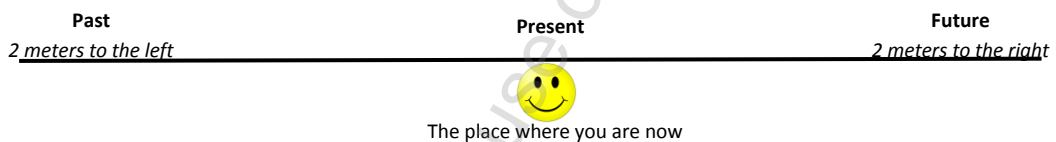
## 2.8. Modelling

Modelling in NLP means a number of techniques allowing to develop a particular model of e.g. behaviour, action, by putting oneself in somebody else's place (position) on the basis of appropriate representations, images, descriptions, physical objects, examples, ways of acting, etc. which define the characteristic features of the original model. The goal of modelling is achieving human perfection as well as the art of acquiring useful knowledge. People model, most frequently by copying the behaviour of others, even at a very young age although they do not realize it. NLP distinguished the following types of modelling: natural, simple and complex, intuitive and analytical, etc.2.

## 2.9. Timelines

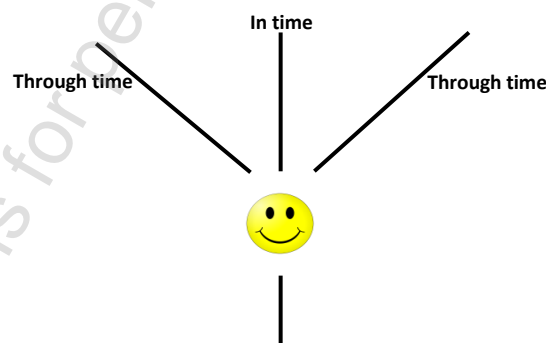
In NLP the word timeline most often means the way in which people code mental images, sounds, feelings, tastes and smells from past, current and future events. Everyone has such a timeline. Similarly to meta-programs or submodalities, timelines are individual. A timeline is also a defined submodality.

Within a few minutes everyone can live in presence – by performing a particular activity, in the past – thinking about past experience, in the future – thinking about something that can happen. Timelines are presented in Figure 2. and Figure 3.



**Fig. 2.** A sample timeline

Source: Author's own study on the basis of [http://www.projektsukces.pl/nlp\\_timeline.html](http://www.projektsukces.pl/nlp_timeline.html) (01.02.2014)



**Fig. 3.** A sample timeline

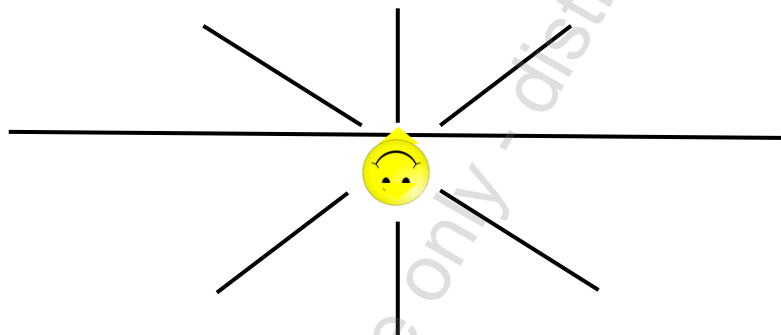
Source: Author's own study on the basis of S. Bavister, A. Vickers, *NLP w praktyce* (...), the quoted edition, p. 237.

It is possible to distinguish two types (kinds) of timelines:

- through time (Anglo-European time);
- in time (Arabic time).

People usually use various time perceptions. Anglo-European types stretch timelines from one side to the other, where one side is the past and the other the future, however, both of them are seen opposite a person (as a curve). People with this linear perception of time are punctual and are expected to be punctual. This vision dominates in business.

People with Arabic perception of time types have timelines running from back to front and can see only one part of them (most often the future), past is left behind (so we have to turn our head to the past). Such people cannot use their past, they remain in the present which leads to unpunctuality (it is not important for them). Such people remain in association with their timelines and probably this is the way in which they store memories, see Figure 4.



**Fig. 4.** A sample timeline

*Source: Author's own study on the basis of S. Bavister, A. Vickers, NLP w praktyce (...), the quoted edition, p. 237.*

How to determine the timelines of a particular person? It is enough to ask a few questions:

- Do you remember what happened a week ago?
- If yes, then how do you think why you remember this?
- Do you remember anything that happened a month or two months ago? A year, two, five or ten years ago?
- Acting according to the same scheme, imagine that something can happen in the future, e.g. in a year, five or ten years.
- Do memories and images form lines? Do they suggest a linear order?

Everyone has some notion of time, even if initially it is not immediately recognizable. People who focus on the past worry more and feel more grief, etc. while people who think about the future do not feel so much grief and do not analyse the past so much.



## 2.10. Action strategies

NLP strategies combine internal processing (sequences of representation systems and submodalities) which can be found behind numerous activities performed by people every day.

To explore ours or somebody else's strategy we can use visual hints in the representation system or use the steps listed below (in the form of questions), which seems a simpler method<sup>2</sup>:

- a) Remember the moments when you felt confident.
- b) Remember a particular moment (of this confidence).
- c) Using your imagination return to this moment to fully experience it.
- d) What and how did you remember thanks to this event?
  - What was the reason for feeling confident?
  - Was a visual image, what was its nature?
  - Was it an auditory image, what was its nature?
  - Was it a kinaesthetic image, what was its nature?
  - What made you feel confident after seeing, hearing or touching?
  - Did you imagine anything?
  - Did you say anything to yourself?
  - Did you have a feeling or did you experience any emotion or a feeling?
  - Did anything else happen?
  - What happened next when you gained confidence?
- a) Did you know that you gained confidence after seeing, hearing or touching? Did you imagine anything, say anything to yourself or have any feeling?
- b) And so on until you discover yours or somebody else's strategy. It can happen sooner than you think.

NLP use techniques – examples

Example 1. The so called *Circle of Excellence*<sup>9</sup> – it is connected with public speaking.

- a) Try to think what excellence means to you. What emotional states do you associate with this situation and what can evoke them to achieve excellence? Try to name these states.
- b) Imagine that there is a circle in front of you on the floor. Mentally place your emotional states which are indispensable for you in it. With the eyes of your imagination see the colour, feel the temperature, the smell and even taste of each of these states. Remember that the more feelings, images and pictures, the better, they can be e.g. feelings of self-confidence, the state when you are really motivated, when you have a lot of energy so as to speak in public in a confident and relaxed way, you can also imagine the state of composure. Look at all these feelings, images and pictures in a holistic way when they are all mixed up together. What does your circle look like? Is it a

calm ocean or maybe a rough sea, fierce fire? And so on. Look at this circle and try to remember as much as you can.

- c) Now peacefully enter this circle and make all these emotional states and energies fill you. Allow them to circulate in your blood, energy channels, the nervous system with every breath, in consequence allow them to fill your body and mind. You can imagine how every breath brings the imagined emotion to your lungs and then takes it your whole body.
- d) Establish an anchor, i.e. select an appropriate stimulus (*kinaesthetic* – e.g. touching your thumb with your left hand finger, visual – e.g. an relevant image, symbol or colour, auditory – e.g. saying a particular word in your thoughts, such as let's start).
- e) Now go out of the circle leaving in it your state of perfection and next break this state, i.e. think about something completely different, it can be your friend's telephone number, count chairs or windows in a flat.
- f) "Trigger the anchor", i.e. touch your thumb with your left hand finger or imagine the coded image or symbol, say: let's start to test perfection.
- g) To reinforce the anchor, you can repeat steps 3-6.
- h) Now find the context in which you would like to use the state of perfection, enter the circle and trigger the anchor thinking and living the situation which is to take place in the future in your imagination. Observe it carefully and remember, bearing in mind that you have resources filling you, that you play the main role, you are not only an observer. You are in association with your images and you can remember the imagined (coded) colours, temperature and sounds, etc.
- i) Leave the circle and break the emotional state.
- j) Now test yourself thinking about a situation which earlier caused stress. How much has changed?

Example 2. The so called *Change personal history technique*<sup>3</sup> – it can be used in the case of minor negative feelings which transformed into well-known but bad habits. Using this technique one can eliminate unwanted, bad habits or convictions leading to low self-assessment.

- a) Define your negative state. Evoke this state and recognize it. Establish an anchor (see above).
- b) Maintain this negative anchor and ask another person to return in their thoughts to a situation when they felt in a similar way. Next wait for this person to define the earliest possible experience. Remove the anchor, i.e. interrupt this state and ask your interlocutor to return to the presence.
- c) In the light of new information, ask your interlocutor what resources in the previous situation helped them to transform this experience into a pleasant or at least acceptable one. These resources can be defined by such words as: safety, being loved and accepted, etc. they must come from the inside of this person – your interlocutor, not anyone else.



- d) Evoke and anchor particular and complete experience of the required state of a given resource and test it with a positive anchor.
- e) Maintaining the positive anchor, ask your interlocutor to return to the earlier experience and next ask them to observe themselves from outside with this new resource and to see how the experience changed. Next tell them to enter this situation with the new resource and live this experience one more time (maintain the anchor during this time). Ask your interlocutor to observe the surroundings, e.g. reactions of others and their own feelings and conclusions. If dissatisfaction occurs at any of the described stages, return to step 4 adding more resources which can have a positive influence on finding a solution. This means that the interlocutor lives this experience without friends, negative emotions or feelings and learns a new state on this basis.
- f) Maintaining the anchor all the time, ask the interlocutor to go forward and try new similar experiences from their past to see that they no longer evoke familiar, unpleasant feelings or emotions. Next, depending on the need, a few more resources can be added and later the anchor can be removed and the state can be interrupted.
- g) Check if there is a change by asking your interlocutor if they remember any of the experiences evoking such negative feelings and emotions. Next ask them to pay attention how memories have changed. Later observe their behaviour to collect data. Project them on the future, i.e. ask the interlocutor to imagine a future situation which would correspond with the situation which in the past evoked negative feelings. Observe what resources are used to change the experience.

## CONCLUSION

Some selected elements of neurolinguistic programming collected in this article can be used to improve our own personality and support other people in this respect. Probably due to the fact that it is a relatively new field of science, based on ample experience of trainers, one can expect that in the next few years NLP can become more popular all over the world. Then it can be expected to find an appropriate place among other fields of science.

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### BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

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