For ease of use, the contents page and any references to tables or figures which are on different pages have been highlighted in yellow. These are hyperlinks to that specific item's page. You can then return to your starting point by right clicking your mouse and choosing "Previous View" in the drop down menu.
This inaugural issue of the peer reviewed journal, Current Research in NLP, contains proceedings from the First International NLP Research Conference held at the University of Surrey, UK, on 5th July 2008.' The conference was organised by the University of Surrey in partnership with the Association for NLP (ANLP International CIC).

The next volume of Current Research in NLP will contain proceedings from the Second International NLP Research Conference, due to be held at Cardiff University on 3rd July 2010 as well as other papers, which have been submitted in the meantime.

The nine papers in this issue contribute to the widely-acknowledged need for a research-minded approach to NLP. The papers illustrate the welcome diversity of NLP usage and include papers by both academic and practitioner researchers, across sectors including education, health, business and psychotherapy. They report variously on NLP practice; conceptual issues; and applications of NLP as research methods.

- Diamantopoulos et al. provide what may well be the most definitive review to date of research relating to that perennial NLP theme, the eye-accessing cues model.
- Wake investigates the practice of NLP psychotherapy (NLPt), with a specific interest in belief change. She argues for an expanded theory that would complement NLP with Object Relations theory.
- Cheal explores how NLP might aid in the management of paradox in business organisations.
- Gray reports on the Brooklyn program, in which the US Probation Department, Eastern District of New York, operated a 16 week, NLP-based program for offenders with various levels of substance use disorders.
- Squirell has applied NLP within her practice as a special needs educator. She describes and evaluates her work with children with Social, Emotional and Behavioural difficulties (SEBD) at a Pupil Referral Unit.
- Weaver’s paper provides an example of a research-based approach to evaluation within a private psychotherapy practice. He uses an instrument called CORE to assess client outcomes.
- Beeden’s paper describes how she has adapted and applied Dilts’ ‘Disney creativity strategy’ within arts education, and reports on student perceptions of its value.
- Churches and West-Burnham discuss implications of the use of NLP in relation to personalisation and the Children’s Agenda in schools. It documents the way NLP has been used as part of the Fast Track teaching programme (the UK government accelerated leadership development programme).
- Walton et al. explore the nature, meaning and benefits of regular participation in exercise from the perspective of 41 women aged 30 to 50 years, using Dilts’ Neuro-Logical Levels model as the basis of the data gathering process.

With such a broad coverage of applications, we know you will find something to interest you in this edition and if you would like to comment on any of the articles here, we would love to receive your correspondence to continue the discussions and debates around practice. If you are yourself, researching into any aspect of NLP, perhaps you would consider publishing your work with us in the future, or perhaps presenting it at the NLP research conference. Details of proffering papers can be found at: www.nlpresearchconference.com

We look forward to developing and exploring the field of NLP research with you.
We are delighted and honoured to have partnered the University of Surrey in organising the Research Conference and in the subsequent production of ‘Current Research in NLP: Volume 1’. Whilst research into NLP may continue to be a ‘controversial’ topic, it is an essential element for both protecting and evolving the field of NLP. As NLP Practitioners, we are encouraged to be curious, so expanding this curiosity into research and challenge within the field is a healthy step forward. It is widely acknowledged that, “there are ‘searchers’ and ‘researchers’”, and to our way of thinking, both are equally valuable in developing and evolving NLP.

We are encouraged by the fact that there are both academic and practitioner researchers in our field that are prepared to devote their time, energy and resources to further developing NLP, and we are eternally grateful for their dedication and commitment.

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BUSINESS
A critical review of past research into the neuro-linguistic programming eye-accessing cues model

Georgios Diamantopoulos
Sandra I. Woolley
Michael Spann

Abstract

The neuro-linguistic programming (NLP) eye-accessing cues (EAC) model suggests that there is a correlation between eye-movements and the internal processing mode that people employ when accessing their subjective experience. At least six out of ten studies that have investigated the EAC model since its introduction in 1977 have reported unsupportive results. In this review of past research, these studies and their respective experimental methodologies are examined and the reliability of their results assessed. The review is extended by presenting recent findings from other relevant eye-movement research while discussing their relevancy to and implications for the EAC model. We will argue that there is substantial ground for further research and identify the requirements that should inform this work.

Keywords

EYE-MOVEMENTS, INTERNAL PROCESSING, EYE-ACCESSING CUES, NEUROSCIENCE, CRITICAL REVIEW

Introduction and background

The Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) Eye-Accessing Cues (EAC) model was first introduced by Grinder, DeLozier and Bandler (1977) and further refined by Bandler and Grinder (1979). The EAC model suggests that non-visual eye-movements (i.e. eye-movements that are not concerned with the visual pursuit of an object in the environment) indicate which representational system a person is currently using.

As defined by Bandler and Grinder (1979, p. 14) the representational system is the sensory system that a representation of a person’s subjective experience is held or accessed in:

‘What we noticed is that different people actually think differently, and that these differences correspond to the three principal senses: vision, hearing, and feeling – which we call kinaesthetics. When you make initial contact with a person s/he will probably be thinking in one of these three main representational systems. Internally s/he will either be generating visual images, having feelings, or talking to themselves and hearing sounds.’
According to Dilts and DeLozier (2000, p. 1097), ‘the term “representational systems” refers to the neurological mechanisms behind the five senses’. The representational system is different to the ‘lead system’, which is the sensory system that the person uses to initiate the search for the representation of the experience; for example, a search for a visual representation may be initiated from an auditory or kinaesthetic representation. In the EAC model, there is also the distinction of the ‘primary representational system’ (PRS), which is introduced and loosely defined in the original NLP texts (Bandler and Grinder 1975, Grinder and Bandler 1976, Bandler and Grinder 1979); an appropriate definition is found in Dilts and DeLozier (2000, p. 1102): ‘in NLP, a person is said to have a “primary representational system” when that person values or uses one of his or her senses over the others in order to process and organise his or her experience of the world.’

It is stated (Bandler and Grinder 1979) that the EAC model is independent of handedness; that is, patterns should emerge for all individuals regardless of their handedness.

Since its introduction in 1977, the EAC model has been investigated in ten studies. While six of these studies report unsupportive results, a clear conclusion as to the validity of the model has not been reached. Each one of these studies is considered in the first part of this paper and it is shown that, upon careful examination, the respective experimental methodologies were based on assumptions informed by an incomplete or erroneous understanding of the EAC model that could have significantly influenced the experimental results. The reliability of the results can be further impacted by the absence of modern eye-tracking equipment to support the inherently complex task of reliably recording, selecting and rating eye-positions. Further doubt is raised as to the validity of the results as most studies reported statistically significant results (whether in favour of the model or not) and yet, the correlations reported are not in agreement across studies.

![Figure 1: The eye-accessing cues model for a normally-organised right-handed person. (G. Diamantopoulos, S.I. Woolley, M. Spann, 2009)](image-url)

Review efforts have been made before (Sharpley 1987, Heap 1988, Richardson and Spivey 2004), where NLP is criticised as unsupported by research efforts. However, these reviews are drawn from the reported results of the referenced studies rather than a critical review of the literature with strong background knowledge of the models in question. Further, Heap (1988) bases his conclusions largely on results reported by masters’ dissertational theses; of his large list of 66 references, 36 are dissertations. The present review is restricted to peer-reviewed publications that concern the EAC model only.

Further extending our survey in the second part of this paper, recent eye-movement research from other fields is presented and its relevancy to and implications for the EAC model are discussed. Thus, it will become apparent that, to our knowledge, there is no research that directly proves or disproves the EAC model and there is substantial ground for further research.

Finally, in the last part, drawing from the strengths and weaknesses of past research in the EAC model and the research findings from eye-movement and cognition research, this paper attempts to identify the requirements that should inform future research.
Past eye-accessing cues model research

Of the relatively few academic studies of NLP, a large percentage have been concerned with the EAC model and the closely related notion of the PRS. In this section, past research literature is reviewed and critiqued, with a sole focus on the EAC model. References to studies of the PRS will only be made where methodological decisions are relevant to our discussion; otherwise, their results are regarded as irrelevant for this review.

Examination of the issues that revolve around handedness is beyond the scope of this review; the authors assume the generic form of the model which, as stated above, suggests that patterns emerge in all individuals regardless of handedness.

Brief overview of objectives and reported results of EAC studies

Thomason et al. (1980) attempted to test the EAC model hypothesis using questions to elicit visual, auditory and kinaesthetic (VAK) representations; their study was unsupportive of the model and was criticised by Beck and Beck (1984). Elich et al. (1985) used questions to elicit VAK representations and attempted to correlate eye-movements and verbal predicates with question modality (interview-style); their conclusion was unsupportive of the model. Buckner and Reese (1987) asked subjects to report on VAK components of pleasant thoughts and found partial support for the model. Another test by Baddeley and Predebon (1991) correlated eye-movements with the corresponding verbal-report of the subjects’ subjective experience and also found partial support. Burke et al. (2003) tested the relation between eye-movements and visual-kinaesthetic-gustatory (VKG) tasks both as hypothesised by the NLP model and idiosyncratically and found support for the idiosyncratic hypothesis.

Farmer et al. (1985) used recall of real stimuli and found no support for the model; a similar study was repeated by Wertheim et al. (1986) and found partial support. Dooley and Farmer (1988) repeated the experiment of Farmer et al. (1985) with aphasic subjects and found partial support.

Cheney et al. (1982) tested the relationship between eye-movements and reported imagery with the use of a questionnaire on vividness (Sheehan 1967); the results were unsupportive of the model. A questionnaire was also used by Poffel and Cross (1985) with unsupportive results but it is unclear if the questionnaire was read out by an interviewer or completed by the subjects.

In an interview-style study (Ellickson 1983), the interviewers attempted to match the subjects’ representational system, as determined in real-time by their eye-movements, through verbal predicates and tested the effect of predicate matching on perceived counsellor empathy.

Falzett (1981) used eye-movements to assess the PRS and determine the outcome of matching it through verbal predicates in counselling. Gumm et al. (1982) attempted to examine the agreement in the determination of the PRS using eye-movements, verbal predicates and self-report. Sandhu (1991) tested whether the PRS can be reliably determined from eye-movements by comparing its assessment from eye-movements, verbal predicates and self-report; he found no support for the EAC model.
Table 1 below is a summary of all the past research studies relevant to the EAC model.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Publication</th>
<th>Purpose of study</th>
<th>Reported results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thomason et al. (1980)</td>
<td>Questions to elicit VAK representations; to correlate EMs with question type</td>
<td>Unsupportive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Falzett (1981)</td>
<td>Determine the effect of PRS as determined by EMs; questions to elicit EMs</td>
<td>Not relevant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheney et al. (1982)</td>
<td>Determine the correlation of EMs and reported imagery; Sheehan/Betts’ questionnaire on imagery to elicit EMs</td>
<td>Unsupportive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gumm et al. (1982)</td>
<td>Determine the effect of predicate of PRS based on EMs, predicates and self-report; questions used to elicit EMs</td>
<td>Not relevant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dorn et al. (1983)</td>
<td>To assess the reliability of assessing the PRS through EMs</td>
<td>Not relevant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ellickson (1983)</td>
<td>Determine the effect of real-time verbal predicate matching as determined by EMs</td>
<td>Not relevant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elich et al. (1985)</td>
<td>Questions to elicit VAK representations; to correlate EMs and verbal predicates with question type</td>
<td>Unsupportive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmer et al. (1985)</td>
<td>Recall of real stimuli to elicit VAK representations; to correlate EMs with stimuli type</td>
<td>Unsupportive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poffel and Cross (1985)</td>
<td>Questions to elicit VAK representations; to correlate EMs with question type</td>
<td>Unsupportive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wertheim et al. (1986)</td>
<td>Recall of real stimuli to elicit VAK representations; to correlate EMs with stimuli type</td>
<td>Partial support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buckner and Reese (1987)</td>
<td>To correlate the self-report of VAK components of subjective experience and recorded EMs</td>
<td>Partial support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dooley and Farmer (1988)</td>
<td>Like Farmer et al. (1985) but with aphasic subjects</td>
<td>Partial support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baddeley and Predebon (1991)</td>
<td>Questions to elicit VAK representations; to correlate EMs with question type and self-report</td>
<td>Unsupportive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sandhu (1991)</td>
<td>Determine the agreement of PRS based on EMs, predicates and self-report</td>
<td>Not relevant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burke et al. (2003)</td>
<td>Questions to elicit VKG representations; to correlate EMs to question type</td>
<td>Support for idiosyncratic case</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

EMs: Eye Movements

Table 1: Summary of past EAC research studies examined in this review. (G. Diamantopoulos, S.I. Woolley, M. Spann, 2009)

The EAC model and transderivational search

A very important part of the EAC model as presented by Bandler and Grinder (1979), is the process that elicits the eye-movements in question. This process, termed as ‘transderivational search’ occurs when the subject recovers the ‘deep structure’ from the ‘surface structure’, as shown in Figure 2.

The terms ‘deep structure’ and ‘surface structure’ were coined by Chomsky (1965) though a clear definition is elusive in both Chomsky’s and the original NLP texts. A fairly comprehensive explanation can be found in Dilts and DeLozier (2000). Briefly explained, the ‘deep structure’ consists of thoughts and ideas and their linguistic expression is the ‘surface structure’; derivation is a series of transformations which connects the deep structure with the surface structure (Bandler and Grinder 1975, p. 29). Chomsky (1965) originally used these terms to describe linguistic processes but Bandler and Grinder implicitly extended these notions to neurological processes related to our sensory experience (Dilts and DeLozier 2000). Bandler and Grinder (1975) describe three
transformative processes (deletion, distortion and generalisation) that are reflected both in the linguistic and the mental representation of the person’s experience. Finally, ‘transderivational search is the process of accessing the meaning, which is equivalent to some set of images, feelings or sounds that are associated to that word’ (Bandler and Grinder 1979, p. 15).

As mentioned above, transderivational search is the process that elicits the eye-movements that the EAC model focuses on. Thus, the first and foremost challenge in directly examining the EAC model as the aforementioned studies have done, is identifying an experimental methodology for eliciting eye-movements that follows a specific and precise definition of transderivational search. As useful as the above definitions may be, they require further refinement before they can be used experimentally. The methodology also needs to be consistent in achieving predictable responses in all instances and for all subjects. For the specific purpose of investigating the EAC model, it ought to recover visual, auditory, kinaesthetic and optionally olfactory and gustatory representations.

![Figure 2: Elicitation of eye-movements in the EAC model. (G. Diamantopoulos, S.I. Woolley, M. Spann, 2009)](image)

**Eye-movement elicitation**

Unknown questions were used by Thomason et al. (1980) and Poffel and Cross (1985). Falzett (1981) used questions from an unpublished doctoral thesis that are not reproduced in his publication. Gumm et al. (1982) used twenty questions to provide the subject with a variety of ‘cognitive tasks’. It is unknown what exactly is meant by ‘cognitive tasks’ in this case; it is likely that the tasks were unrelated to direct elicitation of sensory representations as other research of the time was concerned with generic mental tasks (e.g. Ehrlichman et al. 1974). Ellickson (1983) employed six ‘stimulus cues’ during interviews that were apparently designed to elicit eye-movements and neither the design criteria nor the stimulus cues are included.

Buckner and Reese (1987) asked their subjects to ‘think in silence of a single pleasant thought or memory’ and after ten seconds, the interviewer asked the subject to report any VAK components; once again, the validity of this methodology in eliciting eye-movements as described above was not examined by Buckner and Reese (1987).

Eye-movement elicitation methodology was only sparsely informed by other research; the only instances are the papers by Cheney et al. (1982) and Elich et al. (1985) that utilised the questionnaire on mental imagery developed by Sheehan (1967). However, its relevance and validity in the investigation of the EAC model was not discussed nor tested; even if the questionnaire is successful in eliciting eye-movements, it is not appropriate for this purpose as it explores the different properties of objects within a single representation (e.g. the colour of the dishes and the food on the breakfast table).
Sandhu (1991) was the first to note and give weight to the importance of ‘stressed recalls’ and proposes that the subject’s eyes will shift in potentially meaningful ways only when they ‘think hard’ to answer the question. Despite this observation, the questions taken from the Sandhu PRS Inventory are neither reproduced nor published in a journal publication elsewhere. Further, the inventory sample provided is arithmetic and not relevant to any one sensory modality.

Regardless of the particular method, the examples above highlight the ad-hoc selection of the eye-movement elicitation methodology and the implicit assumption that the respective methodology is equivalent of the transderivational search and consequently examines the desired eye-movements; no formal pilot studies were conducted and minimal emphasis was given on this pivotal aspect.

Baddeley and Predebon (1991) provided the full inventory of questions but there was another fundamental flaw. Duke (1968) found that a ‘complex’ question will elicit a series of eye-movements, almost predictably. However, the more complex the question, the more difficult it is to isolate the cognitive process at work. Thus, questions that are too simple may not elicit any eye-movements and questions that are too complex may elicit too many eye-movements and/or cognitive processes for any useful distinctions to be made. More specifically, in the case of such complex questions, there is no guarantee that the representational system accessed by the subject is the same as intended by the author of the question. For example in a question that appears in Baddeley and Predebon (1991), ‘What colour are the walls in your bathroom?’, which is reported as ‘visually remembered’, the subject could retrieve a memory of their bathroom, kinaesthetically, e.g. by remembering the feeling of sinking into warm bath water (also reported by Beck and Beck 1984). As mentioned earlier, in the EAC model, this is termed as the ‘lead system’ (Bandler and Grinder, 1979, p. 28).

Validation of the subject’s cognition

This leads us to another inherent challenge in the direct examination of the EAC model: validation of the subject’s cognition. While the representational system access required to answer a particular question can be linguistically pre-supposed (i.e. the access of a visual representation is required to recover purely visual information such as the colour of an object), how can one be truly certain that the subject has accessed the pre-supposed representational system to recover the information and nothing else without the use of neuroimaging technology such as functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI)?

Farmer et al. (1985) provided subjects with real stimuli (pictures, tape-recorded sounds and textural objects) that they had to experience and later recall, presumably to guarantee that the representational system the subject used is the one intended. However, this is no different from pre-supposing that when the subject is asked to report on visual information, it is necessary for them to perform a visual access; the need for validation is still warranted. Take a textural object for example, such as a rock: even if it is supposed that the subject was blindfolded (no such mention by the authors), it is not necessary that the subject encoded only the kinaesthetic/textural aspect of the rock. Alternatively, the subject may form a mental visual image of what the rock may look like based on the kinaesthetic input – the ‘feel’ of the rock. Thus, this methodology has failed to warrant the type of representational system accessed or to further involve the phenomenological, subjective experience of the subject. The same approach is taken by Wertheim et al. (1986) and is thus subject to the same criticism.

In an attempt to deal with this fundamental issue of validating the subject’s cognition, some researchers collected accounts of the subject’s subjective experience (Cheney et al. 1982, Elich et al. 1985, Baddeley and Predebon 1991); however, the methodology was not informed by phenomenology literature. For example, the method of introspective inquiry suggested by Beck and Beck (1984) in their critique of a related study (Thomason et al. 1980) is informed only by NLP literature. Imagery and introspection is an area of human psychology that has a long history of controversy (see, for example, Horowitz 1983) simply because of its own very nature. The information is retrieved from a subjective source, the person, and the question of the reliability of any gained
information is very quickly raised (Mathison 2006). NLP aims to study people’s subjective experience and might thus be expected to have an interest in the methods of phenomenology; if NLP is to be explored academically and any potential links to be established, it is imperative that any enquiries into NLP are informed by established methodologies.

**Recording, rating and selecting eye-movements**

One cannot dismiss the inherent difficulty in recording and rating the eye-movements. To date, two different methodologies have been used: a) real-time scoring by human observers; or b) video recording the eye-movements and scoring them later. Especially in the first case, the question of who does the rating is especially relevant; the implicit assumption has been that eye-movements are easily discernable by (un)trained human observers in real-time or with the use of video-recording equipment.

The study of eye-movements has a long history and so does their measurement (Yarbus 1967). We hypothesise that direct-viewing was used in NLP studies because the EAC model is taught to be useful in real-time human interaction where the practitioner observes the eye-movements without technological aids. The use of inexperienced graduate student raters is advocated by Sharpley (1987) as traditional and a good measure of a procedure’s readiness and robustness. This argument could only be valid if the model’s suitability for adoption by untrained individuals was assessed and not its validity. The only available information regarding the accuracy and reliability of direct-viewing of eye-movements is that movements of less than 1° rotation (0.2mm movement of the retina) are not discernable by the naked eye (Yarbus 1967; it is unclear whether this refers to a trained or untrained individual) and the question of sufficient reliability for the purposes of a scientific study quickly arises.

Indeed, several studies make no reference to the experience of the raters (Gumm et al. 1982; Poffel and Cross 1985; Farmer et al. 1985; Wertheim et al. 1986; Burke et al. 2003), while others have regarded the use of naive (Thomason et al. 1980; Cheney et al. 1982; Baddeley and Predebon 1991) or briefly trained raters (Falzett 1981; Ellickson 1983; Elich et al. 1985; Sandhu 1991) as acceptable. NLP practitioners were used in one instance (Buckner and Reese 1987); again, this does not guarantee rating accuracy or reliability.

The case of some studies is strengthened because they used video-recording equipment that allows the rater to review eye-movements (Gumm et al. 1982; Cheney et al. 1982; Elich et al. 1985; Poffel and Cross 1985; Wertheim et al. 1986; Sandhu 1991; Baddeley and Predebon 1991; Burke et al. 2003). In the methods used by most of these authors, the subject was forced to look at the camera thus restricting their head and body movement (Cheney et al. 1982). It is questionable whether all relevant eye-movements are discernable both because of relevant training and obscuring of the eye by blinks or head tilts and so on. The question of precision and reliability of rating has not been raised before other than inter-rater reliability tests which only certify a statistical agreement between raters and have no account for their individual abilities or other limitations imposed. In order to eliminate as many variables as possible, a recording and rating methodology whose error is known has to be used. In the methods described, no such precision/reliability tests have been performed. The question of what eye-movements occur during blinks and how they are relevant to the EAC model has not been considered in the literature other than by Buckner and Reese (1987) and Baddeley and Predebon (1991).

Even if an assumption that all relevant eye-movements can be precisely and reliably captured is made, another potent issue is which eye-movement to take into account. Firstly, the number of eye-movements in response to a stimulus cannot be predicted; to our knowledge there are no studies that show any statistically significant results in this respect. Therefore, by fixing the number of analyzed eye-movements, bias is introduced in the selection process.
It is unknown how Thomason et al. (1980) selected the relevant eye-movement(s). In the study by Elich et al. (1985, p. 622), the authors specify that ‘eye-movements were recorded from the moment of asking the image-evoking question up through subject’s description of the images experienced in response to the question’; however, the process of selecting the eye-movement judged as relevant to the question is also unknown. Similarly, Poffel and Cross (1985) provide no information on the matter.

In a study related to the PRS, Falzett (1981) selected the eye-movement prior to the acknowledgement of the subject that an internal response has been reached. This process was replicated by Farmer et al. (1985). Gumm et al. (1982) and Sandhu (1991) assessed the first eye-movement following the end of each question, while Wertheim et al. (1986) recorded the first eye-movement after the subject was asked to recall the stimuli as well as the last eye-movement before the subject’s acknowledgement of their internal response. Recording the first eye-movement after the end of the question was earlier done by Cheney et al. (1982); in their study, multiple eye-movements were regarded as a separate event and selection was not attempted. Ellickson (1983) made a distinction between occurrences of one and two eye-movements; in the latter case, the second eye-movement was selected. There are several flaws these studies have in common.

• There is an implicit assumption that eye-movements (or at least the relevant one) occur after the end of the question, which is not necessarily true and this is supported by Cheney et al. (1982) who pointed out that often the subject’s eyes will shift before the end of the question.

• Bandler and Grinder (1979) also suggest that some eye-movements may reflect a speech preparation, rehearsal, or translation process or the first eye-movement may reflect the ‘lead’ system, i.e. the representational system that the subject uses to bring the representation into consciousness; in the example offered earlier, the kinaesthetic system (the feeling of sinking into warm bath water) would be the lead system.

• In the case of asking the subject to acknowledge reaching an internal response before verbalising, it is possible that the last eye-movement corresponds to a process related to this acknowledgement.

Buckner and Reese (1987) recorded whether any eye-movement that matched the expected modality was present when asking their subjects if they were aware of VAK components in their thought. While the EAC model does not define a specific selection process, it is questionable if this methodology can yield objective results.

Baddeley and Predebon (1991) recorded a series of eye-movements in each part of their study; the two models they used are shown diagrammatically in Figure 3 together with the other approaches. This is an improvement over previous studies in that it attempts to record multiple eye-movements. However, there are three fundamentally problematic assumptions that cannot be predictably satisfied. Those are:

1. All subjects will always perform the same amount of eye-movements (no selection criteria are discussed).

2. If the correlation between recorded eye-movements and the representational system targeted by the question is to be found statistically significant, it has to occur on the same eye-movement instance for every person. In reality, variations of cognitive and physiological responses can be expected in different people answering the same question.

3. Eye-movements have a one-to-one correspondence to internal representations or processes. In reality, one cannot be certain what these processes are; also pointed out by Cheney et al. (1982).

Recently, Burke et al. (2003) video recorded and scored all eye-movements and performed pattern analysis on sets of two, three, and more than three eye-movements. Cheney et al. (1982) reported that eye-movements will often transpire before the interviewer has reached the end of the question as early as 1982 and it is therefore surprising that no studies up to Burke et al. (2003) take this into account.
Figure 3: Different methodologies of EM selection. (G. Diamantopoulos, S.I. Woolley, M. Spann, 2009)

As mentioned earlier, the EAC model predicts that eye-movement patterns are observed in all individuals regardless of handedness and a generalisation is offered for normally-organised right-handed people (Bandier and Grinder 1979, p. 25, Figure 1). Given this is an explicit generalisation, it will not hold true for all right-handed people and it is thus not sufficient to screen for right-handed people. In order to investigate these claims it is necessary to test whether idiosyncratic patterns exist within any given individual. This idiosyncratic case was only tested by Burke et al. (2003) who had partially supportive results, while all the other studies used this generalised form in order to interpret the selected eye-movements.

Interpreting and analysing eye-movement data

Another interesting aspect of the studies that has never been commented on is the statistical variance of the results reported. Cheney et al. (1982) report no eye-movement 32 per cent of the time while 18.9 per cent of the responses were multiple eye-movements and not analysed. In the same study, eye-movements to the left and up and left were only 14.75 per cent and 10.3 per cent respectively. Poffel and Cross (1985) reported no eye-movement 50 per cent of the time – vastly different results to those of Thomason et al. (1980) despite the similarity in methodologies.

Farmer et al. (1985) reported 49.6 per cent baseline eye-movements with upwards movements coming second at 37 per cent – a significant difference, especially in light of the roughly equal results reported on all VAK components by Thomason et al. (1980). Wertheim et al. (1986) did not include numerical data but report a majority of auditory responses regardless of question type. Dooley and Farmer (1988) and Farmer et al. (1985) report 44 per cent stares for their aphasic subjects and 40 per cent auditory for their control subjects. Finally, Baddeley and Predebon (1991) report 40 per cent and 41.9 per cent leftwards eye-movements in study one and two respectively.
The aforementioned incongruencies observed in the results of the studies can lead to two possible logical conclusions: 1) eye-movements are random; or 2) there are variables that have not been considered (or perhaps discovered) and controlled for.

So, are eye-movements random? From the nine studies that performed statistical analysis on eye-movements and question/task modality, only three report no statistical significance (Cheney et al. 1982; Elich et al. 1985; Sandhu 1991) whereas the remaining six reported some statistical significance even though they were unsupportive of the EAC model (Thomason et al. 1980; Farmer et al. 1985; Wertheim et al. 1986; Dooley and Farmer 1988; Baddeley and Predebon 1991; Burke et al. 2003); this would suggest that eye-movements are indeed not random. Further, if the relationship was simple (e.g. baseline movements) the results would be more coherent. Later in this review, research from other fields that suggest that eye-movements are linked to internal processing will be considered.

From the aforementioned data, a trend is visible in some studies where a large sum of the elicited eye-movements has been stares or baseline eye-movements. It is surprising that this trend has not raised any suspicion about the validity of the questioning methodology in the past since the interpretation of both stares and baseline eye-movements is ambiguous. By stares, we mean a central position of the eye within the eye-socket when the eyes are not focused. According to the EAC model this position is associated with visual access. However, stares can also be regarded as failure to activate the transderivational search and it is unclear how to differentiate between that and visual access (also reported by Ehrlichman et al. 1974; Ehrlichman and Weinberger 1978). This ambiguity is also true of baseline eye-movements; as per the EAC model, baseline eye-movements are associated with auditory eidetic access (auditory constructed sounds or words) but they can also be connected to an internal rehearsal or speech preparation process (Bandler and Grinder 1979, p. 18). Once again, since there is no available distinction between the two cases, it is theoretically consistent with the EAC model that consistent elicitation of baseline eye-movements can also be regarded as a failure of the elicitation process to activate the 'transderivational search'.

Given the statistical variance of the recorded data of one to seven eye-movements, it is surprising that no past research has performed a comprehensive frequency analysis on the number of eye-movements that occur in response to questions or introspection and their temporal location. We suggest that if a predictable relationship exists between eye-movements and internal representations and if this relationship is to be discovered, it is necessary to record and analyse all eye-movements that subjects make (also pointed out by Ehrlichman and Weinberger 1978). Recent developments in eye-tracking technology may allow this to be done reliably and without the immense effort involved in manual rating; depending on the intrusiveness of particular system used, there can be minimal interference with subject-experimenter rapport.

**Eye-movement research relevant to the EAC**

A very important finding for the EAC model by Christman et al. (2003) showed that the retrieval of episodic memories is selectively enhanced when it is preceded by saccadic eye-movements (fast movement of the eyes towards or away from an object, or without a visual stimulus) and not when preceded by pursuit eye-movements (eye-movements used to smoothly follow a moving object). Non-visual eye-movements such as those referred to by the EAC model fall under the category of saccadic eye-movements and thus an important link between eye-movements and memory retrieval is hereby established.

In a different area of eye-movement research and after a series of experiments (Brandt and Stark 1997; Demarais and Cohen 1998; Spivey and Geng 2001), Richardson and Spivey (2000) adopted a ‘Hollywood Squares’ paradigm where subjects were presented with a two-by-two grid of squares, each filled with an object and associated with an auditorily-presented semantic property. Consistent with earlier accounts, they found that
when the objects were removed from the grid and the subjects were questioned about one of the properties, subjects tended to look at the blank region of space where the property had been previously presented. This spatial indexing effect is related to the eye fixation and not attentional focus, is independent to fixations on separate locations in absolute space and even though spatial location is irrelevant to the task, it is consistently and automatically encoded.

The spatial indexing phenomenon agrees with neurological research in imagery and perception where it has been shown that there is a large overlap of brain area (re-)activation between perception and imagery (Kosslyn 2005; Buckner and Wheeler 2001; Handy et al. 2004). Not only is there similar brain activation but the eye-movements are re-enacted and they play a functional role (Laeng and Teodorescu 2002).

The NLP creators developed the EAC model based purely on their own observations of people’s behaviour and it may be tempting to attribute these observations on spatial indexing but on closer inspection, such a conclusion would be erroneous. It would mean that every time a representation is accessed, our eyes move in the same direction as they did when this representation was encoded. In all probability, an illogical conclusion if we consider that most information in our lives is presented to us within a central attention window of a limited viewing range while the eye-movements associated with the retrieval of internal representations are relatively spatially extreme and most probably outside the limits of this window. Also, the study conducted was concerned with very short-term recall – what about longer-term accesses? Of course, neither argument could make a strong stance without collecting further evidence.

Eye-movements in dyadic interactions

The contexts where the EAC model is supposed to hold true are unclear; no explicit claims have been made by Bandler and Grinder (1979) and the original context is that of dyadic ‘natural’ human interaction. It is possible that this is the only context where it holds true and only when a certain condition is met: rapport. The working assumption so far has been that the relationship between the researcher and the subject is not important and several studies have not reproduced this context (Thomason et al. 1980; Gumm et al. 1982; Burke et al. 2003). Further, some studies (Cheney et al. 1982; Elich et al. 1985; Baddeley and Predebon 1991) required the subjects to interact with a light switch to enable blind rating of the eye-movements, which may have influenced the results by creating an artificial environment, thus jeopardising the rapport condition.

There are several important findings regarding eye-movements during dyadic interactions that are relevant to the EAC model:

- If a person is looking upwards and sideways and there is no apparent object to which their gaze is directed, 4-year-old children can infer the person is thinking (Baron-Cohen and Cross, 1992).
- There is some evidence that the relationship between the experimenter and subject affects the rate of the eye-movements (increased rate of eye-movements with high-anxiety questions, MacDonald and Hiscock 1985). No change in direction was observed but the experiment controlled only for change in lateral direction.
- No conclusion may be made about whether the position of the experimenter (face-to-face versus behind subject) affects eye-movements (Kinsbourne 1972; Ehrlichman and Weinberger 1978) but it is certain that they occur even when no other person is present (Ehrlichman and Barrett 1983; Kocel et al. 1972)
- According to McCarthy et al. (2006) eye-movements in dyadic interactions are also culturally-biased. In a complex-question task, all three groups of Trinidadians, Canadians and Japanese subjects made less than 50 per cent eye-contact and the direction of eye-movements was mainly (81 per cent) up for the Trinidadian and Canadian subjects versus 75 per cent down for the Japanese subjects. This was attributed to the different connotations of looking up or down during conversation for each group though there is no solid ground for this claim.
It was also recently explicitly shown that verbal questions will elicit eye-movements when there is nothing to look at (Ehrlichman et al. 2007); an interference theory that was originally put forward has been refuted. The remaining theory is that people naturally shift eyes rather than focus them and they suppress those eye-movements when there are useful visual cues in the environment such as the face of another person (Ehrlichman 1981). In this view, eye-movements could be regarded as an integral part of thought and brain activity.

Another question that several studies have attempted to answer before is whether eye-movements are reliably consistent over time but the results are mixed and hence inconclusive. Templer et al. (1972) found them not to be reliable, in contrast to Bakan and Strayer (1973). Dorn et al. (1983) tested the same subjects with the same questions after a week and found that the eye-movements were different. However, during debriefing some subjects reported that they had recalled their previous response to each question instead of generating a new one.

Returning to the issue of question complexity examined earlier, several studies have made a distinction between questions that elicit eye-movements and questions that do not; reflective versus factual questions (Day 1964; Duke 1968), reflective versus over-learned (Ehrlichman et al. 1974) and complex processing versus over-learned, immediately available and syntactically simple (Ehrlichman and Weinberger 1978).

Summary and proposals for future EAC research

In this review, the authors have demonstrated deficiencies in past EAC research and established requirements that should inform future EAC research.

The pattern that has emerged from reviewing past EAC model research is that working assumptions have not been identified fully. Granted, this is a difficult task for such a complex investigation and we are privileged in being able to learn from past research. A fine example of this is the use of the term ‘representational system’. In the original NLP texts (Grinder and Bandler 1976) this term was defined very loosely and it was not until recently that definitions more suitable for academic research have appeared (Dilts and DeLozier 2000). Linguistically-speaking, people’s ability to answer questions about the world such as ‘what colour is the sky?’ presupposes that they are able to access those representations. Even though this presupposition may be sufficient for empirical and experimental research, it is customary to clearly state what definition of the term is assumed; this has been lacking and the definition has been taken for granted.

We propose a new set of working assumptions (see Table 2) that with further research should lead to a more rigorous experimental methodology.

To begin, it is important to establish criteria for the eye-movement elicitation methodology. An attempt was made by Baddeley and Predebon (1991) to import the criteria from lateral eye-movement research but no discussion of its applicability or relevance was made. Certainly, a formalised classification of question complexity is required (e.g. reflective versus over-learned) or at least the responses have to be controlled; either by adopting a question model that continually refines the requested detail or with a consistency test of the eye-movement responses. Similarly, Ehrlichman and Weinberger (1978) suggested a test of which questions consistently elicit left or right eye-movements, and which do not.

It is also vital to record all eye-movements present because there is no way to predict the number of eye-movements without extensive question analysis. In order for the measurements to be reliable, human rating of the eye-movements should be avoided and a recording method whose accuracy and reliability is precisely known ought to be used. Further, given the possibility that non-visual eye-movements are coupled during conversation (like visual eye-movements are, see Richardson and Dale 2005), ideally both the eye-movements of the subject and the experimenter need to be recorded.

It would perhaps be useful to expand the feedback channels onto the physiological plane. That is, to correlate eye-movements with physiological responses when answering questions, especially since imagery activates the
relevant physiology as discussed earlier. Alternatively, an established means of exploring the phenomenology of
the subject’s experience can be used (e.g. Varela and Shear 1999).

As mentioned earlier, there is no objective way of distinguishing between visual and non-visual eye-
movements. By visual we mean the eye-movements whose purpose is to change the visual stimulus falling on the
fovea and by non-visual we mean those that are a result of neurophysiological events and are not associated with
vision. This would be useful in judging if questions are successful in eliciting eye-movements, at least for stares.

Last, but not least, subjects with a similar cultural background and same native tongue need to be selected to
eliminate cultural bias and because internal translation processes would interfere with the results, respectively.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect</th>
<th>Old assumption</th>
<th>Proposed assumption</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Questions</td>
<td>Response elicits transderivational search</td>
<td>Subject-specific</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Response elicits linguistically presupposed rep. system</td>
<td>Eliciting the presupposed rep. system requires refinement *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>One-step; isolation of cognitive processes assumed</td>
<td>Multi-step; isolation of cognitive processes by refinement *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rating</td>
<td>Performed by raters of variable training</td>
<td>Performed with machine vision; automatic or semi-automatic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selection</td>
<td>Specific eye-movements are relevant</td>
<td>All eye-movements are relevant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pattern</td>
<td>Occurs across questions and/or subjects</td>
<td>Occurs idiosyncratically; secondary generic patterns may emerge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eye-movements</td>
<td>Constant number</td>
<td>Variable number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stares = visual access</td>
<td>Stares = visual access or no transderivational search *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Baseline = auditory access</td>
<td>Baseline = auditory access or no transderivational search *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All eye-movements in response to a question are non-visual</td>
<td>Eye-movements can be distinguished between visual and non-visual *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship</td>
<td>Has no or minimal effect</td>
<td>Rapport is a necessary condition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural background</td>
<td>Has no or minimal effect</td>
<td>Has potentially significant effect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native language</td>
<td>Has no effect</td>
<td>Has potentially significant effect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physiological feedback</td>
<td>Eye-movements only</td>
<td>Eye-movements and other physiological responses *</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* requires further research before a methodology is developed

Table 2: Old and proposed set of assumptions of EAC model research. (G. Diamantopoulos, S.I. Woolley, M. Spann, 2009)

Conclusions and future directions

Thirty years after its introduction, NLP remains a largely unexplored field within academia and the EAC model
was the main target of evaluation in the past. Even though the results of these evaluation efforts have not been
consistent and thus conclusions can only be tentative, they have been used as evidence to discredit the model
itself and NLP as a whole.

Perhaps the EAC model has been seen as a simplistic part of NLP but the inherent complexity of the EAC
model and its study should be evident from the critique of past EAC model research that has taken place in this
paper. Past research has implicitly adopted incomplete and erroneous assumptions and therefore the EAC model
requires further research attention.

More importantly, if the EAC model is considered a simplistic part of NLP and yet no definite conclusions can
be drawn from this relatively large set of research, this is a clear indicator of how much more complex it would be to investigate larger and more complex NLP techniques or models. If academic value it to be extracted from NLP, more weight would need to be given by future research.

Though research in the EAC model has stopped for several years, it may now be a good time to continue these efforts. Eye-tracking technology has matured and the link between eye-movements and neurology is clearer. As discussed, saccadic eye-movements were recently shown to aid the retrieval of episodic memories and even though (at least without further investigation) spatial indexing cannot account for the EAC model it is a positive indicator that eye-movements are related to the process of encoding information. Along with research in dyadic interactions that is now available, these advances justify the investigation of an ad-hoc model such as the EAC model which is still ‘current’ in NLP circles.

What is especially interesting is that a theory similar to the EAC model has emerged fairly recently from an academic field unrelated to NLP (Ehrlichman et al. 2007); it is based on a buffer model which is used to hold representations. Eye-movements are associated with retrieval and fixations are associated with maintenance of the information in the buffer.

We propose that the EAC model is worthy of further research with an experimental methodology that incorporates the assumptions and requirements we have presented.

Acknowledgements

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References


The experience of regular exercise participation for women moving into their middle years: its nature, meaning and its benefits

Margaret Walton
Iain Adams
Mac McCarthy

Abstract

The research study took a holistic approach to exploring the nature, meaning and benefits of regular participation in exercise from the perspective of 41 women aged 30 to 50 years. Semi-structured interviews and focus groups were utilised in the data gathering process. The neuro-logical levels model, from the field of neuro-linguistic programming (NLP), formed the basis of the data gathering process (Dilts 1990; Dilts et al. 1990; O’Connor and Seymour 1995). A heuristic methodology was utilised in the analysis and presentation of the data (Moustakas 1990). Regular participation in exercise was found to provide women with emotional and spiritual gains that extended beyond the traditional physical and lifestyle benefits. Individuals recognised ‘special’ qualities in exercise, plus benefits to the mind. They noted unique personal benefits and enhanced interpersonal relationships in many spheres of life.

Keywords
NEURO-LINGUISTIC PROGRAMMING, NEURO-LOGICAL LEVELS, EXERCISE, HOLISM, HEURISTIC RESEARCH.

The background to the study

The study sought to develop a deep understanding of the holistic nature, meaning and benefits of exercise for women aged 30 to 50 years who maintain regular participation. It focused on women born between 1950 and 1970. These women were subject to the social influences of that era ‘which cast women as appendages and helpmates of men’ (Borysenko 1998, p. 212–3). The women identified for the study exercised three or more times per week and for at least 30 minutes on each occasion. This included participation in a range of facility and non-facility based activities.

The subject group was identified from the total female membership of Preston City Council’s leisure centres and the commercially owned Virgin Active Life Centre in Preston, Lancashire. These facilities were selected to
give representation of both public and private fitness provision, the two major types in the United Kingdom. Preston has a population of just over 130,000 people (Lancashire County Council 2006) and a high incidence of poor quality housing, violent crime and binge drinking. Instances of diabetes and of death from smoking, heart disease and stroke were also higher than the national average (Department of Health 2006b). Life expectancy for women in Preston was 78.9 years, which was below the national average of 80.8 years (Department of Health 2004a). Preston Primary Care Trust (2004) also reported instances of chronic sickness, disability and poor health in the area as being higher than the national average. The subjects identified for the study were considered to be a group worthy of investigation in the light of the traditional academic view of this sector of the population as not having access to freely chosen leisure activities (Scraton 1994).

The research problems

The motivation to carry out this study arose from the lead researcher’s own perceptions and intuitions that much of the literature relevant to the study told only a partial and fragmented story. This was based on her own experiences as a woman who considered exercise as a valuable component in a busy lifestyle. The study acknowledged and honoured the voices of women and their expression of their personal experiences. Specifically, it explored the experience of exercise participation and critically analysed it from the perspective of women moving into their middle years who are regularly involved. It investigated the meaning of repeated immersion in the exercise experience and examined the factors that motivated women moving into their middle years to maintain regular participation.

The traditional perspective on women as regular participants in exercise

The traditional view is that women have little free time for participation in leisure activities (Bepko and Krestan 1991; Stein 1997; Borysenko 1998; Tong 1998, 2008; Partenheimer 2000) and that men exercise more than women (Bird et al. 1998). Clearly, however, this view discounts atypical cases. Nevertheless, participation rates in physical activity and exercise amongst women were generally considered to be at about 25 per cent (Sport England 2005). They have been low for centuries due to false assumptions concerning biology, aptitude and ability, and the suitability of exercise for the female form (Birley 1993). Furthermore, where women have been reported as regular participants in exercise, the benefits have been identified as relating to women’s preoccupation with diet and weight loss (Chernin 1981), a ‘culturally induced body insecurity’ (Orbach 1993, p. 23) and the subsequent decision to be active to attain and maintain a slender body image (Lloyd 1996).

It is becoming more widely recognised that these assumptions about the appropriateness and the appeal of exercise for women are incorrect. However, women are still frequently considered to be held back by limits placed upon opportunity and provision through a variety of cultural, social, personal and institutional factors (Scraton 1994). The factors noted as perceived constraints, mainly rooted in the identified patriarchal and capitalist structures, included dependent children, a lack of disposable income, time and confidence to take part, restricted mobility, and poor health.

The basic tenet that women desire to find ways of balancing various life roles and fundamental self-concepts remains a source of many dilemmas for modern women (Borysenko 1998). Women moving into their middle years, in particular, have many calls on their time and energy (Bepko and Krestan 1991; Stein 1997; Borysenko 1998; Walton 1999; Kay 2000). A fundamental desire to nurture others and to develop positive relationships can require women to give careful thought to balancing commitments involving the close and extended family and friends, along with personal career and social considerations.
The traditional perspective on the benefits of regular exercise participation

The literature providing evidence of the benefits of physical activity traditionally originated from a scientific perspective. It identified links with a range of factors associated with improved physical and mental health and well-being. Also, it was generally not gender-specific (American College of Sports Medicine 1990; Turner-Warwick et al. 1991; Allied Dunbar National Fitness Survey 1992; Blair 1995; Department of Health 1996; Yeung and Hemsley 1996; Faulkner and Biddle 2001; Department of Health 2003; World Health Organisation 2003; Health Development Agency 2004b; Sport England 2005). However, some research has focused specifically on the physical and mental benefits for women (Gill et al. 1997; Brustman, 2000; Shaw and Henderson 2000; Hardcastle and Taylor 2001).

Studies designed to explore the benefits of specific activities also originated in a scientific approach and have investigated, for example, the benefits of swimming (Berger and Owen 1987), aerobic exercise (Ransford and Palisi 1996), physical fitness training (Folkins and Sime 1981) and running (Schnohr 2000). Similarly, the benefits of participation in physical activity in terms of isolated aspects of health have been carried out from a fragmentary perspective. They have revealed connections between exercise participation and stress reduction (Manning and Fusilier 1999; Ruffin 1999), reduced depression and anxiety (Partenheimer 1999; Merritt 2000), mood enhancement (Berger and Motl 2000), increased self-esteem (McAuley 2000) and transcendence of negative life events (Kleiber et al. 2002). As a result, physical activity has been included in public health policies (Department of Health 2004b, 2006a; World Health Organisation 2003; Health Development Agency 2004a) and physical activity promotion programmes (Taylor et al. 1998). However, this may have remained a partial depiction of the whole truth and failed to illustrate the benefits to quality of life and to enhanced involvement in wider life experiences.

Methodology

The lead researcher’s qualification as a master practitioner of NLP was fundamentally formative in the design of this study (O’Connor and Seymour 1995). A narrative approach was used as the data gathering methodology, enabling the subjects to have a voice and for that voice to be heard in its natural form. Braud and Anderson (1998) suggested that the opportunity to tell one’s own story and speak in one’s own words is an empowering experience and may also be a transformative experience for the individual. Etherington (2006) noted that utilising a personal and subjective approach in research provides real and memorable data. It enables the gathering, integration and assimilation of information that might otherwise have been less apparent. In this way, it facilitates the process of exploring meaning assigned to experience.

Subjects for this research project were identified from earlier research (Adams and Walton 2003; Walton and Adams 2003). Subjects in the earlier study had indicated in responses to a postal survey their choice of taking no further part in the research, or of participating in individual interviews or focus groups, all facilitated by the researcher. Forty-six women had indicated a willingness to take part in interviews, 18 in focus groups. Fourteen women had indicated a willingness to take part in either. All the women indicating a willingness to take further part in the research were, initially, contacted by letter in relation to the option they had chosen. Those participants indicating a willingness to take part in either an interview or focus group were given the option to select one or the other. The letters addressed to those participants indicating a preference to attend a focus group was an invitation to select a convenient option. Reply slips and a stamped addressed envelope were included to help optimise return rates (Veal 1997). The letters relating to personal interviews were for information. The arrangements for individual interviews were, subsequently, made by telephone, the researcher alternately contacting participants from Fulwood and West View Leisure Centres and the Virgin Active Life Centre. Each individual retained the right to decline further involvement in the study. The researcher was also a respondent in the study and took part in a self-administered individual interview.
Twenty-three individual interviews and five focus groups were carried out, providing data from a total of 41 women. Permission to take notes was sought from each subject. Also, subjects were asked if they objected to the interview being recorded for later transcription. A series of questions designed to explore a subjective perception of experience in accordance with the neuro-logical levels process, from within the field of NLP, was utilised in the interviews and focus groups (Dilts 1990; Dilts et al. 1990; O’Connor and Seymour 1995) (see Table 1). In line with the principles of organic research, this process facilitated an exploration of deeply personal and meaningful aspects of experience (Clements et al. 1998). According to Clements et al. (1998, p. 117) organic research ‘requires honouring ourselves, our collaborators, our readers, and the context in which we work’. This approach to investigating ‘how life is lived’ offered a ‘feminine’ influence to interpreting an aspect of daily life in a study involving women (Clements et al. 1998, p. 123).

The neuro-logical levels process acknowledged that behaviours and actions, witnessed on a surface level, were driven by internal systems, including personal beliefs and identity structures. It was utilised as an exploratory technique to identify unconscious triggers for behaviour. Also, it highlighted deep rooted meaning attached to the context explored. The process was designed to facilitate personal reflection by raising subconscious and implicit thinking processes into conscious awareness (Dilts 1990; Dilts et al. 1990; O’Connor and Seymour 1995). It was, therefore, utilised in this study as a tool fit for purpose in that it facilitated the investigation of the subjects’ deep rooted connections with their regular participation in exercise. It facilitated the investigation of the nature and meaning of exercise as experienced by the subjects. Also, it enabled the subjects to reflect on the benefits that they take from their regular participation in exercise. The use of this process was an innovative aspect of the study. The lead researcher, as a master practitioner in NLP and a colleague on the research team who is a practitioner, were familiar with the process (O’Connor and Seymour 1995).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Robert Dilts’ neuro-logical levels</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What, for you, is the most positive form of exercise?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Behaviour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are you doing there?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What else are you doing?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Capability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What skills and capabilities do you have that enable you to do this?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Belief</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What do you believe about yourself when you are doing this?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who are you when you are doing this?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Meaning/spirituality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What does this mean for you?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What does it mean for you in the rest of your life?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With this in mind, who are you in the rest of your life?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Belief</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What do you believe about yourself in the rest of your life?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Capability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What other capabilities do you have in the rest of your life?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Behaviour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are you doing in the rest of your life?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where are you doing this?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: The question format utilised for the interviews and focus groups. Questions adapted from the Neuro-Logical Levels Process (Dilts 1990; Dilts et al. 1990; O’Connor and Seymour 1995).

The process consists of six areas of questioning, which explore subjective experience from the level of the specific context or environment, through to the meaning that the context has for the individual (see Table 1). Subjects were encouraged to reflect on personal experience and perception. Each question is designed to enhance the individual’s self-awareness and to facilitate the thought processes. For the purposes of the research study, the six areas of questioning in the neuro-logical levels process (environment, behaviour, capability, belief, identity, meaning/spirituality) were prepared and asked in relation to the context of the subject’s self-selected preferred exercise activity. For the purposes of this study and to gain greater understanding of the nature and
meaning of exercise in relation to its benefits in a holistic lifestyle sense, the questions were also asked in reverse order in relation to the whole life context. The first half of the process set the context for return. The questions specifically about the exercise activity heightened subjects’ self-awareness about themselves within that context. The questions shifted to the whole life context at the deepest point of the process. This created an organic connection between the exercise activity and the whole life context (O’Connor and Seymour 1995). Subjects were brought back through the process to an end point that related to a much larger context.

During the interviews, the questions were asked in the pre-determined format and the subject was allowed to respond to the questions in their own way. All interviews were recorded and transcribed. All individual responses were considered appropriate and relevant and topics raised by the subjects were followed through as demonstrating personal relevance and significance. Further questions were utilised to probe for further information or clarification during the natural course of the interview if it was felt to be appropriate or necessary. On occasion, subjects’ naturally occurring responses pre-empted a question in the process, resulting in the structure of the interview being adjusted to retain fluidity and to avoid duplicated responses. Also, subjects were given the opportunity to add further information on the specific topic if they so wished.

The neuro-logical levels process was further utilised in the focus groups, in order to maintain consistency in the data gathering process (Dilts 1990; Dilts et al. 1990; O’Connor and Seymour 1995). A recording and transcription of each group meeting were produced and each participant completed their own notes in relation to the topic, which were also included in the data. Focus groups enabled data to be gathered in an interactive and discursive environment (Litosseliti 2003). The interactions became a naturally occurring formative element of the data gathering process in the focus groups. This arrangement added a further dimension to the data, and broadened its scope. The focus groups enabled the collection of data that demonstrated a consensus on, as well as individual differences in, the beliefs, attitudes, experiences and feelings of the subjects, as they arose from the interactive context. In this way, the focus groups were used as a supplementary source of data, providing additional exemplary reports of the nature, meaning and benefits of regular participation in exercise. The data were utilised to check validity in the findings from the interviews (Litosseliti 2003). This process added further validity to the results (Silverman 2000).

Data analysis

The focus of the study, and the data collection and analysis methods related closely to the theoretical explication of a heuristic process. This was defined by Moustakas (1990, p. 10) as ‘a way of being informed, a way of knowing’. The heuristic process comprises six phases (Moustakas 1990). They are: the initial engagement with the research topic; immersion into the topic; incubation; illumination; explication, and the culmination of the research findings in the final report. The heuristic process involves an internal search to discover the nature and meaning of ‘everyday human experience’ (Douglass and Moustakas 1985, p. 39). It is a process in which self-dialogue and self-discovery are considered to be significant.

The early stages of this study involved focusing on the specifics of the context from which the research questions took their form and significance. Conscious immersion in the topic occurred once the study was defined and clarified (Moustakas 1990). Regular exercise participation and delivery were already integral parts of the life of the lead researcher. Observation and reflection on exercise participation and delivery for the purposes of the study also became integral parts of her life. This allowed the lead researcher to be alert to all possibilities for discovering meaning in connection with the topic. She became more aware of opportunities to maintain a sustained focus wherever the theme was being expressed. Also, she noted significant connections with the topic in everyday interactions outside the exercise context. The lead researcher was actively involved in regular exercise, in the delivery of exercise sessions for others, and in the design and delivery of training to fitness instructors. She interacted regularly with people who participated in exercise and with other exercise instructors. The opportunity
existed for these interactions to provide reflective triggers relevant to the study, along with interactions outside the exercise environment with women in the identified subject group.

As expected with research utilising a narrative approach, the study generated large amounts of data (Moustakas 1990; Braud and Anderson 1998; Rowan 2001). Analysis of this qualitative data required the lead researcher to become immersed in gaining a full understanding of the individual subjects’ experiences. This involved periods of reflection and incubation away from the data, to allow new understandings to develop, and syntheses and awareness to emerge (Moustakas 1990). Furthermore, it required a particular perspective be adopted to enable an understanding to develop, not just of isolated events, such as separate exercise experiences, but also of the impact of those experiences on other aspects of each individual’s unique life. Awareness of an integrative process helped to clarify the growth, change and development that took place over time with an accumulation of experiences (Moustakas 1990).

Analysis of the qualitative data from the interviews and focus groups involved acquiring a high level of familiarity with the content and linguistic meaning of the transcriptions (Martin 2001). A series of mind maps was collated on A3 paper for each participant in the study (Buzan 1988; DePorter 1996). These mind maps helped in the identification of themes within the narrative gathered from each individual, and gave an overall view of the data collected. Large spaces were acquired to spread out all the notes and mind maps due to the volume of data produced. A squash court and an activity studio were used for this purpose. It was found to be valuable to be contemplating the content of the research material in settings that were familiar and that had strong connections with exercise provision. In accordance with the findings of Fisher (1997) it was felt that this aided the thought processes utilised in the analysis of the volume of data. The ‘overview’ process took place on three separate occasions. This enabled all the data to be viewed simultaneously. Further notes and thoughts were gathered on flipchart paper. A time gap of two to three weeks between each viewing allowed awarenesses to arise and links to form. This enabled a detailed impression of all the data to be gained and allowed a perception of the common themes to emerge.

Recognition was given to the need to demonstrate respect for and understanding of the perspective of all those involved in the research process. In order for the research process to take place effectively, data analysis involved a cyclical process of self-reflection, and a move towards dissociation from one’s personal life and association with the personal experiences of the subjects. A return to self-reflection enabled integration of the new learnings (Miller and Glassner 1997).

Substantive data from the interviews and focus groups were extracted verbatim and collated on 1169 index cards. An emergent process led to data related to the research questions being categorised into themes. This process provided physical evidence of five main themes labelled as lifestyle benefits, ‘special’ qualities, benefits to the mind, personal benefits and interpersonal benefits. The cards pertaining to each theme were spread out to give an overview. They were then further categorised into subsets of each theme, formed by linking related comments. The analysis was conducted manually. The process was verified by a colleague on the research team who is a practitioner in NLP.

The resultant categorisation of themes provided a way of mapping out an interpretive pathway illustrating the nature, meaning and benefits of regular participation in exercise for women moving into their middle years. It provided a way of establishing an understanding of a single exercise experience, and also of repeated immersion in the exercise experience. This approach to the research project facilitated a holistic exploration of the value and meaning of exercise for the subject group in terms of their personal and unique whole life narrative histories. Emerging thematic structures were discussed and illustrated. Individual depictions of each subjects’ experiences were developed and included verbatim material taken from the transcriptions. Exemplary portraits were created. These were unique to the individuals involved in the research and characterised the group as a whole. A composite depiction was constructed from the totality of the individual depictions, and is described further below. Also, a creative synthesis, reflecting the researcher’s personal intuitive and imaginative interpretation of the exercise experience was included (Moustakas 1990; Walton 2007).
The nature of exercise

The composite depiction was developed to represent the common qualities and themes that embraced the experiences of the subjects. This was written as if describing one single person. The aim here was to provide a vivid, accurate, alive and clear representation of the nature of exercise and to encompass the core qualities and themes inherent in the experience. The composite depiction included the core meanings as experienced and expressed by the individuals in the study (Moustakas 1990).

‘The active woman’s busy lifestyle involves a partner, children of school age, a job, the home, and the increasing responsibilities of aging parents. She fully recognises the demands of her lifestyle, and that there are certain, largely unspoken, unwritten expectations placed on her. She recognises in herself almost an audaciousness at ‘daring’ to regularly step out of the giving and providing roles that she personifies, and do something for herself.

She generally feels fitter and healthier for exercising. Exercise helps her control her weight, even with the advancing years, when, she believes, weight gain can be a problem. She generally has a positive outlook on life, faces everyday tasks, problems and challenges energetically, and with the self-belief that she can accomplish them. She exudes an energy that exemplifies a proactive approach to living, and assertively makes personal decisions that help her and her family maintain good health.

Exercise is a passion! She could not imagine being without exercise, and would not like to be without the positive benefits it provides. Relaxation is a significant and valued gain. Also, she feels she gains patience, confidence and self-esteem. The fitness and energy she gains give her a sense of lightness, and doing something for herself helps build her self-respect. Her mind is alert, and she feels she can be better organised, and can be more effectively responsive in everyday situations. She is out-going, self-assured and self-reliant. She credits exercise with providing her with qualities such as resilience, determination, perseverance, motivation and self-discipline. Her gains from exercising enable her to feel confident about approaching new challenges and experiences, and she actively seeks new opportunities to continue to develop herself, within and besides the context of her exercise.

The actual process of exercising is particularly difficult to describe. The active woman is very aware of accessing deep, very personal and profoundly meaningful emotions and sensations during exercise. Also, she is aware that she is in a ‘different place’ when she is exercising, and much of what she experiences, is not within her normal conscious state. She feels she is in more of a meditative state of mind. When she runs or swims, for example, she connects very strongly with the repetitive, rhythmical action of the activity. The repetitiveness, the constancy of the rhythm, the continuous flowing action take her to her special place. It enables her to experience herself to a depth that is not normally possible within the busyness of everyday life. She describes it as an inner calmness, peace, quiet, and peace of mind. Also she feels that exercise enables her to access a sense of freedom, an escape and a release from everyday concerns and this allows her to ‘switch off’ to some of the stresses of daily life. Solitude, aloneness and access to personal space are also important gains, and, again, are not considered easily accessible within the daily process of living. Exercise gives her time to herself, time to ‘pull herself together’ and the opportunity to take ‘time out’ from everyday activities. The ‘escape’ and the ‘space’ mean she feels she can later return to routine activities in an enhanced state, and better able to deal with everyday demands.
The process of exercising provides the active woman with the time to think. She perceives this not to be widely available in life generally. She can think about herself and the benefits she is taking from her exercise session. Also, she can use the time in exercise as a diversion from everyday topics that otherwise tend to occupy her mind. She can think about things that she normally would not have time to think about; and finds herself making plans, considering options, and coming up with new ideas.

Sometimes her exercise requires that she use her mind in order to learn and ultimately master the activity itself. It is so with activities which involve routines, such as step, aerobics, tai chi and dance. This process, in itself, she finds beneficial, as it too provides a distraction from everyday thoughts and concerns. She feels it helps her to develop alertness keeping her mind and her memory active, and enabling her to think more widely about other things in life. Sometimes exercise is an opportunity to clear, empty or rest her mind. Once again, she finds this difficult to achieve in the normal busyness of her daily life. When she is completely focused on the activity, her mind is still, empty, and she is no longer thinking. Even simply thinking about this state enables her to recall the sense of peace, calmness and inner quiet that it engenders. She is ‘amazed’ at the enormity, the richness, the beauty and the powerfulness of it all.

Repeated involvement in exercise means that the active woman is regularly immersing herself in such deep and profoundly significant experiences. She holds the accumulative and pervading positive effects of such influences in the highest regard. She finds that they enable her to take a positive stance to sorting, organising and ordering her thoughts, integrating recent events into her self-concept and world-view, and creating revised views of both. The sense of well-being she gets after exercise gives her an altered perception not only of herself, but also of her recent experiences, and of herself in relation to her experiences, and to other people. Her involvement in exercise enables her to experience creative and expanded thinking processes. She is often ‘amazed’ by what she has been able to do and how much her perception of her potential has expanded, not only in the exercise context, but also in other areas of her life. She instinctively senses a deep belief that she has the capability to continue to grow. She gives herself new challenges, with the belief that she will achieve them. Challenges include those directly related to exercise and to other areas of her life. The active woman sees herself to be in a state of development and moving forward.

The active woman particularly appreciates her participation in exercise as something that she can do for herself. She feels that exercise involves her mastering herself, as well as the intricacies of her chosen activities. She gains self-knowledge and self-awareness. She becomes aware of herself in physical movement, of her coordination and posture, and her connection with activity. Also, she is more aware of how she functions generally in all aspects of her life. She recognises that exercise enables her to reconnect with a fundamental self-concept that is devoid of any of the social roles that much of life demands of her. She described this as a connection with a ‘simplified’ self, ‘just me’, and a ‘true’ self. Making this connection reflects her process of letting go of her social identities, such as partner, parent, employee. This connection with a deep sense of self is like ‘coming home’.

She recognises constructive change in herself as a result of taking up regular exercise and distinguishes between an ‘old’ self and a ‘new’ self. She wholeheartedly views movement into the new self as positive. Also, she can identify specific aspects of herself that she would still wish to develop further. This connection with on-going development and regeneration of the self as ‘new’ brings with it a sense of youthfulness and freshness. The active woman moving into her
middle years feels and believes she looks young for her years.

It is the view of the active woman that exercise enhances her interpersonal interactions. She describes this as a healing influence, for herself and for other people in her life. It means that she passes on a nurturing and healing influence in her relationships with other people. She believes that exercising enhances her relationships with everyone, and in particular with family, friends and work colleagues.’

Conclusions about the nature and meaning of the exercise experience

This study provided evidence that regular participation in exercise experiences gave rise to a range of benefits. The nature and meaning of the exercise experience as they were ascertained in this study are conceptually represented in Figure 1. Such experiences were found to positively influence health and lifestyle, enabling subjects to feel positive about their life and to approach new challenges and experiences with confidence. Exercise was found to provide a range of ‘special’ qualities, such as peace, solitude, freedom, time out and escape. Immersion in these special spaces enabled women to return to routine activities in an enhanced state, and better able to deal with everyday demands. Exercise provided benefits to the mind, by facilitating time to think, or time to empty and clear the mind. Individual and unique perceptions of the benefits enabled subjects to apply them to their personal life contexts. The benefits were found to have significant positive impact on the individual and on the individual’s interactions with other people. Repeated immersion in exercise meant that subjects were regularly involving themselves in uniquely interpreted deep and profoundly significant experiences. Subjects held the accumulative and pervading positive effects in the highest regard. The full range of benefits was found to influence the motivation to retain the exercise habit in a cyclical and developing process.

Figure 1: The nature and meaning of the exercise experience as noted by active women moving into their middle years. (M. Walton 2009)
Conclusions about the use of Dilts’ neuro-logical levels process in research

The study offered opportunity to recognise holism and interconnectivity in human experience. Also, it recognised and acknowledged deep significance and unique personal meaning in an everyday experience. The research project demonstrated how ordinary daily living was contributing to an individual and collective evolutionary process. This study utilised a qualitative methodology to develop a holistic perspective. It expanded traditional theoretical assumptions in its related research fields by highlighting the gap between traditional fragmentary methodologies and the holism and interconnectivity of human experience. The lead researcher’s qualification as a master practitioner of NLP was fundamentally formative in the design and completion of the study. Dilts’ neuro-logical levels process provided a manageable, integral and clear framework that produced data of a rich quality (Dilts 1990; Dilts et al. 1990; O’Connor and Seymour 1995). Subjects were not required to rank, rate or categorise their feelings, opinions and experiences. The data collection process communicated deep respect for the individual, and intrinsically contained messages about valuing the uniqueness and specialness of each individual being studied. Dilts’ neuro-logical levels process was, therefore, considered fit for purpose on this occasion. Researchers intending to use it for similar purposes may wish to note that the process generates large quantities of data.

Acknowledgements

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Department of Health, 2004b. At least five a week. evidence of the impact of physical activity and its relationship to health. A report from the
Exploring the role of NLP in the management of organisational paradox

Joe Cheal

Abstract

Tensions and paradoxes are becoming ever more prevalent in the business environment and this research is an exploration into the nature of such tensions and paradoxes. This research aims to establish if and how paradox actually affects people in organisations, if paradox in organisations is recognisable, if and how paradox can be managed and also if and how neuro-linguistic programming (NLP) might aid in the management of paradox. The primary research reported here involves a qualitative study of the perceptions of eighteen managers from three different organisations: a charity, a council and a food manufacturer. The findings indicate that paradoxical situations do exist and that they have a range of causes, effects and solutions. Beyond that, the study also establishes particular language patterns and metaphors that may be indicative of paradox and tensions. Further findings of relevance to NLP are also discussed.

Keywords

PARADOX, DILEMMA, DOUBLE BIND, ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Introduction

Dilemmas, tensions, double binds, conflict and vicious circles: each a potential cost to business, manifesting in the forms of stress, indecision and dissatisfaction in the workplace. In an environment where the pace and amount of work increases there is likely to be increased pressure, conflicting priorities and dilemmas that need to be resolved quickly. Today’s management ‘find themselves pulled in more directions than ever before’ (Stroh and Miller 1994, p. 28) and ‘spend much of their time living in the fields of perceived tensions’ (Quinn 1990, p. 3). Polarities, tensions and vicious circles can be summed up in one word: ‘paradox’. This paper, along with a glossary at the end, explains and demonstrates these terms.

In order to survive now, organisations (including their leaders and staff) need to be able to understand and work with paradox. Cameron (1986, p. 545) suggests that: ‘To be effective, an organisation must possess attributes that are simultaneously contradictory, even mutually exclusive.’

Paradox management is a new and potentially exciting field in organisational development (OD). According to Van de Ven and Poole (1988, p. 25): ‘Addressing organisational paradoxes … is an issue on the edge of organisation and management theory, and one that will spawn new ideas and creative theory. Looking at paradoxes forces us to ask very different questions and to come up with answers that stretch the boundaries of current theories.’ And
Allen and Cherrey (2000, p. 115) argue that ‘embracing paradox is an antidote for either-or thinking. Paradoxes invite us to live with polar opposites in peaceful co-existence.’ If more people within organisations understood the nature of paradox, how to recognise it and how to manage it, perhaps there would be a reduced level of stress and dissatisfaction and hence a reduced cost to the organisation.

This article is based on a larger piece of research, where the main objective was to explore the notion of paradox management as an OD intervention. An OD intervention here might include change management, learning and development, problem-solving and conflict resolution. The sub questions of the research were: ‘Does paradox actually affect people in organisations and if so how?’ ‘Is paradox in organisations recognisable?’ ‘Can paradox be managed and if so how?’ and ‘How might NLP aid in the management of paradox?’ It is the last question on which this article is primarily focused.

The field of NLP began in the early 1970s with research into what made particular people good at what they did. From that time, the field has expanded with a range of understandings, processes, tools and techniques, most of which are beyond the scope of this report. What is of particular interest are the possible connections between NLP and the management of paradox. Bandler and Grinder (1990) discuss various techniques that can help to resolve internal tensions and also discuss a process of ‘reframing’ that may help people who are in disagreement. So might NLP bring strategies and tools to the larger system of organisational paradox?

Beyond reviewing the literature on organisational paradox, the primary research of this study was designed to provide new qualitative data (through interviews) about how people perceive that paradox actually affects them. As far as the author can establish, this had not been done before, as commentary on the effects of paradox on people has previously been from the researcher’s perspective (e.g. Vince and Broussine 1996). So this paper aims to provide an interesting comparison between the subjective perceptions of the player and the literature on organisational paradox.

The interviews also provide new data about the participants' perceptions on how they dealt with paradox and paradoxical problems. This may give some personal insights into the manageability of paradox in the workplace.

**Literature review**

Defining paradox

In order to make the claim that paradox is manageable, it is essential to define the term ‘paradox’. There is stark disagreement in terms and definitions of paradox, ranging from the simple: ‘an apparent contradiction’ (Quinn and Cameron 1988, p. 290) to a more hard-line approach where paradox necessarily contains self reference, contradiction and vicious circularity (Hughes and Brecht 1978). This hard-line approach is known as a ‘logical paradox’, for example: ‘This statement is untrue.’ This, as a statement, is self referential, contradictory and goes round in circles because if it is true, it is false, which means it is true (ad infinitum).

Poole and Van de Ven (1989, pp. 564-5) suggest that: ‘the paradoxes in management are not, strictly speaking, logical paradoxes ... Organisational and management theories involve a special type of paradox – social paradoxes [which] tend to be looser: the opposing terms are often somewhat vague, and instead of logical contradictions, tensions and oppositions between incompatible positions must be considered ... This opens the possibility of dealing with social paradoxes not only through logical resolutions, but through taking into account the spatial and temporal nature of the social world.’
Ford and Backoff (1988) postulate that combining the spatial and temporal aspects creates four forms of paradox:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time dualities</th>
<th>Directional dualities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Horizontal</strong></td>
<td><strong>Vertical</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Synchronic</td>
<td>• same level, same time (e.g. two managers ask a staff member to do two equally important tasks now)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diachronic</td>
<td>• same level, different time (e.g. a manager changes their mind and says ‘no’ when they said ‘yes’ earlier)</td>
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Figure 1. Time and directional duality quadrant. (J. Cheal 2009)

It is conceivable that a problem that has a different level and/or different time duality would be easier to resolve than a problem that sits at the same level and at the same time. The directional and time dualities model is a useful distinction in that it may help to understand the dynamics of a paradox.

**NLP and paradox**

Logical level (or logical type) frameworks can help to separate out the layers of a paradox which in itself can help to resolve a dilemma or double bind. This is done by shifting away from ‘either/or’ and allowing ‘both/and’ to be true at different levels. The concept of logical levels is used within NLP to bring a hierarchical or categorical order to a person’s thinking, particularly if they are thinking in a one dimensional ‘either/or’ manner. It could be argued that the ‘neurological levels’ model (Dilts 1990) may play a role in paradox management by separating an organisation out into the layers of ‘spirit’ (who are we here for), identity, beliefs and values, capabilities, behaviours and environment. This might demonstrate, for example, that an organisation can hold particular values and yet people behave in a manner that apparently contradicts those values. Although this may still be a problem that still needs addressing, the ‘levels’ model helps to remove the ‘paradoxical’ element.

Paradox is, in part, about internal and external conflict (e.g. of beliefs and values). A particular strength of NLP is its tools and techniques for resolving intrapersonal (internal) and interpersonal conflicts. The ‘visual squash’ and ‘six step reframe’ techniques are classic examples (see Bandler and Grinder 1990), as is the negotiation process (see Dilts and Delozier 2000b).

Another aspect of NLP that may aid in the understanding and management of paradox is in studying the language patterns that people use. NLP helps to focus on the subtleties of language by understanding how language affects and reflects a person’s neurology (i.e. the brain and nervous system). Might people place or hold themselves in paradox by the language they use (e.g. I don’t know whether to laugh or cry) and might they signal paradox unconsciously in what they say (e.g. I feel caught between the devil and the deep blue sea)?

NLP uses two major language patterns, the ‘meta model’ and the ‘Milton model’ (Dilts and Delozier 2000a). The meta model is designed to take a person into the details, finding out specifically what they mean (e.g. how do you know that your manager doesn’t like you?). The Milton model takes the person in the opposite direction, allowing them to make helpful generalisations (e.g. the fact that you are reading this means that you are curious about paradox management). These language patterns may provide some insights into paradox management. For example, if two people are arguing about a proposal, it may be that by getting to the specifics, they can see
a workable way forward. In addition, by seeking generalisation, it may be possible to help them see that they actually agree on a bigger picture level, in keeping the organisation in business perhaps.

The core function of NLP is to model useful behaviours. If one person is effective at something, how do they do it? What can be learnt about how they do it and how can that be taught to others? The method for modelling is not just to observe the person’s behaviour but also to understand the person’s internal ‘strategies’. In order to complete a strategy, someone will tend to go through a loop that ends when they achieve their outcome. To explain this loop, NLP borrows the concept of ‘Test-Operate-Test-Exit’ from Miller, Galanter and Pribram’s TOTE model (see Dilts et al. 1980). For example, if deciding to buy a book, the strategy might be: See a book and ask myself ‘Is this of interest?’ (Test), then look at the cover and through the book (Operate), get a positive feeling and an internal ‘yes’ (Test) and then decision is made (Exit). When a paradox is in action, it could be said to be running a strategy or process and if this is the case, it could be mapped out using the TOTE model. With paradox, particularly the looping kind, the TOTE has no Exit, so the paradox strategy runs TOTOTO … An example of this might be a member of staff who is stuck in a loop: ‘I want to go home on time to spend time with my kids, but everyone else works late everyday and so it would make me look bad, so I’ll stay late at work, but I want to spend more time with my kids …’ A looping TOTE could be called a TOTO, or as O’Connor (1997) calls it, a TOT.

Although some of the models, tools and linguistic analysis may prove helpful, it is important to note that aside from work by Andreas (2006), there has yet to be an in-depth study into the nature of paradox and the role of NLP in its resolution.

Polarity, either/or thinking and paradox

The notion of paradox appears to trace back to Aristotelian logic which, in turn, has influenced Western thinking to the present day. This has become known as ‘either/or’ thinking (Johnson 1996) and it appears to create polarities (for example: either right or wrong, either win or lose). Why does polarity lead to paradox? A common description and/or definition of paradox is that it ‘describes a particular relationship between opposites. It is, in its simplest form, a statement or state of affairs seemingly contradictory but expressing a truth.’ (Berg and Smith 1995, p. 107) Polarity equates to two contradictory opposites, and in formal logic, this is expressed as either X or not X. In formal logic, as soon as a position is taken on something, there will be a negation, an opposite, a contradiction and hence a paradox. The concept of not (or negation) may be at the heart of paradox. Andreas (2006, p. 58) suggests that ‘negation is an easy way to create an oversimplified world of ‘either/or’ categorical opposites, limiting choice to one of the two.’ The negation of X (i.e. not X) can mean an apparently mutually exclusive, specific, logical opposite (e.g. on or off), a notional opposite (e.g. autocratic or democratic, manager or leader, option A or option B) or a general opposite which could be anything other than X.

Taking the exploration of ‘polarity as paradox’ further, from an NLP perspective paradox can be considered a nominalisation. Nominalisations are part of the major language patterns of NLP (meta model and Milton model), where a process (verb) is turned into a thing (noun). This can cause confusion because the resulting nominalisation (e.g. ‘leadership’) will likely mean very different things to different people. Not only is the word ‘paradox’ itself a nominalisation, but possibly any nominalisation will prove to be one side of a polarity paradox. When examining a list of polarities in organisations, all of the examples appear to be nominalisations (as in Quinn and Kimberly 1984, p. 301; Pascale 1990, p. 53; Peters 1992, p. 473; Stroh and Miller 1994, p. 31; Marsh and Macalpine 1999, p. 645). A sample list appears below in Table 1. Perhaps one thing that distinguishes a nominalisation from a ‘non-nominalisation’ is that it has a meaningful polar opposite. For example, ‘desk’ (a non-nominalisation) has no meaningful polar opposite, whereas ‘empowerment’ (a nominalisation) does. A list of values is also a list of nominalisations and ‘nearly all values have a polar opposite value that is also positive’ (Quinn and Cameron 1988, p. 292); for example, spontaneity and predictability.
A proposed typology of paradox

To date, there appears to be no ‘grand unified theory’ of agreed terms and typology of paradoxes and of the relationships between these types. If paradox management is to become a more mainstream field of organisational development, there needs to be some form of framework for understanding the nature of paradox. Whilst not all researchers in the field will necessarily agree with the author’s interpretation, a framework needs to begin somewhere.

From the varying definitions and conditions of paradox given in the literature, the author has extrapolated the following components or dynamics of paradox.

‘Poles are the underlying contradiction of a paradox and are conceptual and inert. They can appear as ‘digital’ (i.e. mutually exclusive) or ‘analogue’ (i.e. a continuum).

Splits are active and cause the ‘paradoxee’ to feel pulled in two or more directions or decisions. It can also feel that whichever option they take, they lose.

Loops are active and cause the ‘paradoxee’ to feel like they are going round in circles, either ending up where they started or perhaps having lost a little or gained a little.

Flips are active and cause the ‘paradoxee’ to feel like they ended up with the opposite to or negation of what they actually wanted or intended.’

Splits, loops and flips are the active expression of the underlying pole and are how the paradox plays out or is experienced by the ‘paradoxee’. In this sense, splits, loops and flips are perceptual as opposed to conceptual. It is also possible that the components will combine, the most common perhaps being a flip-loop, where the ‘paradoxee’ goes round in circles but keeps getting flipped each time. An organisational example of a flip-loop might be where the leadership is driven by the short-termism of the shareholders to initiate ‘profit enhancing’ change. The change takes place but needs time for the staff to adapt. Because this doesn’t happen quickly enough, the business is driven to change again. This loop continues, but with each change the performance (and hence profits) are inadvertently driven down.

Building on these components, Table 2 shows some key types of paradox gathered from examples presented in some of the literature explored.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of paradox</th>
<th>Components</th>
<th>What is this?</th>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Example literature</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Polarity</td>
<td>Poles</td>
<td>The conceptual aspect of a paradox, the underlying opposition or contradiction.</td>
<td>Autocratic vs democratic leadership.</td>
<td>Handy (1994)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Johnson (1996)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Peters (1992)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Double bind</td>
<td>Splits</td>
<td>No win situations, where you are wrong if you do and wrong if you don’t (or right if you do and right if you don’t).</td>
<td>Go to the meeting and get verbally attacked, don’t go to the meeting and get attacked without being there to defend myself.</td>
<td>Wagner (2001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lawley (2000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dilemma</td>
<td>Splits</td>
<td>A difficult decision caused by a tension between two positions or options.</td>
<td>Should we choose candidate X or Y?</td>
<td>Hampden-Turner (1990)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self reference</td>
<td>Loops</td>
<td>Circularity caused by something referring to itself. For example, a tautology, or defining something by using itself.</td>
<td>Towards the end of an email: 'This email is to be read by those who have not yet read it.'</td>
<td>Ropo and Hunt (1995)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vicious or virtuous circle</td>
<td>Loops</td>
<td>Circularity driven by a series of cause-effect events that loop back to the original cause.</td>
<td>I am not assertive because I lack confidence and I lack confidence because I am not assertive.</td>
<td>Hampden Turner (1990)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self fulfilling prophecy</td>
<td>Loops</td>
<td>Circularity caused by the ‘paradoxee’ expecting a certain outcome and hence looking for the evidence of it. Usually contains a hidden double bind where the paradoxee accepts evidence that agrees with expectations and rejects all evidence that does not. The term ‘self fulfilling prophecy’ was coined by Robert Merton.</td>
<td>We expect to lose the contract, so we don’t put much effort into it, so we lose the contract.</td>
<td>Merton (1996)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knots</td>
<td>Flips</td>
<td>Creating the opposite to what was intended.</td>
<td>People who are good at what they do get promoted to their level of incompetence (known as the ‘Peter principle’).</td>
<td>Peter and Hull (1969)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Schwartz (2005)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unintended consequences</td>
<td>Flips</td>
<td>Taking action brings about unforeseen (usually negative) result.</td>
<td>A ‘health and safety’ initiative is introduced to reduce the amount of accidents. However, more accidents are reported as a result because people’s awareness has been raised about reporting accidents.</td>
<td>Merton (1996)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Dörner (1997)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Logical paradox</td>
<td>Flip-loops</td>
<td>A statement or event that contains apparently simultaneous contradictory concepts. In order for them to be true they need to be false and in order to be false they need to be true.</td>
<td>A manager tells their staff to ‘be more spontaneous’. If they are spontaneous it is only because the manager has told them to be and hence they are not being spontaneous.</td>
<td>Dilts and DeLozier (2000b)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Basic typology of paradox. (J. Cheal 2009) Managing Paradox
With regards to the management of paradox, Ford and Ford (1994) discuss three key approaches: formal logic, dialectics and trialectics. Each of these approaches is a logic which ultimately affects the mindset or thinking model of the individual. For this reason, the difference between these logics is an important distinction to make. Ford and Ford (1994, p. 758) suggest that: ‘When a person is “operating in” a particular logic, he or she takes its rules and boundaries for granted. Logics pose the problems, provide the language for explaining and understanding them, and determine their solutions. Logics give people their ‘reality’, the truth, the way things are … when people are unaware that they are using a logic, or are ‘trapped’ in only one, this point of view becomes an unwitting limitation to what might be seen or understood, restricting their observations and offering no really new alternatives.’

The three logics are summarised in Table 3 below, with example references that fall within each of these approaches.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paradox management approaches</th>
<th>What is this?</th>
<th>Example references</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Formal logic</td>
<td>Working in the framework of either/or, maintaining a polarity between two seemingly opposing positions.</td>
<td>Johnson (1996)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dialectic</td>
<td>Creating a ‘third way’ or synthesis between the polarities (which are known as thesis and antithesis).</td>
<td>Gadamer (1976), Siporin and Gummer (1988)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trialectic</td>
<td>Shifting outside or beyond the polarity for example by reframing.</td>
<td>Ford and Ford (1994) Carini et al. (1995)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Paradox management approaches (adapted from Ford and Ford 1994). (J. Cheal 2009)

Each approach has its problems and drawbacks. Formal logic (or Aristotelian logic) attempts to deal with the paradox by maintaining the either/or frame which means that although it may help to understand a paradox, it does not resolve it. Formal logic has also been criticised for its inability to account for change (e.g. Korzybski 1958), and as such is not necessarily a useful tool for organisational development.

A problem for dialectics is that as a synthesis is formed from the thesis and the antithesis, a new polarity is created at the level of the synthesis (because the synthesis will have an opposite or negation) and hence a new paradox.

Trialectic logic is a rather new and obscure concept that is hard to quantify and hence hard to reproduce. If dialectic materialism could be compared to a Cartesian/Newtonian dualistic, mechanistic paradigm then trialectics would be comparable to a holistic, quantum physics paradigm (Dell’Olio 1983). In organisational terms, this would link with complexity theory and systemic thinking. A tool that appears to reflect trialectic logic would be reframing and this is an area where NLP might add value (e.g. Bandler and Grinder 1982).

Having explored some of the issues of the three logics, an important question from an OD perspective is: can they add anything to the management of paradox?

Formal logic tends to approach paradox in an either/or fashion, where one must choose one side or the other. Classic decision making tools follow this form, e.g. Lewin’s forcefield analysis (in Huczynski and Buchanan 2001), exploring the pros and cons of both sides and making decisions from there. Sadly this can sometimes lead to a decision being made by choosing the ‘least worst’ option. Polarity management (Johnson 1996) takes this a step forward by introducing the idea of movement between the polarities by deciding which of the ‘pros’ best suits the current situation and then when the ‘cons’ become too intense, one flips over to the other option until the ‘cons’ of that option become too intense and then one flips back again. This appears to happen in organisations over long periods of time (e.g. centralise then decentralise then centralise …).

Between formal logic and dialectics is ‘fuzzy logic’ (Kosko 1993) which suggests there is a continuum between the two poles of ‘either/or’. This would allow for a midway point solution, a balance or a compromise.
Although a ‘from/to’ continuum is an improvement on ‘either/or’ (in the sense that it provides more options), it might still be considered rather one dimensional. For example, if the result of a negotiation could only be somewhere between win/lose and lose/win, then the best result for all parties could only be a compromise; win/win can only occur if a second dimension is added.

If the single dimension is converted to two dimensions, a dialectic construct is created. This is also known as a 2x2 box, a quadrant (e.g. Blanchard et al. 1994, Covey 1994) or Cartesian Co-ordinates (Bodenhamer and Hall 2004). It is also used by Blake and Mouton (1966) in the form of a ‘managerial grid’. The idea of dialectics is to think in ‘both/and’ terms instead of ‘either/or’ by taking a thesis and its antithesis and then creating a synthesis. In this two dimensional model of a dialectic construct, the four quadrants are: 1) thesis; 2) antithesis; 3) synthesis (both thesis and antithesis); and 4) inverse synthesis (neither thesis nor antithesis).

The trialectical approach might include denominalising and reframing. The process of denominalising is usually linked to NLP (e.g. Dilts and DeLozier 2000b) but is also referred to by Hampden-Turner (1990, p. 131) who suggests that ‘by adding ing to … words we convert the noun form to the present participle; not decisiveness but deciding … Once expressed in this way, they are process words … the oppositions are softened and the adversary structure disappears.’ Ford and Ford (1994, p. 765) say: ‘According to trialectics, there are no “things” in the world other than change, movement or process. Things, such as people, organisations and ideas, are all names given to abstractions of what are identifiable and relatively constant patterns of movement.’ Trialectics would therefore imply that paradox is a process and not a thing.

According to Ichazo (1982, p. 74), trialectic logic is about ‘the change from one material manifestation point to another’ and the movement from one point to another point appears to be that of one frame to another frame. In this sense, reframing captures the essence of trialectic logic. Reframing taps into a rich source of material and hence may provide a useful resource for paradox management. Bolman and Deal (2003, p. 12) refer to frames as ‘windows, maps, tools, lenses, orientations, and perspectives’ and use four broad frames (structural, human resource, political and symbolic) through which organisational reframing can take place. Bandler and Grinder (1982) propose two types of reframing: content and context, and these have been further developed by Dilts (1999) with the ‘sleight of mouth’ patterns and also by Hall and Bodenhamer (2005) with the ‘mind lines’ patterns.

Summary of literature on NLP and paradox

Conceptually, there appear to be numerous links between NLP and the understanding and management of paradox, including the awareness and use of language patterns (e.g. from the meta model and Milton models) and the ability to think in multiple directions (e.g. logical levels and reframing).

What may be new to NLP are the components and typology of paradox and the nature of the three logics: formal, dialectic and trialectic. Of particular significance is the formalisation of these ‘logics’ and that when a person is positioned in the framework of a particular logic this will inform (and possibly limit) their thinking.

Methods

As there was no hypothesis to prove or disprove, the nature of the research was exploration rather than validation. Theory would come from the data and for this reason, the approach was inductive as opposed to deductive.

It was important that the method allowed the meaning of the phenomena discussed to surface, which made qualitative interviews most appropriate. The author used semi-structured interviews, which allowed for freedom of exploration whilst maintaining a degree of consistency throughout the interviews. Each interview lasted approximately 45 minutes and was recorded (with the explicit permission of the interviewee) and transcribed. A level of confidentiality was agreed with each individual involved, for example that the individuals
and their organisations remain anonymous and that their specific responses would not be fed back to their own management.

A handout was shown to the interviewee that contained a list of words and phrases connected to paradox (see Figure 2). The interviewee was then asked if they had experienced any of the terms and if so, which ones. They were then asked questions such as: ‘What would be an example of that?’ From there, the author asked questions to gain more detailed information; for example, where and when, how it made them feel and what they did to resolve it.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ambiguity</th>
<th>Groupthink</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blame</td>
<td>Indecision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competing demands</td>
<td>Interpersonal conflicts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflicting priorities</td>
<td>Mixed messages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contradictory communication</td>
<td>Polarised thinking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Damned if I do, damned if I don't</td>
<td>Procrastination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dilemmas</td>
<td>Tensions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entrenched positions</td>
<td>Vicious circles/cycles</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2: Handout shown to interviewees at the start of the interview. (J. Cheal 2009)

A Q-Sort was used to analyse the data because it is a simple and flexible tool to uncover themes. Although Q-Sort becomes extremely complex with large amounts of data (Robson 2002), it worked well with the sample size of this study. As well as spontaneous themes, where possible, the analysis also looked at language patterns and specific examples of how paradox has affected participants and how they have attempted to resolve paradoxes.

Since the research was qualitative, no statistical analysis was needed and hence a small, non-random sample was appropriate. The author sought a specific population who were likely to be affected by paradox in organisations and so the sample was non random. This meant a rather skewed population sample that may not necessarily represent all middle-to-senior managers. For this reason, the results could not be generalised but may show that some paradoxes can be managed.

The population was 18 junior to senior managers from three organisations in different industries (e.g. a charity, a county council and a food manufacturer). Six people were selected from each organisation (by an in-house HR/learning and development manager), three first line managers and three senior managers. This allowed for some loose comparisons of people in the same organisations, first line managers across organisations and senior managers across organisations. Although not enough to be statistically significant, it should have been enough to give some insights into the similarities or differences in the experience of paradoxes in these industries. With regards to access, the author works as a consultant with a range of organisations from the industries mentioned and so had numerous contacts in HR and management. This will also mean that the author had a knowledge of and familiarity with the organisations and industries which allowed for more in depth, probing interviews.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paradox label &amp; Type</th>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Org type</th>
<th>Cause</th>
<th>Effects on system</th>
<th>Effects on individual</th>
<th>Strategy/ intervention used</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ambiguity paradox</td>
<td>Double bind</td>
<td>To act or not to act. If things go wrong, my neck is in the frame. If I do nothing, people say ‘you should have done something’.</td>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>Council</td>
<td>Staff member without line manager, having to act outside level of responsibility.</td>
<td>Potential risk of person acting beyond level of responsibility.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can of worms Paradox 1</td>
<td>Double bind</td>
<td>Open can: issues and stress. Don’t open can: hidden issues and guilt.</td>
<td>First Line</td>
<td>Council</td>
<td>Issues exist that have been ignored but someone sees that there are potential issues.</td>
<td>If not handled, issues resurface at bad time.</td>
<td>Extra workload and/or worry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can of worms Paradox 2</td>
<td>Knot</td>
<td>Try to help: can owner thinks I’m interfering and removing their authority. Not try to help: Person unprotected and vulnerable. Either way, sees me as a persecutor. (Drama triangle?)</td>
<td>First Line</td>
<td>Council</td>
<td>If can opened, owner of can becomes resentful, though my intention is to do the right thing and to help them …</td>
<td>Org shoots the messenger, so people more likely to keep secrets.</td>
<td>Difficult, heart sinks, can be gruesome, feels like grassing people up.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural difference paradox</td>
<td>Vicious Circle &amp; Self Fulfilling Prophecy</td>
<td>We don’t like them because we’ve never liked them.</td>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>Manufacturer</td>
<td>History, subjectivity and emotion.</td>
<td>Splits, lack of communication.</td>
<td>Feeling in the middle.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Departmental polarities 1</td>
<td>Polarity, Dilemma</td>
<td>Servicing different departments leads to competing demands.</td>
<td>First line</td>
<td>Charity</td>
<td>Divide between departments and planning devolved to individual teams. No one taking bigger picture control.</td>
<td>Damaged relationships.</td>
<td>Stress, can’t plan, frustration, feels unfair.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Departmental polarities 2</td>
<td>Dilemma</td>
<td>Research vs Production</td>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>Manufacturer</td>
<td>Need to give customer choice and new products. But production want standardisation, reduced waste/cost.</td>
<td>Disruption</td>
<td>Communicate, pragmatic approach, compromise or stand up for it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Efficiency paradox 1</td>
<td>Knot</td>
<td>Needs of customer not being met because of drive for efficiency.</td>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>Manufacturer</td>
<td>Organisation wants both innovation/customisation and reduce cost/standardisation.</td>
<td>Departments/organisation may not get what it wants.</td>
<td>Pressure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Efficiency paradox 2</td>
<td>Vicious circle and knot</td>
<td>I’m good at what I do, so I get given more work. This continues until I cannot do my job anymore.</td>
<td>First Line</td>
<td>Council</td>
<td>Work takes path of least resistance.</td>
<td>Inequality of workloads and expectations.</td>
<td>Resentment about other people not doing much.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empowerment paradox 1</td>
<td>Double bind</td>
<td>Making decisions without director input leads to ‘Why didn’t you ask us?’ but not making decision leads to ‘Why don’t you do your job?’</td>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>Manufacturer</td>
<td>Traditionally, decisions are not made until directors have had input.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Diplomatic skills to keep directors happy.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: A sample of paradoxes experienced by first line and senior managers in each organisation. (J. Cheal 2009)
**Analysis of data**

**Paradox examples**

All interviewees reported at least one organisational paradox that had had an effect on them, and the effects mentioned were, without exception, negative. The most common effect was ‘frustration’. Every one of the 18 people interviewed was able to give examples that fitted within the framework of paradox typology. For the sake of space, Table 4 below gives a sample of the study results which identified 52 different paradoxes.

Each of the paradoxes were labelled by the author, which was done for convenience rather than significance. The collected paradoxes were analysed by paradox type (as established in Table 2) and, where data was available, examples, cause, effects and interventions are shown. It was apparent that some managers had strategies for handling paradox whilst others did not.

**Language and thinking patterns**

There were also three interesting language/thinking patterns that emerged from the interviews. The first was the use of metaphors, the second was a sudden change of pronoun use from ‘I’ to ‘you’ and the third was a range of other indicators of polarity, tension and other forms of paradox.

The use of metaphor might be an indicator of problems and possibly paradox. Table 5 shows the metaphors used by the interviewees when talking about problems (usually paradoxical) throughout the interviews. Perhaps metaphor may be used as a way of expressing difficult or emotive concepts by disassociating (i.e. emotionally distancing oneself).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actions speak louder than words</th>
<th>Grass is greener</th>
<th>Scrambled egg (head felt like)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Balloon out of control</td>
<td>Grey areas</td>
<td>Round in circles and end up at square one</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Big gamble</td>
<td>Grinning your teeth</td>
<td>Sailing too close to the wind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blue flashing light</td>
<td>Halos and horns</td>
<td>Same flavour but with less meat on the bones</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blow up</td>
<td>Hands are tied</td>
<td>Set of hurdles and we may fall at one</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blow with the wind</td>
<td>Heart trying to do the stomach’s job</td>
<td>Shifting a big rock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bone of contention</td>
<td>Herd of elephants coming towards you</td>
<td>Silk glove with the iron fist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Borderline cases</td>
<td>Juggling</td>
<td>Silo mentality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brush it under the carpet</td>
<td>Many balls in the air at the same time</td>
<td>Split the pot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can of worms</td>
<td>Mix it up like a deck of cards</td>
<td>Spoon feeding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chaos on the streets</td>
<td>Move the goalposts</td>
<td>Stabbed in the back</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chase off in different directions</td>
<td>Nightmare</td>
<td>Sticking ones head above the parapet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clash of egos</td>
<td>Old Boys club</td>
<td>Sweating blood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparing apples and pears</td>
<td>Old hat on</td>
<td>Thin end of the wedge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Court of the sun king</td>
<td>On different wavelengths</td>
<td>Turn a blind eye</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creaky system</td>
<td>Open the stable door and let the horse bolt</td>
<td>Unhappy bunnies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cut any ice</td>
<td>Out of its box (an old issue)</td>
<td>War (it’s a war out there)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Different angles</td>
<td>Put it on the backburner</td>
<td>Wrestling with a difficulty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Double edged sword</td>
<td>Queer the pitch</td>
<td>Woolly priorities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eggs in one basket</td>
<td>Resources are tight</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empire building</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fingers in ears</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 5:** Metaphors used to describe paradoxical issues. (J. Cheal 2009)
There was often a change in the focus of an interviewee’s attention from talking in the ‘I’ form to talking in the ‘you’ form. Sometimes, this was in the form of stating an opinion or generalising (also known as a ‘lost performative’ generalisation according to the NLP meta model, Bandler and Grinder, 1975). For example:

- ‘As a manager, you then have to make judgements’
- ‘I answer based on facts… Base it on facts and you can’t go wrong.’

At times, when the interviewee was talking about themselves they used the pronoun ‘you’, as if they were projecting. For example:

- ‘When I sense that it starts happening you have to step back and think about yourself as a cog in the machine’
- ‘I just let stuff go because otherwise it would eat you up completely’
- ‘He has information and I need that. You have the dilemma of: I need the information but I don’t want to ask’
- ‘If they take the other half of my job away, I don’t know, it makes you insecure.’

There were also a lot of ‘you’ responses when the interviewee was asked: ‘How does that affect you?’ For example:

- ‘It makes you feel very squeezed’
- ‘It does disillusion you’
- ‘You feel as if you’re not making progress.’

Another combination was:

- ‘Sometimes it gets the better of you; sometimes I feel ‘grrrr’.’

The change of pronoun from ‘I’ to ‘you’ may also be a sign that the person is uncomfortable and wants to ‘put it out there’ by dissociating. In modern parlance, Western cultures tend not to use the term ‘one’ (as in ‘one sometimes find it frustrating’), so another option would be ‘people’, but that would still include the individual who is speaking, so ‘you’ is a more dissociated method of speaking. Alternatively, perhaps the speaker wants to involve the listener in order to gain empathy. This ‘I’ to ‘you’ language pattern is a general observation although all 18 interviewees did it. A detailed analysis of this language pattern is outside the scope of this paper and may be somewhat difficult to prove one way or the other. It may however, be worth further study.

Other potential indicators of paradox that were expressed by interviewees are highlighted in Table 6. They have been split into explicit and implied. The explicit indicators give a strong suggestion that there is a paradox being discussed. The implied indicators suggest a possibility that a paradox is being discussed, depending on the context.

It is interesting to note how many words act like the word ‘but’ (e.g. however, nevertheless, on the other hand, though, whereas, whilst) in that they change the ‘emotional’ direction (positive to negative and negative to positive). When these patterns are used it is possible to follow the string of reframes from positive to negative to positive and back again. Some words such as ‘between’ and ‘or’ act as a splitter, marking out two different sides whereas other words such as ‘not’ and ‘too’ act as indicators of polarity in the sense that they imply that there is an opposing factor. Indeed, it could be argued that any time a position is taken on an issue (e.g. I’m right, you’re wrong) this would imply there is an opposing position and hence a paradox.
### Explicit polarity/tension

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Example/notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between</td>
<td>‘it’s between x and y’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Balance</td>
<td>‘strike a balance between x and y’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Compromise</td>
<td>‘compromise between x and y’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Dichotomy</td>
<td>‘dichotomy between x and y’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Difference</td>
<td>‘difference between x and y’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Divide/Division</td>
<td>‘divide between x and y’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Happy medium</td>
<td>‘happy medium between x and y’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contrary</td>
<td>‘what you have to do might be contrary to your values’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counter</td>
<td>‘counter productive’, ‘counter balance’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Either/or</td>
<td>‘either x or y’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Versus</td>
<td>‘x versus y’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Win/lose</td>
<td>‘I win, you lose’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Implied polarity/tension

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Example/notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>But</td>
<td>‘they will get skills but other people will have to wait’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t</td>
<td>‘I don’t see it as x’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>However</td>
<td>‘x however y’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instead</td>
<td>‘instead of x, y’ (or ‘if not x, y instead’)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nevertheless</td>
<td>‘x nevertheless y’ (acts like ‘but’)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not x</td>
<td>implies polarity between x and not x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On the other hand</td>
<td>‘x, on the other hand, y’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Otherwise</td>
<td>‘x, otherwise y’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ought/should</td>
<td>implies a mismatch between expectation and reality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rather than</td>
<td>‘x rather than y’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Right</td>
<td>Implies there’s a wrong (works for any truth value)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>So</td>
<td>‘x so y’ (problem so need/solution)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Though</td>
<td>‘x though y’ (acts like ‘but’)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too</td>
<td>Implies being at the end of one polarity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whereas</td>
<td>‘x whereas y’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whilst</td>
<td>‘whilst x, y’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Without</td>
<td>‘talk a lot without any action’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6: Language Indicators of polarity, tension and other forms of paradox. (J. Cheal 2009)

### Conclusions

The primary research appeared to demonstrate that paradox in organisations is recognisable and paradox does indeed affect people in organisations, usually in a negative manner (see Table 4). As to whether paradox can be managed, the answer from the literature and the primary research appears to be ‘sometimes’. It appeared that some managers coped with paradox whilst others did not. Certainly, there are ways of understanding and managing paradox conceptually, but this also requires the players to be aware of paradox, to feel they can do something about it and have the motivation to act.

Paradox is a complex concept to grasp and paradox management is a skill that needs to be learnt. It is hoped that by introducing the components and typology of paradox, this may aid management practice in the future. Further research is required to determine how easily paradox management can be taught and learnt as an organisational skill.

Of particular interest to this article, is the question: ‘How might NLP aid in the management of paradox?’ and the research suggests that although there is further work to do, the areas of linguistic analysis, metaphor, reframing and denominalisation all show promise.
The possible linguistic indicators of paradox are particularly interesting (see Table 6) as they may give an NLP or OD practitioner clues as to where the heart of the paradox lies, i.e. between what and what? For example: ‘It’s a compromise between time and quality’ indicates a polarity between time and quality as if it is an either/or and hence a paradox.

As Table 5 suggests, the use of metaphor may also give clues about the existence of paradox (e.g. going round in circles). Although not exclusively NLP related, the use and exploration of metaphor may be a promising area for paradox management. As a way of expressing paradox, metaphor might also be useful in its management. Dilts (1999, p. 69) reports that: ‘According to Bateson … metaphorical thinking leads to more creativity and may actually lead us to discover deeper truths about reality.’ If a client uses a metaphor to express a problem, an OD practitioner might use a further metaphor for a solution. For example, ‘I keep hitting my head against a brick wall,’ leads to ‘If there was a door in the wall, where would it take you?’

A curious phenomenon is the tendency for interviewees to flip from ‘I’ to ‘you’ focus when describing something uncomfortable, as if to dissociate themselves. The author could find no precedent in the literature referencing this phenomenon. Although this may not be unique to paradoxical issues, it is perhaps worthy of further research. Other dissociating language to notice might be ‘that’ instead of ‘this’, ‘there’ instead of ‘here’ and ‘then’ instead of ‘now’.

It is possible that the most useful paradox management intervention to link with NLP is the concept of reframing; for example, in redefining particular problems to see them from other angles. It could be argued that a problem is only a problem if it is perceived as a problem. Hoebeke (2004, p. 151) suggests ‘in organisations there are no problems, only people with problems,’ and Ford and Ford (1994, p. 760) consider that ‘Boundaries reside in the observer(s), not the observed. A boundary between an organisation (A) and its environment (not-A), for example, belongs neither to the organisation nor the environment, but to the observer.’ Horn (1983, p. 21) adds that ‘opposition is only “apparent” … Only in our human conceptions do opposites exist at all.’ If this is the case, then when perception changes, the paradox ceases to be ‘manifest’ and returns back to the realm of potential. Given that NLP has a strong grounding in the nature of reframing, it would certainly be worth exploring some of the reframing literature (e.g. Dilts, 1999; Hall and Bodenhammer 2005) in future research.

As discussed in the literature review, an awareness of nominalisations may be useful (although perhaps not essential). Considering the amount of potential nominalisations in the English language, a practitioner would need to focus on those that are troublesome in a particular context. For example, words like ‘empowerment’ or ‘leadership’ could create polarity when there is a lack of an agreed/shared definition. Further study would be prudent to determine if a paradox could be resolved when the polarities where denominalised (i.e. turned back from things into processes).

If paradox in organisations affects people in a negative manner, then paradox management is a worthy cause. This article was designed to raise the readers awareness and understanding of paradox in organisations and then to open the door to using NLP in helping to resolve such paradox.

**Glossary of terms**

**Dialectic**
A philosophical model of logic that creates a ‘third way’ or synthesis between the polarities of thesis and antithesis.

**Dilemma**
A difficult decision caused by a tension between two positions or options.

**Double bind**
No win situations where you are wrong if you do and wrong if you don’t (or right if you do and right if you don’t).

**Formal logic**
A philosophical model of logic that works in the framework of either/or, maintaining a polarity between two seemingly opposing positions. Also known as Aristotelian logic.
**NLP**

Neuro-linguistic programming, the study of the structure of subjective experience. Also known as the psychology of excellence and the ‘science’ of change.

**Nominalisation**

A verb that has been converted into a noun. Nominalising is the act of turning verbs into nouns and denominalising is the act of converting the noun back to verb form. In NLP terms, a nominalisation is often identified as a thing that you could not put into a wheelbarrow, e.g. love, empowerment.

**Paradox**

A contradiction between interconnected propositions or concepts that still holds true.

**Reframing**

Transforming the meaning of something by putting it into a different framework or context than it has previously been perceived.

**TOTE**

Test–operate–test–exit, a simple algorithm for outcome focused ‘problem solving’. A person with a goal will check/test (usually unconsciously) if they have achieved the outcome. If not, they take action (operate) and then test again. If they still do not have the outcome, they act again, until the test matches the outcome then they can exit the feedback loop.

**Trialectic**

A philosophical model of logic that shifts outside or beyond a polarity for example by reframing.

**References**


New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.


PSYCHOTHERAPY
A study of the relationship between the core belief structures of neurolinguistic psychotherapy and object relations theory

Lisa Wake

Abstract

This grounded theory study considers the core belief processes of neurolinguistic psychotherapy (NLPt). In reviewing the findings, these are then considered in the light of object relations theory. The study considers the neurolinguistic psychotherapist's perception of beliefs and then compares the therapist's experience with conceptual principles that are present in object relations theory.

The main conclusions of the study revealed that the attachment relationship and resistance was a recurring theme in the therapeutic experience; that NLPt provides the potential for working with affective states through the inherent outcome oriented nature of the therapy; that there is a potential relationship between neuro-linguistic programming (NLP) core belief structures and the object relations theory; and that the splitting process as it is described within object relations can be related to leading NLP theorist, Robert Dilts' views on ‘hopelessness’, ‘helplessness’ and ‘worthlessness’.

Recommendations are made that include the management of resistance and teaching of attachment theory in NLPt training.

Keywords

ATTACHMENT THEORY, BELIEFS, COUNTERTRANSFERENCE, NEUROLINGUISTIC PSYCHOTHERAPY, OBJECT RELATIONS THEORY, RESISTANCE

Introduction and Background

NLPt is a relatively new modality compared to the more traditional approaches in psychotherapy. Since NLPt’s early development in 1992, there has been little published literature on NLP psychotherapy. Where literature has been written it has focused on the application of the NLP methodology in psychotherapy rather than the theoretical concepts that underpin NLPt (Bolstad 2002; McDermott and Jago 2001). Of the limited research that exists within NLPt, this has looked only at outcome measures not the process of therapy itself (Einspruch and Forman 1985).
This study uses a grounded theory approach to develop an understanding of the experience of psychotherapists who use NLP in their work, and how they relate to and work with client’s core belief structures. Within NLP, Dilts (1990) and James (1996) refer to core beliefs or prime concerns being one of the drivers for influencing our subjective reality.

In reviewing generic psychotherapy literature on neurological development and subjectivity of experience, there is a relationship to core belief structures and the developing brain of the infant, particularly in relation to stress responses (Gerhardt 2004). Gerhardt suggests that infants who are handled sensitively and frequently in early life particularly when distressed, have greater ability to cope with stress later in life. Schore (2003) argues that infants of depressed or absent mothers often experience ‘dead periods’ in their own development which results in cellular death in the infant brain, describing this as the child finally detaching and becoming silent to match the mother’s state, ‘this state switch from a regulatory strategy of intense struggling into the dissociative immobilized state mimicking death is ultimately experienced as a “dead spot” in this child’s subjective experience.’ (2003, p. 126)

There are parallels between Schore’s notion of the ‘dead spot’ with the object relations theory of Klein (1946). Kristeva (2001) suggests there is the presumption of an ‘innate preconception’ within the infant of a breast, and that when this need is not met, the infant moves from a ‘thought as no thing… replaced by the non-realisation of the breast’. (2001, p. 179). Kristeva refers to Klein’s idea of how this initial non-response from the mother can result in a traumatised response in the infant at the separation.

The author reviewed object relations theory and compared this to the experience of NLP therapists working with the belief structures of clients to ascertain if there was a relationship between how therapists worked with core belief structures of a client’s inner world and the theories that are presented in object relations theory.

**Literature review**

Einspruch and Forman (1985) conducted a meta-analysis of 39 studies that had taken place between 1975 and 1984, looking at NLP as a generic psychological intervention. Their study identified a number of components that questioned the validity of the research that had been undertaken previously, concluding that although NLP is testable and verifiable, previous research was methodologically inadequate as it was not possible to determine the validity of either NLP concepts or whether NLP-based therapeutic procedures are effective for achieving therapeutic outcomes. They made recommendations that empirical investigations were conducted to test the validity of NLP as a model of psychotherapy.

Einspruch and Forman (1988) used their findings to conduct a study of 31 phobic patients within a multifaceted treatment programme using NLP and Ericksonian approaches. The researchers concluded that NLP holds promise for becoming an important set of therapeutic techniques for treating phobias.

A further piece of research conducted by Genser-Medlitsch and Schütz (1997) demonstrated through a comprehensive evaluation of 55 patients that NLP is an effective modality of therapy in accordance with its therapeutic objective.

In conclusion, from the papers reviewed, research has focused on therapeutic outcomes with little if any focus on the process of therapy. The studies consistently lack reporting of the therapeutic methodological approach, the role of the therapist within the sessions and the developmental history of clients.
The subjectivity of relationships within psychodynamic literature

Object relations theory was chosen as the therapy to test the findings against as they emerged, because the theory concerns the internal objects that influence an individual’s subjective reality. The theory emerged out of Freudian psychoanalytic theory and was first developed by Klein (1928). Klein’s work parallels the NLP notion of a subjective reality in that she viewed a person as a ‘subjective agent within a subjective world of relationship, conflict and change’ (Gomez 1997, p. 34). This resonance with the subjectivity of relationship in NLP is also found in the work of other later object relations therapists, Winnicott, Fairbairn and Bowlby.

Like Klein, Fairbairn studied Freud and also came to the view that the ego or ‘I’ began at birth as a dynamic structure (1952), with the primary aim of object-seeking, and the idealised object. Fairbairn proposed that our strongest urge is for contact with others and that we are driven by separation anxiety.

Winnicott (1971) disagreed with Klein on the notion of instinctual conflict and considered that we are born healthy and that a baby develops a sense of self through a ‘good enough’ mother. His theory holds the view that the baby is preoccupied with the mother as the primary object and that it is the mother’s ability to contain the sense of oneness with the baby that provides a security within the infant’s self. For Winnicott, life then becomes a process of moving through phases of illusion to disillusion, seeking a core sense of togetherness.

Figure 1: Object-seeking, as defined by Fairbairn (based on Fairbairn 1944a, p. 105). (L. Wake 2009)
Bowlby is seen as a developer of object relations theory and his work in this area spawned a separate school of psychotherapy, attachment theory (1969). Attachment theory holds similar principles to and is built on object relations theory. It focuses on the primacy of the need for a relationship, and the relational structure of the self.

**Methodology**

The research design is qualitative using the grounded theory approach (Glaser and Strauss 1967). Rennie has used grounded theory extensively in the field of psychotherapy research (Angus and Rennie 1988; Rennie et al. 1988; Rennie 1990, 1992, 1994a, 1994b, 1994c, 1994d, 1996, 1998; Watson and Rennie, 1994), and proposes that this methodology provides the opportunity for thematic analysis of subjective experience.

The study analyses the therapist’s perception of the client’s belief structures. Six therapists were selected using a combination of convenience and theoretical sampling. The therapist profile consisted of three male and three female therapists, five were accredited with the UK Council for Psychotherapy (UKCP) and one was in their final year of training. Three of the therapists worked in both private practice and the public sector, the remaining three therapists worked in private practice only. Four therapists operated from a pure NLP theoretical basis, one therapist was also trained in family therapy, integrative and psychoanalytic theory, and one was also trained in Ericksonian therapy. The author conducted all six interviews.

Semi structured interviews were used for the first three subjects. Questions used for the semi structured interviews were as follows.
1. How do you identify a client’s core belief structures?
2. What patterns, if any, have you observed in the core belief structures in a number of clients?
3. What theories, if any, have you developed about how these core belief structures have arisen within the client?
4. In working with a client’s history story, what observations have you made about the generalisation of belief structures?

The second set of interviews was guided by the emerging data, which were beginning to demonstrate that the role of the therapist was a key component within the therapy.

The main themes that emerged as possible categories in the first set of interviews included:

- role of resistance in therapy
- therapy relationship
- 3 patterns of behavioural response that clients gave
- what the therapist is doing in the session
- relationship of self to the world
- recognising and working with patterns.

After the second set of interviews the data were analysed again, grouping the themes into areas of commonality (see Appendix A), which were then grouped into categories. The analysis was a combination of both interpretative and iterative, with transcripts being recoded and grouped to ensure full saturation of the data. A further data coding process identified sub themes within the main themes (see Table 1), resulting in four main themes and a number of sub themes. These are listed in Table 1.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main category 1 The therapists approach to working with beliefs</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. How beliefs are identified</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Identification processes</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Working with patterns</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Incongruence in the client</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Psychiatric labels</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Holding and seeking possibilities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Creating possibilities</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• - Working towards outcomes</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. The therapist’s role</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Therapist identification of their role</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main category 2 The client’s process</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Psychodynamic processes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Resistance</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Transference and countertransference</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Conflict</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Unconscious processes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The structure of beliefs</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Repression of emotions</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Non-cognitive thinking</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Fundamentalism</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Fabrication</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. The client’s sense of self</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Negation of self</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Valuing self</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. The client’s belief structures</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Where beliefs come from</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Flexibility in thought and emotion</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main category 3 Relationships</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. The therapy relationship</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Providing agency for the client</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Respecting the client’s world</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The therapist’s reactions</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Connecting</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Trusting</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Holding</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. The client’s perspective</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Relationship of self to others</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Client’s attributing their condition to others</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main Category 4 Professional Practice</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Safety for the client</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The client being safe</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Scope of practice</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Ceasing therapy</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. The professional role</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Being supervised</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Ongoing development of the therapist</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Main themes and sub themes. (L. Wake 2009)
Validity of the data

Credibility of the data is provided through the use of quotes to provide examples of how the categories emerged through analysis of the narrative within the transcripts (Morse 2002, pp. 3–4). The emerging themes were discussed with two colleagues to enable the researcher to test out understanding and to challenge thinking. Credibility and confirmability is also enhanced by ensuring that there is sufficient evidence within the transcripts to support the themes (Hammersley 1992, pp. 57–82).

Only categories that were present in four or more of the study subjects are included in these findings, and only where the study subjects give a clear description of their experience. The study is limited in that only 6 subjects were interviewed, where ideally 8–20 subjects are used (Strauss and Corbin 1990).

Bloor (1997) recommends that member checks and triangulation occurs to ensure credibility of the research. This was conducted at the University of Surrey NLP Research Conference in July 2008. Six NLP therapists from across the UK and Europe were present during this presentation. Feedback included a need for links to object relations theory where this can be made and a call for further extensive research into this area.

Within the time constraints of the study and limited number of study subjects it was not possible to check out the validity of the data through triangulation. The author attempted to address this through the checking of coding categories by another researcher which resulted in a change to some of the categories.

Because of the lack of research into this area it was not possible to conduct a comparative study with other studies. There is comparison within the findings between the data sets from the study subjects.

The researcher recognises the requirement to demonstrate the reflexive process of data analysis and the potential of observer bias in qualitative data analysis. Seale’s (1999) view is that it is difficult for the researcher to be aware of their own subconscious influence on shaping the ideas that emerge within the research. The researcher used a process of mind mapping (Buzan 2006) of her own internal thought processes onto a white board. This process of dissociating from the data allowed the researcher to reflect on her own subconscious projections onto the data. The researcher then discussed these considerations with her clinical supervisor whose role it is to be aware of and bring to the surface unconscious projections that are affecting clinical work. Subsequent to this, the data were revisited and further analysis conducted to ensure that emerging themes were supported by the data.

Other factors that may affect the reflexivity of the analysis is the nature of psychotherapy. Psychotherapists maintain a high degree of confidentiality in their client work, therefore data being shared may have been filtered substantially before being presented to the researcher to protect the identity of the clients.

Results and interpretation

As Table 1 shows, the following four main themes emerged from the analysis.

1. The therapist’s approach to working with beliefs.
2. The client’s process.
4. Professional practice.

Each theme is considered in relation to object relations theory with results and interpretation reported simultaneously; however it should be noted that analysis and results were conducted prior to comparison with the wider existing psychotherapy literature.
The therapist’s approach to working with beliefs

All therapists were clear that they are working with beliefs and are able to identify the processes that they use. Therapists consistently refer to the client’s lack of conscious awareness of their beliefs, with beliefs usually of such a high order, and at identity level that the client may not always be aware of how limiting the belief structure is,

‘whereas the really deep core beliefs, they are hidden so deep, that often they don't have awareness of them.’

This is supported by Bowlby’s theory that beliefs are partly conscious and partly unconscious and usually not completely consistent or coherent (Levy et al. 1998). Bowlby (1973) proposes that the rationale for keeping beliefs outside of conscious awareness is to defend the person from a threat to the self. There is consistency with NLP theories that consider repression of beliefs as having defensive and self protective functions (Wake 2008).

Universal across all therapists is the notion of creating possibilities for the client in the here and now. Therapists are able to work with the current range of behaviours and create different choices from this,

‘just putting them in a different order, then having a different choice.’

And,

‘I can say “instead of having problem X, what would you rather have?” and that leads us down another avenue.’

This focuses the client towards an outcome state rather than a problem state. Although possibility and outcome based approaches do not necessarily fit within the field of object relations theory, recent research into compartmentalisation or schizoid processes has demonstrated that the more clients work with positive compartments of their psyche, the greater the association with positive feelings about the self and the greater the integrative organisation, whereas if negative compartments are accessed, this contributes to negative mood and low self esteem. By offering a more integrated structure, even when the negative is accessed, the client is more likely to minimise the impact of important negatives (Showers and Kevlyn 1999). This view supports Wake’s (2008) theory that working with the neurological components of affective states towards a future orientation can facilitate rapid change within a client, enabling the client to access more resourceful states.

There is a strong recognition of the significance of the therapist’s role within the interviews. Although the therapists do not refer directly to the notion of attachment theory, except in one instance, it is clear that the role of the therapist as object is a significant concept for all therapists.

‘My role is to provide them with the rock around which they can do what they need to do … that of almost being like a rock and the tide came in and the tide came out.’

Another therapist refers to this with insight,

‘Because the real, the real work there is just in the relating… I can think of a couple of people where I have worked with maybe 30–50 hours over a long time, and you know, and one was pretty awful. … Really nasty, systematic abuse, prolonged abuse, that this person had been subjected to over many years as a young person. So the first thing, above all else is about building trust and just relating week on, every other week, whatever it was. And creating a platform or a scenario in
which, actually it is ok, to start to just let that little inner self start to show. So that's what I was saying when I talk about defensiveness or protecting, it is a massive generalisation.'

Attachment history and relationships are not discussed within the core curriculum of NLP; however Wake (2008) and Gawler-Wright (2005) both contest this view, positing that the role of the therapist in the therapy relationship in assisting repair of early attachment relationships is crucial. Each of the therapists within this study also considered that their presence had a significant role within the therapy process.

Winnicott (1960), Fairbairn (1952) and Bowlby (1969, 1973, 1980) all considered that the relationship with the therapist provides a heuristic clue to early attachment relationships. The therapists within this study illustrate Dujovne’s (1990) summary of the role of the therapist in object relations therapy. Dujovne suggests that the experience of the ‘good’ therapist challenges the predominantly negative bond with the ‘bad’ object and puts the patient in touch with its ‘goodness’. Thus, the experience of the nurturing therapist-parent seems to dislocate the patient’s internal dissociation by bringing ambivalence into the foreground. The dislocation occurs because the ‘good/bad’ split fails, the internal reality of sadness cannot be denied, and omnipotence turns to vulnerability. (Dujovne 1990, p. 477) This is represented in the narrative of the therapists, who consistently refer to being there for the client, and allowing the client to do whatever the client needs to do in the moment.

The client’s process

The primary processes that are at play in the client’s world within object relations theory are splitting, introjection, projection and the schizoid and depressive positions. (Gomez 1997). The NLP therapists were aware of the client’s process within therapy, and although the language used was dissimilar to that used within object relations theory, the semantic meaning of the experiences bore strong relationships to some of the concepts found within object relations theory.

Within the literature of NLP, there is little to support the notion that it is a therapy that involves the therapeutic relationship. Wake (2008), Gawler-Wright (2006), and the European Association for NLP (EANLP) all hold the alternative view that the therapy relationship is key to enabling a client to find solutions and new behavioural choices; ‘It is only when the therapist develops a truly responsive relationship of trust and understanding with clients that the unconscious can become conscious, what is held non-verbally and somatically, can be sponsored and validated.’ (Wake 2008, p. 174)

Three main categories from the study reflect the psychodynamic nature of therapy. All therapists in this sample refer extensively to working with resistance, with each of them highlighting awareness and utilisation of the transference and countertransference process. Four of the therapists also referred to working with conflict in the sessions.

The term ‘resistance’ in the psychodynamic world was first coined by Freud, who noted that clients would often be unwilling or unable to voice their thoughts and feelings because the super-ego was repressing the conscious or unconscious less acceptable impulses. Within psychodynamic and analytic therapies, resistance is used as part of the therapy process; within NLP there is no theoretical concept for managing and working with resistance, yet all six therapists reported resistance within the therapy sessions.

Most of the therapists had a working knowledge of transference and countertransference at a theoretical level, and each therapist also clearly articulated their awareness of how the transference was acted out in the therapy relationship. This contrasted with the blocks that the therapists were experiencing when they met with resistance. There was also recognition of when the therapist was being affected by their own countertransferential response.

Therapists were able to refer to examples of when the therapy relationship had been significantly impacted by the transferential process, with therapists referring emotionally to the impact that the client had on them.
Bowlby (1960) refers to this as the patient acting like the 'detached' child. His approach to therapy proposes that the role of the therapist is to support the client as they go back and work through the repressed emotions of sadness, hopelessness and wishes for love that were missed out on in the phases of despair and protest. Klein also refers to this and suggests that the role of therapy is to help clients work through the depressive position in the attachment relationship between therapist and client.

The interviews also provide insight into the negative and positive countertransferential responses.

'I was quite flattered by the referral, I thought, 'Ooh, the person, I held this person in quite high regard, the person who referred the client had recommended me, and with hindsight, the feeling of flattery, was something [laughs] to really pay attention to.'

And in his negative countertransference he refers to,

'The person came in and went all round the office picking up, was really invasive with my space, making comments on things.'

All therapists were limited in their approach to working with the transference and within the syllabus of training in NLP, transferential processes are not taught as mainstream.

The primary conflict that arises in object relations theory is that of conflict between the good and bad object. There is recognition amongst the therapists that many clients experience levels of unconscious conflict, where they are caught in a paradoxical or double bind situation. Therapists consider that it is the attempt by the client to resolve their conflict that often causes even greater conflict. This paradoxical process is highlighted in two examples,

'What they are doing is seeking confirmation that they have no value, although they assume they are seeking confirmation of value.'

And,

'There was a lot of guilt associated with not having her at home and guilty about not going every day, and also desire to protect her own boundaries and having some space for her.'

This matches Fairbairn's notion of the 'anti-wanting I', or the internal saboteur, which results in the client rejecting his own neediness and therefore not getting what he wants.

One of the questions asked within the semi-structured interview concerned the structure of beliefs. Within NLP there is very little information on the structure of core beliefs, with Dilts (1990) referring to three core processes of being: 'helplessness', 'hopelessness' and 'worthlessness'. James (1996) refers to three processes at core belief or prime concern level, those of 'being', 'doing' and 'having'.

Only one therapist referred specifically to the work of Dilts in considering core belief structures. Another therapist did not refer to Dilts specifically; however they did refer to the notions included within Dilts’ model.

It is clear from this study that the author’s sample of NLP therapists do not work with the belief structure concept proposed by Dilts and James. Klein’s theory proposes that splitting is unique to each person and that the infant uses splitting to ensure that each of the components are separated into manageable components. Klein holds the view that splitting generates two main domains, 'good' and 'bad' objects and these are then further differentiated into the initial relationship with the mother, and in later life, with other people, objects and
processes. Klein goes on to say that this is manifest as destructive anger within the depressive position, the paranoid-schizoid fear of annihilation and the fear of loss of the identity, resulting in worthlessness. Fairbairn holds a similar view to Klein, proposing that the schizoid position (where love is destructive and the client experiences intense meaningless) and the depressive position of anger and hate, results in despair. These theories relate directly to Dilts’ theory of ‘hopelessness’ which is manifest within the depressive position, ‘helplessness’ within the paranoid-schizoid fear position and ‘worthlessness’ within the fear of loss of identity where the infant feels wholly bad and worthless.

Winnicott relates anxiety states to the three processes of ‘holding’, ‘handling’ and ‘object-relating’. His theory suggests that where ‘holding’ has not been managed well the baby experiences a threat to his Being, matching Dilts’ theory on ‘hopelessness’. In ‘handling’, where this is not managed well by the mother, the baby experiences having no relation to his body, feeling unreal or depersonalised and he ends up with no reference point, similar to Dilts’ view of ‘helplessness’. Winnicott’s third process is that of ‘object-relating’, where the infant develops a fascination with and desire for the external object, which commences with feeding and relationship to the nipple. In anxiety states influenced by ‘object-relating’ the infant experiences a sense of separateness from others, resulting in futility and loneliness. This is less clear in relating to Dilts, in that anxiety states appear to affect all components of Dilts’ ‘beingness’.

Bowlby relates to anxiety states through attachment processes. He considers that securely attached children are more likely to form effective relationships with others. The insecure-ambivalent child will have an internal self structure that is unloveable based on an unpredictable other, which mirrors Klein’s paranoid-schizoid position. The insecure-avoidant child has an internal self structure that is not worthy of care, which results in repression of anger, which mirrors Klein’s depressive position.

What was clear amongst all therapists was the amount of energy or emotion that is present within the belief structures as the therapist begins to work with them. This matches the early description of meeting with resistance.

Fairbairn considers that resistance is set up to ensure that we reject the intolerable aspects of our self. The client continues to project inwards their own ‘badness’ and can therefore continue to see the external person as good enough. Fairbairn (1944b) describes this as ‘moral defence’ whereby an outward sense of security is retained at the expense of internalised insecurity and conflict.

Each therapist had a perception that clients have difficulty holding a positive sense of themselves and that the role of therapy is to enhance or develop a stronger sense of self. Most of the therapists referred to a negation of the self which support the notions as they are presented by Klein, Winnicott and Bowlby. Although the NLP therapists do not refer to the development of the self through object relating, it is clear that they are working in accordance with an internalised view of the self, and that this is based on either ‘good’ or ‘bad’ introjects.

Evident within the interviews was the view that clients had an idea of how they had developed their own beliefs and this was supported by the therapist’s recognition and identification of patterns.

Therapists were able to consider what was present when a client was not resistant, hence providing a contrast frame for considering the process of resistance.

Relationships

Relationships are consistently referred to in the interviews and these are categorised into two concepts; the therapy relationship, and, the client’s perception of relationships. It is the relationship of the self to others that is a core component of object relations theory.
It is recognised within attachment relationships in object relations theory that there is a need amongst anxious individuals to seek validation and reassurance from others. The therapists in this study demonstrated their own ability to provide validation, reassurance and Winnicott’s (1963) ‘holding’ and ‘object-relating’, with the therapist providing attunement to the client’s needs and inner state.

The flexibility of behaviour in respecting each client’s world amongst therapists is also apparent, with therapists adopting means by which they can work with each client as a unique being.

The principal process in object relations therapy is to use the therapy relationship to work with the paradoxical emotions that are held within the client. Dujovne (1990) suggests that the therapist’s role is to acknowledge the emotional states within the client and use these to assist the client to acknowledge and integrate the split-off aspects of the self. The therapists in this study demonstrate their ability to provide a ‘good enough’ therapist/parent role to assist connection in the client and a way of assisting the client to develop faith in relationships.

It is clear that the therapists are working with clients to develop a more integrated sense of self. The therapists in the study highlight their ability to work within NLPt processes to develop a capacity within the client for self-reinforcement and reconciliation of the ‘good’ and ‘bad’ aspects of the self.

Therapists were able to move clients on in their relationship with others, by becoming the ‘other’ in therapy, reflecting object relations theory that the therapist becomes the object in therapy.

Gomez (1997) comments that most therapeutic approaches can work with the object relations perspective, particularly in relation to assessing a client and his needs, or where difficult or conflicting processes occur in therapy.

Professional practice

Some of the categories that emerged included the need to ensure that safety was maintained for the client, and that therapists worked within their scope of practice, including the use of the supervisory relationship. The schools of object relations theory require that therapists are in ongoing psychotherapy during their training and also remain in supervision. As ongoing personal therapy during training is not a core requirement for NLPt therapists, the author has included components of professional practice within the findings as they do relate particularly to the counter-transferral process.

Each therapist clearly worked within their scope of practice and demonstrated their desire to keep the client safe. Therapists varied in their approach to how they managed this, with some using risk assessments, and others focusing on the relationship. Although therapists are clear about their scope of practice, there was no awareness demonstrated in the findings regarding the role and place of resistance, transference and countertransference. One of the therapists in the study clearly referred clients on when they were outside of their theoretical framework. Other therapists were keen to ensure that safety was maintained for the client, although they did not have clear ideas of what the therapeutic programme of care would be for clients where resistance was actively being demonstrated in therapy.

Conclusions

This study has found that there is a relationship between the core belief structures of NLP and object relations theory. Many of the processes and patterns present within object relations theory are found amongst the therapy processes of the NLPt therapists. It is of significance that all therapists in this sample work with an internal representation of the self, with this described as having positive and negative attributes. They were all aware of
the role of transference and counter-transference in therapy and are also attuned to resistance, although there is a lack of theoretical understanding and application back into practice of the process of working with resistance.

The main conclusions of the study can be separated into:

- the attachment relationship and resistance
- affective states and outcome orientation
- belief structures
- splitting processes.

The attachment relationship and resistance

The attachment relationship is core within the therapy work of these therapists. The traditional NLP model of therapy would focus only on outcome, which is likely to be effective for clients with positive attachment histories. Where clients have experienced negative attachment relationships the process of outcome-oriented, non-psychodynamic therapy that is provided by NLPt is unlikely to address early attachment needs. Bandler and Grinder, in modelling the work of Satir, Perls and Erickson, focused predominantly on the linguistic structure of the therapy process. Satir (1972) was a family therapist and as such worked with the relationship constructs within the family and often found herself, as part of the attunement process, adopting particular roles within the family. Perls (Perls et al. 1973), as the founder of Gestalt therapy, worked with the projections of clients, often becoming the mirror for the ‘bad’ split off aspects of the psyche. Erickson also used positive attachment relationships within his work, particularly in his relational therapy described by Haley (1974).

It is recommended that the current teaching of NLPt based therapy includes the attachment relationship. Dilts (Dilts and DeLozier 2000) has included this in the consideration of imprinting processes of Lorenz (1970) and this could become the basis of a wider understanding of the development of the self from an NLPt perspective.

The emergence of resistance as a theme in the therapy is very apparent. Therapists are working with this and as such, this is likely to bring to the fore transferential and countertransferential responses. The study seems to imply that NLPt should include at its core training a greater level of personal exploration and therapeutic change for students wishing to become therapists. This can be supported in a way that respects the outcome and individualistic nature of the modality, while at the same time ensuring that therapists are emotionally and psychically equipped to respond appropriately to resistance states.

Affective states and outcome orientation

NLPt is an outcome-oriented psychotherapy and each of the therapists demonstrated the outcome focus that they utilise in their work with clients. There is a strong emphasis in NLPt on the ‘linguistic’ and ‘programming’ aspects of the modality. There is limited emphasis on the ‘neuro’ components and where this does exist, it is limited to references to classic conditioning and Pavlovian responses. Wake (2008) has researched up to date theories and developments in neuroscience within psychotherapy and developmental psychology and has brought these into the modality. Each therapist demonstrated an ability to recognise and work with affective states. By adding in the recent work by Schore (2003), Gerhardt (2004) and Pert (1997), NLPt may be able to bring neuroscience and theories on affective states into an outcome oriented frame, thereby affording effective therapeutic change through brief interventions.
Belief structures

The purpose of this study was to identify if there is a relationship between the core belief structures of Dilts and those conceptualised within object relations theory. Evidential within the material are the concepts as they are described by Dilts, although in a different linguistic form. By taking a meta perspective on the material as it was reviewed, and by considering the entirety of the therapist responses, observations and theorems, parallels can be made between the two theories. The parallels are summarised in Table 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Klein</th>
<th>Fairbairn</th>
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<th>Winnicott</th>
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<td>Separateness from others</td>
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<td>Despair</td>
<td>An other who does not care</td>
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Table 2: Relationship between the models. (L. Wake 2009)

Splitting processes

Fairbairn’s model for splitting processes (see Figure 1) is evident in the work of the therapists, with some parallel processes that are occurring within NL Pt. There is a core sense of identity within individuals that relates directly to the central ego, and the libidinal connection to the object exists. As we grow and develop we form ideal projections, that is, how we want to be perceived by others. This is clear in some of the descriptions of the therapists’ work, where they are aware of clients who present an idealised projection of themselves and the resistance that they meet when this idealised projection is challenged. Within Fairbairn’s model, splitting occurs between the libidinal and anti-libidinal egos and the rejecting and exciting objects. It is suggested from this study that the splitting as it is demonstrated within NL Pt occurs between the sense of self with self, resulting in helplessness and worthlessness, and the sense of self in relation to others, resulting in hopelessness. James’ concepts of ‘being’, ‘doing’ and ‘having’ were not demonstrated in the interviews.
Further studies need to be conducted into the process of NLPt as a psychotherapy. This study could be used as a starting point for a comprehensive study with up to 20 participants.

It would provide greater credibility to the field if outcome measures were assessed in a comparative study of protocol-driven NLPt therapy (Genser-Medlitsch and Schütz 1997) versus relational NLPt therapy (Gawler-Wright 2006, Wake 2008).

It is recommended that comparative studies are conducted that measure the effectiveness of NLPt interventions between clients with negative attachment histories and those with positive attachment histories. Work is already being conducted in the US through the Institute for the Advanced Studies of Health (IASH) on NLPt as an intervention in post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and this could be an ideal study group to look at those with poor attachment histories.

This study can be used as a starting point for developing greater understanding of the psychotherapy process of NLPt. The study was designed specifically for this purpose and as such can be developed further to support the requirement for an evidence base for the modality. The study has argued that there is a relationship between the core belief structures of NLPt and object relations theory.

**Acknowledgements**

The author is grateful to Paul Crawshaw, Supervisor, Katherine Sanderson and Dr Alisdair McSween who have supported her through the dissertation that has informed this paper and other studies at Teesside University.

The author wishes to acknowledge in full the therapists who gave of their time to provide the data for this study. Their openness and willingness to share their experience as therapists have added substantially to the body of knowledge of NLP as a therapeutic modality.
References


James, T., 1996. Prime concerns: using quantum linguistics to increase the effectiveness of the language we use. Honolulu, HI: Advanced Neurodynamics.


Appendix A

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<th>Category of meaning</th>
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(L. Wake 2009)
An exploration of a research-based approach to the evaluation of clients’ experience of neuro-linguistic psychotherapy within a private practice making use of the CORE model

Martin Weaver

Abstract

This work was undertaken to gain experience of conducting a research-based approach to evaluation within a private psychotherapy practice and to seek to measure the effectiveness of the provision of neurolinguistic psychotherapy (NLPt) for the clients of one psychotherapist, using the clinical outcomes in routine evaluation (CORE) psychotherapeutic outcomes evaluation model.

NLPt is a form of constructivist psychotherapy (Weaver 2008) developed as an application of neuro-linguistic programming (NLP), created in the early 1970s in California (Bandler and Grinder 1975). NLPt is founded on the belief that the client creates representations of reality, or maps (Korzybski 1933), which are then used to guide the client in understanding of their world and their place in it.

Clients from within a single private practice were asked to participate by completing the questionnaires of the CORE psychotherapy evaluation model. CORE is a standardised public domain model used to audit, evaluate and measure the outcomes of clients in therapy, and is commonly used in UK psychological therapy and counselling services. The main tool of CORE is a 34-item questionnaire, designed to score a client’s perceptions in four main areas – well-being, common problems or symptoms, life/social functioning and risk of harm to self and others. CORE was chosen as a quantitative measure of the effectiveness of NLPt, being relatively simple to apply and relatively easy to analyse and present.

As well as raising a number of questions about how this type of research can be carried out in the future within a private practice, this work also showed a statistically significant reduction in the scores relating to client problems, as recorded by the clients themselves as part of the CORE model.

The sample was made up of: 41 clients who participated, with results from 33 being used. Client ages ranged from 18 to 55 years, with each client attending an average number of 7 sessions in total, with a space of 1 week between sessions.
Introduction

The question of how a service, psychotherapeutic or otherwise, is meeting the needs of its clients has led today to a proliferation of performance targets, league tables and even performance pay. In the end however, it is reasonable for both the provider and the consumers to want to know that the service for which they are paying is effective.

As important as the need to prove efficacy to clients is the need for practitioners providing that service to have some form of evidence base upon which they can build improvements to that service. This is vital to both the individual therapist and the profession as a whole as they put into practice a specific psychotherapeutic modality.

Research data and research experience in the psychotherapy profession as a whole, if not rare, exists within a very small pool of resources (Aveline et al. 2005). Further, NLP and its psychotherapeutic application, NLPt (McDermott and Jago 2001; Wake 2008) have specific problems and deficiencies in their relationship with traditional research. These problems and deficiencies were highlighted by Tosey and Mathison where they observed that 'the lack of research-based investigation is significant, as is the lack of dialogue between practitioner and academic communities.' (Tosey and Mathison 2007, p. 4), a view echoed in more general constructivist papers such as that by Neimeyer and Mahoney (1995, p. 25).

As observed by Aveline, ‘Worthwhile research is possible at all levels of complexity of investigation but generally needs team work and funding. The path from clinical insight to laboratory studies to clinic is satisfying but long.’ (Aveline et al. 2005, p. 458) To date, the establishment of a mature research project by a single therapist in private practice has been essentially impossible; there is often no ‘team’, only the individual, and precious little funding is available.

Even so, the private practice setting offers a wealth of material to the potential researcher; a wide spectrum of clients potentially willing to take part in research, the clinical insight into the questions which can and which need to be asked in such a setting, and most importantly, a depth of experience and understanding of the complexities and subtleties of the psychotherapeutic modality in ‘real life action’ rather than purely in the laboratory setting.

Background

Between 1999 and 2001, a study was completed in a single practice, designed to answer an apparently simple question:

- How effective was the course of NLPt given to clients in alleviating their presenting symptoms?

Given the paucity of available research into the efficacy of NLPt, the intention was to examine the overall psychotherapeutic experience, in order to provide verifiable results which could add to the anecdotal feedback received by, and unstructured observations made by, individual therapists. The proposition was that unless the overall experience was shown to be beneficial in some measurable way, then there was little purpose in examining the relative efficacy of individual NLP or NLPt intervention techniques, in order to find out which one may or may not be more effective than another.

In addition to the desire to confirm the efficacy or otherwise of the overall process, it was also hoped that this work would act as a starting point for research projects that may encourage other therapists to engage in more detailed and robust research into the efficacy of the NLPt psychotherapeutic experience.
Selection of an analysis technique

The question then arose as to the shape of existing research in the area of psychotherapy practice. Such research is generally conducted in one of five generic formats.

1. Randomised control trials
2. Correlational process-outcome studies
3. Case studies
4. Qualitative vs. quantitative studies
5. Scientific vs. hermeneutic processes

The first challenge facing this study was the practicality of applying any of these research formats within the boundaries implicit in the individual practice setting. Due to the unavoidable limitations of the individual practice, the research method used had to include:

- a simple, quantitative study model
- the use of an accepted method for the evaluation of the efficacy of the psychotherapeutic process which could be applied feasibly within the practice
- access to a method for the analysis of results.

The author’s attendance at a seminar in May 1999 provided one possible answer to some if not all of these requirements. At this seminar the CORE research tool was introduced and explored. The detail and history of the CORE system are laid out on the CORE system web site. Briefly, the CORE system describes itself as:

‘... the first standardised public domain approach to audit, evaluation and outcome measurement for UK psychological therapy and counselling services.’

The Psychological Therapies Research Centre at the University of Leeds coordinated the development of CORE from 1995–98 through a multi-disciplinary team of researchers and practitioners representing the major psychological therapy professions. The Mental Health Foundation and the Counselling in Primary Care Trust provided the development funding for the various independent elements of the CORE system from 1995 until the CORE initiative became self-financing in 1998.

The CORE system is a ‘hub and spoke’ model for quality evaluation of psychological therapy provision. The CORE outcome measure, the therapy assessment form and end of therapy form, and the administration form are the key central components or ‘hub’ of the CORE system.

The CORE outcome measure

The CORE outcome measure is a 34-item questionnaire designed to measure a pan-theoretical ‘core’ of clients’ global distress, including:

- subjective well-being
- commonly experienced problems or symptoms
- life/social functioning

In addition, items on risk to self and others are included to assist risk assessment in NHS and other sectors.

The main purpose of the CORE system is to offer a global level measure of distress which is expressed as the mean score of the 34 items, each of which is scored against clinical thresholds before and after therapy, to help determine the degree of clinical change experienced during therapy. The measure has been validated extensively and key publications demonstrate that it has good psychometric properties and considerable utility.
for both clinical assessment and clinical governance initiatives (CORE).

It appeared that the established use of the CORE system across many different psychotherapeutic modalities and professional groups would result in simpler cross comparison of results across a broad spectrum of psychotherapeutic modalities (Mellor-Clark et al. 2006). In addition, the tools developed for the CORE system have been credited in a range of professional settings. Finally, the collection of data and its analysis under CORE system is relatively simple (Barkham et al. 2006).

Given that no other tool of its kind was visible in the literature, nor was suggested by colleagues or professional bodies, this appeared to be the best tool to use. Having found this relatively simple and well supported instrument there was no further active search for another possible instrument to carry out this work.

Ethics

Ethical considerations were very important in taking the decision to ask clients to participate in this work. The code of ethics for the author’s professional organisation, the Neuro Linguistic Psychotherapy and Counselling Association (NLPCA), state:

‘Members are required to clarify with clients the nature, purpose, and conditions of any research in which clients are to be involved and to ensure that informed and verifiable consent is given before commencement.’

All clients were informed about the CORE programme and invited to take part. They were informed that this work was an attempt to evaluate the effectiveness of the therapeutic process that they were engaging in and that what was being measured was the degree of change that they recorded. This was believed important so as to assure the client that they were not being asked to be a test subject for an experimental process. The confidential nature of the results was shown and explained and clients were taken through the process before they were asked to commit and all questions were answered fully. Clients were told that their therapy would not be affected by their decision to take part in, drop out of, or decline to participate in this research.

At the end of the first session clients were provided with written information about the therapeutic process including contact details of the professional organisation. At the start of the second session clients were asked about their experience of reading the written information and time was given for all questions that arose. A note was made in the client notes that the written information had been provided and that it had been read. In this way all ethical considerations were believed to be covered.

Methodology

Overview

After the decision was taken to use the CORE system the means of identifying clients who would be used in the research was considered. The first thought was to choose every ‘X’ number of clients, where ‘X’ was equal to 3rd, 4th, 5th etc. As the need for numbers to be as high as possible to gain a robust data set was recognised, the conclusion was quickly reached that every client who attended would be asked to complete the forms. Those that declined would be accepted for therapy on the same terms as those who accepted or subsequently dropped out. No special screening for this exploration would occur.
How CORE was used

The client completed the Outcome Measure (see Appendix, Figure 3) questionnaire and the extra non-CORE related Severity Rating Score Sheet (see Appendix, Figure 4), created by Professor David Winter as another quicker way of determining a measure of change, before any explicit therapeutic work began. This Severity Rating Score Sheet also allowed the client to record in their own words what problems they were expecting to resolve with the NLPt therapy. It was presented as part of the process. Therapy then progressed. At the agreed completion of therapy, the client completed new copies of the outcome measure questionnaire with no reference to their first completed form and a slightly different version of the severity rating score sheet. The data was then sent to be analysed by Dr. Ash Quaite at the Barnet, Enfield and Haringey Mental Health NHS Trust, Department Of Clinical Psychology.

This research has focused on the quantitative part of the severity rating score sheet for the reasons stated earlier.

Detail of method used

A client’s first contact with the psychotherapeutic service was usually by a telephone call. In this call the focus was totally on the client and their needs. There was no mention of any kind of research activity. In the first session before any obvious therapy began or indeed any formal contracting the following script was used:

‘Before we begin, I am part of a research project looking at measuring the effectiveness of this type of work and I wonder if you would agree to completing a confidential questionnaire?’

Where a client declined to participate in this research the CORE papers were placed out of view and the therapeutic protocol was initiated. On receiving the client’s agreement (see Table 1) the script continued:

‘Thank you. The idea is that you complete it now and then again when we have finished. In this way we can get a numerical measurement of your degree of change. The questionnaire asks how you have been over the last week. There are 34 statements with one of five possible responses. Just tick the one that best describes you. If you have any problems with any of the questions then just ask me and we’ll talk about it.

‘Then on this page (severity rating score sheet) there is a space for you to describe your problem or problems in your own words. You may have one, two or more. Write it so that you will recognise it later. It can be as general or as detailed as you would like. Then look at the numbers below and give it a number rating from that scale.’

The client was then handed the forms and was left alone to complete them in private.

There were three general responses from clients to the request to participate in this research. Table 1 presents the therapist’s response to these presentations.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Client response</th>
<th>Psychotherapist response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Was very willing to participate in this research. Positive approval of research and wanted to take part. In fact eager to get on with it and please the therapist. Almost too helpful by starting before all the instructions had been given.</td>
<td>Needed to take care. Ensured that instructions had been given clearly and that client understood what was wanted. Checked and rechecked with client.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsure. Wanted to help but also wanted more information. There was some tension and a bit of anxiety. What about confidentiality? What will happen to the data? How well informed is this? What do all the boxes mean?</td>
<td>Took time to answer all questions. Ensured that all instructions were understood. Was available to help but not guide client responses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definitely not. Presenting for therapy and not to be a guinea pig. Story pours out like an avalanche. Kept talking about self and problems.</td>
<td>All the papers were put away and engaged with the client in the therapeutic process. CORE was not attempted from then on at any time in the future.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Therapist responses to client’s attitude to participating in the research. (M. Weaver 2009)

At the close of therapy

At this final session, the slightly modified severity rating score sheet was given. This was modified to ask for more details and future needs allowing space for the client to express their views of the therapy and any future needs they may have (not shown). No elements of the CORE form were changed. Where a client decided that the final session of therapy was not required as outcomes had been reached the questionnaire was posted out for completion and returned to the therapist in a stamped addressed envelope provided by the therapist.

The therapist then completed a further set of forms after the client had left. These forms asked for demographic data, information and medications, family circumstances and took up to 30 minutes to complete. These forms have been omitted for simplicity as they do not form part of the quantitative measurement process.

The therapy treatment protocol

It was not the intention of this research to identify the effect of the overall use of NLPT, nor to measure the effectiveness of specific NLPT interventions. What follows is a description of what the author considers to be the most basic of interventions within a generic treatment protocol. In all work with the clients, interventions came from a foundation of the NLP presuppositions. This set of presuppositions, whilst they might not be ‘the truth’, are accepted as a basis from which to work and appeared to be beneficial for effective psychotherapy (Wake 2008, pp. 23–37; McDermott 2001, pp. 29–43).

Further, use was made of Dilts’ ‘logical levels’ (Dilts 1990). Although there has been criticism levelled at Dilts to say that this process has little to do with formal logic, the process of identifying a way into the map of a client was found to be effective.

At the first contact with the client, most commonly by telephone, space was made available for them to explain their present situation and for them to hear how the process of psychotherapy would progress. This allowed the client to be heard in a non-judgemental space and for their fears and fantasies about the process to be addressed. The first contact conversation was paced such that at the first session a number of practical issues; location, fee, subject matter, duration of session and so on had already been addressed.

It might also be useful to state here that no client was offered, and no clients are ever offered, a free ‘initial or ‘assessment’ session. At first contact the explicit message was given that we would work therapeutically from the outset. There was a clear explanation that if in the first 30 minutes or so either the client, or therapist, felt or believed that the process was not working then a referral would be offered and no fee would be accepted. Further, at this first contact clients were asked to take a piece of paper and to write at the top ‘What I want’ and fill that page with words, pictures, poems and so on. They were advised that this would form a guide or an agenda to
begin the work. This was not referred to again until after the CORE form had been completed at the first session. A number of clients did refer to their writing as they completed the extra non-CORE form. During later work in 2008 a client described in the Daily Mail the effects that this first testing period and the later therapy had on them (Stephen 2008).

Before the specific NLPt interventions were made the treatment protocol had four more stages to complete. These stages made up the start of the formal assessment process that together with the complete first session allowed a decision whether or not to continue with the therapy to be made.

1. The client was explicitly informed about confidentiality and that they could have copies of any or all of the notes made throughout the work.
2. The client was asked about all prescription medications that they may be taking at that time or may have been talking at any time in their past. If the client was unclear as to the names of current medications they were asked to bring these to the next session to ensure that names and dosages were correctly recorded.
3. The client was asked about their use of non-prescription drugs including the use of alcohol and tobacco and in what context the drugs were taken and for how long.
4. The client was asked what previous experience they had of counselling, psychotherapy and/or coaching. Where clients had recent previous experience there was a conversation about the decision they had made to enter this present relationship rather than return to the previous one(s) and how they would like this psychotherapy to be the same and/or different from previous experience(s).

There were three main interventions used to engage with the clients in varying degrees and intensities during the first session. These also formed the basis of the work with all clients to a greater or lesser degree in the later sessions. However, the following description is a process of self-modelling. Knowing what we do know about the limitations of that process with its distortions, deletions and generalisations it might best be read with that in mind.

Having invited the client to read through their written page, ‘What I want’, which ranged from three sentences to five pages of closely handwritten statements, clients were asked the question, ‘Which one of these if it changed would make the most change for you?’ It was expected that the client would be quite able to weigh up the various statements into a hierarchy and so prioritise the most important one and so frame a well-formed outcome, or well-formed enough for that moment (Young 2004, pp. 141–71). This took anything from a few seconds to some minutes of discussion both to focus in question and to state an outcome that was in NLP terms ‘well-formed’ (O’Connor 2001, p. 11). The time taken for this activity bore little or no relation to the amount that was written. Having arrived at a single outcome (I want X, or to have X, or to be X) with which to work, clients were then asked the question: ‘So, when in your life did you stop X (or having X, or being X)?’ This took the client on a discussion into the past and the beginning of the identification of the first significant event. Timeline work (James and Woodsmall 1988) or time code interventions (Woodsmall 1992) were found to be the most effective way of reaching the specific first significant event (or near-enough first as decided by the client).

In the process of indentifying the first significant event and the actions taking place during it, the aspect or ‘part’ of the client became quite apparent (Wake 2008, p. 129). The client was asked to engage in a dialogue with the part or aspect of themselves that was experiencing this first significant event. Feedback on the change process came from the different physical sensations experienced and described by the client. Time was taken to elicit and explore as many of the sub-modalities of this experience that were needed for the client to begin to make a distinction between sensation and meaning. The effect of this elicitation and exploration was to begin to teach the client how to dissociate from the experience and thus create new perspectives.

In this dialogue the client in the ‘now’ was invited to create these new perspectives, frames and learnings from which to resolve the negative or unhelpful emotions in that event. This resource of new perspectives was then “Forward Paced”, that is, projected and associated into the now and the future to enhance existing and/or create new desirable outcome(s).
Another way of reframing a relationship, especially one created and maintained from past experiences and thus rehearsed and endlessly recycled into the future was to use the metamirror process (Young 2004, pp. 255–70). This process was facilitated with each client.

At the close of each therapy session there was a space to review the work carried out. There was a discussion about what actions would be carried out by the client in the time until the next session. Clients were offered the opportunity to telephone at any time although no guarantee was nor could be given that the therapist would be available. An undertaking was given to answer any calls or emails ‘just as soon as the therapist is able to’.

Results

The time frame to complete this research was between 2 June 1999 and 9 April 2001. Records show that between these dates there were 75 new clients. From this number 41 completed the forms and of those 33 were complete enough to be analysed. There is no record of the numbers of those clients who declined to participate, who were not invited to participate because the therapist forgot to invite them, who terminated the therapy or who neglected to return the final questionnaire after the last session. However, a letter to Dr. Quaite towards the end of the research period states that ‘a number’ of uncompleted CORE forms were pending due to clients not returning their final questionnaire rather than because they had terminated the therapy. There are no indications that any clients terminated the therapy during the programme or actively declined to participate. This reflects the real world nature of the psychotherapeutic practice.

In total 41 clients over the period of the research completed forms and 33 completed forms were analysed. The missing eight may have been those who did not return the final questionnaire by post. Statistical analysis confirmed that observed reductions in post therapy CORE scores were all statistically highly significant (see Figure 1). There was a marked reduction in the rating of the severity of both Problem A and Problem B following therapy (see Figure 2).

There remains the question as to differences between statistical significance and clinical significance. CORE uses two categories of measure.

1. Reliable change index: the extent of change in a measure that might be expected by chance alone or measurement error.
2. Clinically significant change: where the change in a score pre to post psychotherapy is five or greater.

All the scores from the 33 clients showed numbers far greater than 5. This shows that the change was clinically significant.

The observed differences were found to be highly significant.
Figure 1: Outcome measure subscales pre therapy CORE Scores with post therapy CORE Scores. (Weaver 2009)
Figure 2: Average rating scores – severity rating score sheet problem A and B, before therapy (1) and after therapy (2). (Weaver 2009)
Table 2: Demographic data of clients. (Weaver 2009)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Sex                                | Male 46.3% (19)  
Female 53.7% (22)                                                |
| Ethnicity                          | 90% identified as white Europeans                                    |
| Employment                         | 65.9% were in full time employment                                   |
| Age                                | Average age of clients was 35.29 yrs  
Age range was 18 to 55  
Average age of female clients 36.41 yrs  
Average age of the male clients 34.00 yrs  
(No significant difference shown in the ages of men and women) |
| Risk                               | 7.3% of clients were judged to be at a mild level of risk of self harm  
95% of clients were judged to pose no risk to others                  |
| Sessions:                          |                                                                      |
| Frequency                          | 83.3% of clients were seen for therapy on a weekly basis             |
| Planned                            | Average number of sessions planned was 6.07                         |
| Attended                           | Average number of sessions actually attended was 7.07               |
| Missed                             | Average number of missed sessions was 0.45                          |
| The mean number of days from the first session to the last session regardless of the number or length of sessions| All clients:- 80.15  
Male clients: 67.47  
Female clients: 91.62 |

**Conclusion and discussion**

It would seem that the research-based question has an answer.

- How effective was the course of NLPt given to clients in alleviating their presenting symptoms?

  Based upon the analysis of the data in this study, use of the neurolinguistic psychotherapeutic modality by this therapist resulted in a statistically and clinically significant reduction in the pre and post CORE scores and in the severity ratings scores of problems experienced by clients. This result gives weight to the many books that have been published on NLP and NLPt that contain stories and case studies related to the application of these methods in psychotherapy and other personal development work.

  The experience of using the CORE measure is that the completion of both outcome measures questionnaires was relatively easy and quick, usually taking a maximum of ten minutes. The completion of the severity rating score sheet takes around five minutes, requiring more thought by the client and a little discussion with the psychotherapist. This has now been incorporated into the CORE process with the creation of a new form. The analysis of the resulting data caused more problems with a loss of contact with the original analysers of the data which meant more detailed conclusions were difficult to draw out. Further, a computer based system of direct input from the client would have sped up the data collection process. There is now a computer based analysis program but no direct client input process.

  However, there are a large number of questions that arise, not least of which is: has this process actually measured the application of NLPt?

  The answer to this question assumes that we can answer the question ‘What is NLPt?’ The major assumption is that the processes and interventions made by the psychotherapist are recognised by those in the field as NLPt. In turn this raises questions about how NLPt has been, and continues to be, agreed as an unambiguous body of
material, and by whom? Whereas it seems clear that something positive has been experienced by the clients in this exploration, is what has been measured NLPt or a specific and subjective application of the modality by one psychotherapist?

There are a number of studies that have investigated specific interventions (Atwater 1983) and more general interventions (Hammer 1983; Unterberger and Ulbrich 1998; Witt 2008) and yet because of the limitations of this present work it is very difficult to make connections with other work in the field.

The CORE system provided a simple-to-apply process that provided both therapist and clients with a way to have their degree of change measured. However, as has been stated above there are lots of details that are overlooked.

Further areas for investigation are shown below.

How well does CORE relate to the process of NLPt?

The CORE process chooses to categorise four elements; subjective well-being, symptoms, life/social functioning and NHS defined risk, whereas the NLPt focus is on helping the client change the structure of their subjective experience(s) in different ways that seek to support the achievement of outcomes as defined by the client. These changes and outcomes may or may not fall into the categories that are clearly defined by the CORE process. In this way the focus of NLPt is more about fitting to the client while the CORE process pre-defines the ‘fit’ to which clients must match.

In essence CORE is an end term tool rather than a process evaluating tool. It asks ‘How was it for you?’ rather than ‘How did you do that?’ or ‘How might you do that more effectively?’ In this way CORE can be a good end or outcome measure between NLPt and other therapies, especially between similar short term or brief therapies. The mechanics of what was done, when it was done, and for what purpose an intervention was applied, will have to be explored using another set of instruments.

For instance, in the severity rating score sheet, some clients wrote words or phrases e.g. anger, fear, low self esteem, sexuality, communication, clear blockages, manage my emotions, have a future, family issues. Some clients used up the whole space and more to list and describe just how bad their life was at that moment. There was not the space in this research to take these comments into account. An analysis of these comments together with the CORE scores would give a more specific picture of the degree and direction of change from a clinical perspective and thus more detailed conclusions might be drawn.

Which intervention was most effective?

This study was more about the complete service that was provided rather than any specific intervention, sequence of interventions or intensity of intervention. Therefore we cannot isolate timeline work from the applications of the logical levels or the parts work. It may very well be that there is danger in comparing narrow laboratory experience of small chunk work in order to then make generalisations into real world practice, as described in this paper.

How is the statistical difference experienced in the clinical setting?

There was no space within this research to describe how the relationship changed between client and psychotherapist over the course of the study. There would have been value in recording the experiences of both client and psychotherapist at the start of the therapy and at the end as well as at defined periods in between.
Was the sample size big enough?

This study covers data from only one psychotherapist and the data were collected between 1999 and 2001. A greater number of neuro-linguistic psychotherapists collecting more data is needed to provide a wider range of client data to build a bigger and more robust study. A larger study would however require more funds in order to analyse the flow of data. Further, this therapist had not the time, resources or the necessary skills to make full use of the CORE data to provide more information from that which was collected. There may be other conclusions that can be drawn from the data that this therapist had been unable to discern and elicit.

What is the place for private psychotherapists in the world of scientific research?

It is clear from this exploration that practising psychotherapists are in a unique position to gather data and inform and influence the development of investigative research. However, given the complex nature of the interventions and the developing relationship between client and therapist new instruments might well be required to explore these interactions. Coupled with the relatively large amount of research on the effect of the client/therapist relationship in therapy, drawing out the specific effect of NLPt is clearly a complex task.

Thoughts for the future

Given the present government guidelines as advocated by the National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE, 2009) there is a desperate need to measure the systematic use of these interventions and for these to be weighed and balanced against the practicalities of a real world practice. During this study a range of interventions were used and it is likely that not all of them have been described in this paper. Therefore even with the potential danger as highlighted above of drawing conclusions from a narrow research experience, work in the future might be undertaken in the laboratory setting where specific interventions are explored in isolation, using non-therapeutic participants. In this future research there may even be a place for a randomised control trial (RCT) procedure or a suitable variation of it.

Psychotherapy is about a relationship and in developing new ways to explore and examine the effects of NLPt any future study will need to ensure that wider effects are studied such as the dose effects. A study by Howard et al. (1986) was later developed and confirmed by Kopta et al. (1994, p. 1009), who state that: ‘... the more psychotherapy, the greater the probability of improvement, with diminishing returns at higher doses.’ This later research ‘clearly supported the view that treatment produces benefits that surpass spontaneous remission rates’ (Aveline et al. 2005, p. 454).

How is this effect present or making itself felt in NLPt? Thought-provoking studies (e.g. Lambert and Barley 2002; Lambert and Ogles 2004) state that the relationship between the therapist and client might just outweigh any effect that the modality itself professes to have. However, Margison et al. (2000) showed that the involvement of the therapist in the research activity may overcome these and other factors.

With its absence from general texts on psychotherapy and from existing formal training courses, it is clear that all those involved in NLPt need to develop a clearer direction and a greater coherence in the communications that are presented both professionally and in public. This specialist NLPt work then needs to be linked with wider experience and research in the field of psychotherapy. From the work presented here there is a clear opportunity for a university, or similar, based team to work with practitioners in the field to seek answers to all these questions and place NLPt on a firm footing.

With a greater pool of such work the detail and the stories that lie behind these numbers will provide us with a greater understanding of the effectiveness of NLPt as well as the psychotherapist’s interventions now and in the future. We might also create a more useful closeness between psychotherapist and client.
Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank:

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Dr. Ash Quaite who was at the time a research assistant to Professor D. Winter based at the Barnet, Enfield and Haringey Mental Health NHS Trust Department Of Clinical Psychology in Edgware Middlesex who undertook the analysis of the data and the production of the original report.

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Mr. Roy Dalgleish, partner, for his support, insight and patience in showing the way through this process.

Further research is available at: http://www.eanlpt.org/research.html

References


Stephen, Jaci, 2008. ‘I’ve spent 20 years in therapy but was any of it worthwhile?’ Available from: http://www.dailymail.co.uk/femail/ [Accessed 6 July 2009].


Appendix

**Clinical Outcomes in Routine Evaluation**

**Outcome Measure**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site ID</th>
<th>Client ID</th>
<th>Therapist ID</th>
<th>Sub codes</th>
<th>Date form given</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Important - Please Read This First**

This form has 34 statements about how you have been OVER THE LAST WEEK. Please read each statement and think how often you felt that way last week. Then tick the box which is closest to this.

*Please use a dark pen (not pencil) and tick clearly within the boxes.*

**Over the last week**

1. I have felt terribly alone and isolated
   - 0 1 2 3 4

2. I have felt tense, anxious or nervous
   - 0 1 2 3 4

3. I have felt I have someone to turn to for support when needed
   - 4 3 2 1 0

4. I have felt O.K. about myself
   - 4 3 2 1 0

5. I have felt totally lacking in energy and enthusiasm
   - 0 1 2 3 4

6. I have been physically violent to others
   - 0 1 2 3 4

7. I have felt able to cope when things go wrong
   - 0 1 2 3 4

8. I have been troubled by aches, pains or other physical problems
   - 0 1 2 3 4

9. I have thought of hurting myself
   - 0 1 2 3 4

10. Talking to people has felt too much for me
    - 0 1 2 3 4

11. Tension and anxiety have prevented me doing important things
    - 0 1 2 3 4

12. I have been happy with the things I have done.
    - 0 1 2 3 4

13. I have been disturbed by unwanted thoughts and feelings
    - 0 1 2 3 4

14. I have felt like crying
    - 0 1 2 3 4

Please turn over
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Over the last week</th>
<th>Not at all</th>
<th>Occasionally</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Most of the time</th>
<th>Off-side only</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15 I have felt panic or terror</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 I made plans to end my life</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 I have felt overwhelmed by my problems</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 I have had difficulty getting to sleep or staying asleep</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 I have felt warmth or affection for someone</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 My problems have been impossible to put to one side</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 I have been able to do most things I needed to</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 I have threatened or intimidated another person</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23 I have felt despairing or hopeless</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 I have thought it would be better if I were dead</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 I have felt criticised by other people</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 I have thought I have no friends</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27 I have felt unhappy</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28 Unwanted images or memories have been distressing me</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29 I have been irritable when with other people</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 I have thought I am to blame for my problems and difficulties</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 I have felt optimistic about my future</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32 I have achieved the things I wanted to</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33 I have felt humiliated or shamed by other people</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34 I have hurt myself physically or taken dangerous risks with my health</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME IN COMPLETING THIS QUESTIONNAIRE**

**Total Scores**

**Mean Scores**

(Total score for each dimension divided by number of items completed in that dimension)

**Survey:** 151

Copyright MHF and CORE System Group.

Figure 3. The CORE outcome measure. (MHF and CORE system Group)
Severity Rating score sheet

Please write below what you consider to be the two major problems for which you are seeking help. (If you have only one problem, then complete only the “Problem A” section.)

Client Code: Date:

Problem A:

Problem B:

For each problem, please now select a number from the scale below to indicate how severe the problem is at present. Write your chosen number in the boxes below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>0</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Does not</td>
<td>Slightly/ sometimes</td>
<td>Definitely / often</td>
<td>Markedly / often</td>
<td>Very severely / continuously</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Upsets me and/or interferes with my normal activities

Problem A: Problem B:

[This form was originally developed by Prof. David Winter]

Figure 4. Severity rating score sheet. (M. Weaver 2009)

Footnote

1Barnet, Enfield and Haringey Mental Health NHS Trust Department Of Clinical Psychology.
The Brooklyn program: applying NLP to addictions

Richard M. Gray

Abstract

From 1997 to 2004 the US Probation Department, Eastern District of New York, operated a 16 week program based on neuro-linguistic programming (NLP) for offenders with various levels of substance use disorders (Gray 2001, 2002). The program was based upon Jungian and Maslowian concepts of personal growth and development (Gray 1996; Maslow 1970; Progoff 1959; Zoja 1990) and was closely tied to the stages of change model and the work of James Prochaska (Prochaska et al. 1994). It made use of standard NLP tools for the creation of: peak experiences - using submodality analysis, accessible resource states - using anchoring understood as a classical conditioning paradigm, and the well-formed outcome frame to instantiate Prochaska’s preferred future. All changes worked to move the participant towards identifying and realizing an individualizing/self actualizing future. Later, the program was informed by research into the mechanisms of incentive salience in the midbrain dopamine system (Robinson and Berridge 2001; Robinson 2004). Through 2004, the program graduated more than 300 participants. Thirty percent (29.6 percent) of participants who had previously tested positive for abused substances remained abstinent for one year following treatment. Statistical analyses showed that the NLP treatment obtained results that were equivalent to results obtained by participants in intensive outpatient treatment despite being much less expensive and much less time intensive – the program required two hours per week and periodic individual sessions. Positive affect, increased self efficacy and general participant satisfaction were hallmarks of the program completers (Gray 2002).

Keywords

NEURO-LINGUISTIC PROGRAMMING, ADDICTIONS, ADDICTIONS TREATMENT, SUBSTANCE USE DISORDERS.

Introduction

The Brooklyn program operated as an in-house substance use treatment program for the Federal Probation office in Brooklyn, New York during the period between 1997 and 2004. It began by treating offenders with verified histories of marijuana abuse or addiction and clients with no significant personal direction and expanded to cover offenders with all levels of substance use disorders. Participants met in a group format with one or two facilitators for two hours once a week over the course of the program’s 16 week span. The program is fully manualized. The program was terminated in 2004 after a change in administration led to a recalculation of the department’s budget. In according with standard federal practice, and the new administration’s application of those practices, the money that the Brooklyn program had saved the department could no longer be reprogrammed to other purposes and created a net decrease in funding. As a result, the Brooklyn program and other money saving, in-house treatment modalities were terminated so that the department could restore its funding.

After two years, a statistical analysis (in 1999) of results from 99 recent clients found that program completers
did as well as clients who had been referred for standard intensive outpatient treatment, but at a significant saving to the government in time and money. The program is unique in that: 1) it is non-confrontational and non-directive, the problem behaviors are for the most part never directly addressed; 2) it provides behavioral success criteria for each stage of the program so that facilitators can gauge participant performance; and 3) like coping strategy interventions, the program is focused on providing affective (feeling-based) tools for enhancing choice and personal transformation; unlike more standard programs clients are never instructed as to where the tools should be used.

Participants reported significant increases in positive affect, and self esteem as well as the government’s savings in time and effort. Program completers were shown to have one-year abstinence rates of 29.6 percent as verified by random urinalysis (Gray 2001, 2002).

**Background**

The Brooklyn program was designed to take advantage of depth psychological and humanistic hypotheses about human growth and development and their intersection with the stages of change model set forth by James Prochaska and his colleagues (Gray 1996, 2001, 2002, 2005, 2008; Prochaska et al.1994). More specifically, it was designed with the following assumptions.

1. Substance use disorders are, in general, about the subjective utility of abused substances and behaviors and their capacity to produce an immediate but ultimately false sense of self efficacy (Gray 2001, 2002, 2005, 2008; Zoja 1990).

2. The path to individuation/self actualization represents a more salient, more personally rewarding set of experiences that are capable of outframing the addictive urge in the short term and creating meaningful future outcomes in the long term (Gray 1996, 2001, 2002, 2005).

3. In line with Prochaska’s strong principle of change, the identification of a more highly-valued future outcome predicts movement from precontemplation to action in the stages of change model (Prochaska 1994; Prochaska et al. 1994).


5. In accordance with the work of Milton Erickson, later confirmed by Antonio Damasio, it was understood that present memories of past positive experiences could be used as resource states for acquiring the positive affect states that would drive the experiential base of the project (Erickson 1954; Damasio 1999).

6. Because, according to James Hillman, any affective state experienced on a sufficiently deep level may be understood as archetypal, the affective states used to awaken the felt sense of Self could be created and enhanced using simple conditioning procedures (Gray 1996, 2001, 2002, 2005; Hillman 1983).


The basic techniques used in the program were taken from the NLP tool set. NLP is a set of tools comprising an epistemology, a methodology and a set of techniques rooted in a strategy for modeling human behavior developed in the mid 1970’s by linguist John Grinder and psychology graduate student Richard Bandler. Grinder, then assistant professor of linguistics at the University of California, Santa Cruz, was inspired by the transformational grammar of Noam Chomsky. In his adaptation of transformational grammar, Grinder understood that the structure of both language and experience could be modeled in terms of sequences of sensory experience including
what was seen, heard, felt, smelled or tasted: the visual, auditory, kinesthetic, olfactory and gustatory (VAKOG) elements. When accurately mapped, these sequences would provide the keys not only to modeling the subject behavior but also to modifying unwanted or un-useful behaviors (Bandler and Grinder 1975, 1979; Bostic St. Clair and Grinder 2001; Dilts et al. 1980; Dilts and DeLozier 2000; Thomas Yeager, personal communication, 2007).

Bandler was described by Grinder as a natural therapist who had the unique skill of being able to learn and quickly master almost any psychotherapeutic technique. As their collaboration began, Bandler would experientially master a psychotherapeutic approach and together they would parse the more salient aspects of the techniques in terms of Grinder’s model (Bostic St. Clair and Grinder 2001).

At Bandler’s urging, Grinder first applied his model to Fritz Perls’ Gestalt therapy. Over the next several years, Grinder and Bandler applied their modeling skills to the patterns and techniques of Virginia Satir, founder of conjoint family therapy; Milton Erickson, often described as the father of modern hypnotherapy; and others. In the course of their researches they created a technique for modeling behavior, a series of tools of general therapeutic applicability and interventions for specific pathologies, learning problems and behavioral issues. This basic repertoire was enhanced significantly by the contributions of other early participants in the development of NLP including Robert Dilts, another of Grinder’s graduate students; John and Connierae Stevens (Steve and Connierae Andreas), already well known in Gestalt circles; Leslie Cameron-Bandler, Judith DeLozier; David Gordon and Steven Gilligan (Bandler and Grinder 1975, 1979; Bostic St. Clair and Grinder 2001; Dilts et al. 1980; Dilts and DeLozier, 2000; Lewis and Pucelik 1990; O’Connor and Seymour 1990).

One of the end products of these efforts was a set of basic skills and techniques that may be thought of as the basic NLP tool kit. In general, they represent the elements of most NLP-based interventions. According to Dilts and DeLozier (2000) these include primary representational systems, accessing cues, sensory based predicates, the meta-model, pacing and leading, anchoring, reframing, change personal history, visual-kinesthetic dissociation and state management. For the purposes of this program, the crucial elements of the toolset are submodality analysis and manipulation, anchoring and well-formed outcomes.

Submodality analysis and manipulation is based on the idea that all subjective behavior can be analyzed into sequences of sensory experience; what we see, hear, feel, smell and taste. On a more finely-grained level, the valence, intensity and meaning of these experiences are determined by the qualities of the sensory experiences. These qualities include their subjective position, distance, intensity, amplitude, stability, focus, etc. The manipulation of these variables can intensify, weaken or change the meaning of an experience. For example, the image of a pleasant memory may be experienced as associated or dissociated, near or far, bright or dim, moving or still, two-dimensional or multi-dimensional, colored or mono-chromatic, etc. Similar dimensions of perception apply to the other senses. Each of these manipulations can change the subjective experience significantly and can, in combination, powerfully impact subjective experience. The scientific validity of submodality distinctions, especially in the visual modality, has been largely confirmed by mainline psychology but without reference to NLP (Andreas and Andreas 1988, 1989; Bandler and MacDonald 1987; Gray 2001, 2002, 2005, 2008, 2008a).

The second tool, anchoring, is a basic classical conditioning technique that is used to make the affects developed using submodality analysis transportable and manipulable by the client. In general, it consists of associating a predetermined - though nevertheless arbitrary - gesture as conditioned stimulus with a practiced ecstatic state (developed using submodality manipulation) as a conditioned response.

In NLP, anchoring can refer to almost anything from a gentle touch used as a conscious reminder, to a classically conditioned stimulus that evokes a specific, involuntary, emotional or visceral response. In the Brooklyn program, anchoring is treated as a classically conditioned learning experience in which repeated pairings of a meaningless gesture with an emotional experience allow that gesture to elicit, and modify, the original emotional experience. These conditioned stimuli may be thought of as triggers for the desired responses. They are automatic and relatively immediate. Stacking anchors, an extension of anchoring as an instance of classical conditioning, allows the creation of new states and experiences by combining felt experiences (Gray 2001, 2002, 2005, 2008).
The third tool, well-formed outcomes, is a central pillar of NLP interventions that has developed more or less directly from the work of Noam Chomsky. Just as Chomsky held that native speakers of any language can intuitively identify whether a communication is well-formed or meaningful, just so, human behaviors require certain kinds of structure in order to make them meaningful, motivating or efficacious. Typically these conditions include the specification of the formal characteristics of the elements and their required order (Bandler and Grinder 1975; Dilts et al. 1980; O’Connor and Seymour 1990; Gray 2008b).

At their most basic level, the NLP well formedness conditions for any given outcome specify that:

- it must be stated as a positive thing or experience; something wanted, not something unwanted or ended
- it must be something that is under the goal seeker’s personal control which also implies that the task should not be stated too broadly
- it must be specified in terms of sensory experience; it must be described in terms of what can be seen, heard, felt, tasted or touched
- it must be evaluated in terms of its impact on the person’s current life and the lives of the people around them (ecology). (Bandler and Grinder 1975; Dilts et al. 1980; O’Connor and Seymour 1990; Dilts and DeLozier 2000; Gray 2008b)

From these basic tools, the program built experiences of self efficacy with regard to affect, access to mood control, access to personal experiences of ecstasy and a core sense of personal identity and worth. That experience would serve as a foundation for the creation of an anticipated future that was sufficiently stable to provide motivation for change and personal transformation into the future, without regard to the underlying problem behavior.

Although founded on presuppositions grounded in humanistic and depth psychologies, it soon became apparent that the principles upon which the program depended could be expressed in terms of structures in the midbrain dopamine system. Significant correlations were noted between the assumptions of the program and the behavior of individual dopamine neurons (Schultz 2002), the instantiation of salience hierarchies in the orbitofrontal cortex (a current review is presented in Kringelbach 2005), and the differentiation between hedonic impact and incentive salience (Berridge and Robinson 2003). Similar studies from the perspective of physiology provided a vertical integration of the hypotheses upon which the program was built and allowed for further refinements of the techniques employed.

Procedures

The program begins by turning away from a problem focus and emphasizes that the participants can learn to enhance their memory, feel better emotionally, gain control over their emotions - choose how and when they want to feel differently, and finally, design a future that is meaningful to them. Beyond these outcomes, the only representation made to participants was that if they applied the techniques they would always leave the sessions feeling better than they did when they came in; if they didn’t, it would be the most boring two hours of every week. Problems were deemphasized. In some cases, the program was presented as laying a behavioral foundation for later work on the problem behaviors themselves.

In the first several sessions, participants were taught to access and enhance a series of positive resource states using standard NLP submodality techniques. This submodality work begins with a striking enhancement of the remembered experience and so validates the first promise to clients – that they will be taught memory enhancement techniques. During the same several sessions, the participants are taught to focus more and more on the feelings associated with the experience so that they discover a series of deeply-pleasurable transcendent states. These pseudo-meditative states are designed partly to provide feelings of self efficacy, but also to provide powerful positive experiences that are strong enough to challenge the salience of the problem state.
Next, in sequence, the participants were taught to anchor several predefined states that they had accessed and enhanced during the preceding sessions. These states included the experience of focused attention, a single good decision made in a systematic fashion, a moment of skill consolidation or streamlining of a learned behavior – riding a bike, driving a stick shift, an experience of pure fun or enjoyment, and an experience of confidence or personal competence. These resources were enhanced to ecstatic levels, to the point where there was virtually no shadow of the original content or context. Each state was anchored to a distinct hand gesture. The anchors serve three purposes:

1. they make the resource transportable and accessible in multiple contexts
2. they create a relatively mechanical means for evoking and enhancing the anchored state
3. they create an automated access for later integration of these preliminary anchors into a more complex state (stacking anchors).

Once the anchors have been practiced and enhanced several times, participants were encouraged to practice them in multiple situations so that they generalize into other life contexts. This ensures that the new behaviors – access to the resource states – generalizes beyond the confines of the weekly session. A strong emphasis on homework and independent practice served the same end. Participants also created several of their own anchors to ensure that they knew that these processes were under their personal control; that the resource states were theirs and theirs alone.

At about the seventh week, the anchors were assembled into a single state labeled ‘NOW’ which, according to the author’s understanding, created a basic felt experience (constellation) of Jung’s deep Self. This state was used as the affective basis for creating a meaningful and compelling set of outcomes in the last sessions when the NLP well-formedness conditions are used to create a future that matches the positive health outcome in Prochaska’s strong principle of change (Prochaska 1994). It relies on his observation that movement through the stages of change is propelled most significantly by the identification of a meaningful and compelling future.

The process continued with the recollection and anchoring of a second series of resource states from various periods in the participants’ lives. These consisted of times when the participants felt good about themselves, things that they did well, things that they learned easily, meaningful jobs and roles, and things they wanted to be when they were children. These were anchored, enhanced and integrated into the NOW state.

Finally, the felt state associated with NOW is used to create well-formed outcomes across several life domains: home life, occupation, spiritual life, relationships, intellectual life, and health practices. Each outcome is created by accessing the NOW anchor and imagining life in each domain through that affective window. This results in future outcomes that are consistent with a deep, felt sense of personal identity. Superficial outcomes – wealth, sex, possessions etc. – are discarded in favor of behavioral outcomes that characterize the kinds of behaviors that give expression to the constellated sense of the deep Self. The remaining exercises are devoted to enhancing the vision of the future and consolidating the learnings.

Methods

The study was undertaken after two years of program operation (Gray 2002). During that time it had graduated more than 200 participants. The program was 16 weeks long and met in a classroom format for two hours every week. Participants were required to attend two one-on-one sessions during the course of the program, and more if they returned a positive urine specimen or missed a group session.

The regular one-on-one sessions were undertaken to ensure that each participant had mastered the program skills up to that point in the program and to help them refine their technique. Persons who missed a session were brought in for make-up sessions. For persons who had submitted positive urine specimens, the techniques were reviewed and similarly refined. Some discussion of the problem was undertaken but the emphasis was always on the program skills and ensuring that the participant had mastered them.
Population

The Brooklyn program was a non-voluntary program operating under the aegis of the Federal Government in Brooklyn, NY. All participants were court-mandated to substance use treatment. Clients were selected in a non-random fashion by their probation officers on the basis of convenience, perceived need, and often, financial constraints upon the department.

Participants were required to be fluent in English, not in active relapse and free from serious mental or psychiatric impairment. After a brief intake and introduction to the program, participants began with the formal exercises. Beyond these constraints, all referrals were usually accepted.

Although earlier sessions of the program had been limited to persons with marijuana-based problems and others who had been adjudged as being in need of an otherwise undefined personal direction, the study sample was a diverse group of offenders who were often using multiple substances.

The comparison group consisted of clients who had been removed from the program and were referred to the standard federal contract treatment protocol. Those clients received treatment from a contracted provider consisting of two sessions of group therapy and one individual counseling session per week over a period of six months (or more). The majority were removed from the program because they failed to attend the first two meetings. Others were terminated either for excessive absences or were removed by their probation officers.

Data collection was limited to program completion, urinalysis results before, during and after program completion and, later, positive and negative affect scale (PANAS) data.

Informed consent

All clients were provided with and signed informed consent forms. Because of the possibility that some of the clients had poor literacy skills, the forms were read aloud to all participants.

The form documented the length and character of the program and advised: that the program satisfied the requirements set forth by the court for substance use treatment, that the client had the option to choose other treatment modalities besides the Brooklyn program, that enhanced program requirements or sanctions might follow upon evidence of relapse, that the program had mandatory attendance policies and conditions for removal to other treatment modalities, that the program was skill based and would be evaluated based on skill mastery, and that participants were required to participate in random urine testing. The consent included a notice of the non-confidential nature of program data and the fact that program results would be disclosed to the probation officer and to the court. Finally, the form notified the client that the program involved altered states of consciousness accessed through visualizations and guided meditations.

Insofar as the program is not insight-based, or diagnostically driven, very little personal history was taken by the operators of the program.

Urinalysis

Preliminary urinalyses were performed in-house using radioactive enzyme multiplied immunoassay technique (REMIT) equipment that was regularly calibrated according to Federal Government standards and subject to blind evaluations. Confirmation retests of positive specimens were performed by a contract agency using gas chromatography/mass spectrometry (GC/MS) testing. The equipment and procedures used by the contract agency were regularly recertified by federal inspectors. Strict chain of custody procedures were used to insure that every specimen would be admissible as evidence in a court proceeding. Random weekly urine specimens were collected every week from each participant. The policy of the Federal Probation Department required weekly urinalyses of all offenders for whom drug treatment had been mandated. This regimen began before they entered
drug treatment and continued after completion. Urine specimens were scheduled using a random call generator which averaged one call per client per week while in practice it could be more or less frequent.

Evaluation criteria

One of the important characteristics of the program was the inclusion of behaviorally defined success criteria which were evaluated during the two one-on-one sessions. If behavioral deficits were noted, measures were taken during additional one-on-one sessions, to correct the problems.

There were seven behavioral criteria. Early in the program participants might legitimately have had trouble creating truly automatic anchors. So provisions were made to coach participants on anchoring during the first one-on-one. However, if by the first one-on-one session, a participant could not meet the first three criteria this was understood as a sign of non-participation. If participants remained unable to meet the root criteria after the eighth session they were instructed to repeat the program or to seek another form of treatment.

1. Name the five states and illustrate the appropriate hand gestures; do this in order (Exercises 2 and 3).
2. Describe your physiological responses as the state arises (Exercises 1–5 and throughout the program).
3. Physiological signs: changes in posture, facial expression, heart rate, breathing and skin tone. Many participants will begin to express rhythmic movements that reflect the underlying experience. Although they differ from person to person, state changes will be observable.
4. Response latency: persons who have entered the deep states required will either not respond to external stimuli (loud noises) or will respond with marked latencies (e.g. eye movements several seconds after the sound).
5. Perseveration: persons who access the states often take a few seconds to return to normal consciousness. Persons who immediately return to normal voice tone and reaction time are suspect.
6. Mood change: the state enhancement and anchoring exercises (1–5) and all of the subsequent exercises lead to strong positive feelings. People who begin the session in negative states quickly change to more positive affects. Persons who retain a negative mood are suspect.
7. States arise automatically in response to the anchors; there is no preparation time or conscious effort to access the state.

Results

Statistical measures

Statistical measures were provided by an outside contractor who created a statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) file based upon data elements collected during approximately one year of treatment (n=127). Twenty-eight records were removed because of ambiguous or missing data. This left 99 valid cases with observable measurements (urinalysis results).

Of the 99 valid cases, 80 (80.8 percent) were program graduates. A total of 19 (19.2 percent) were non-graduates, 2 of whom had been excluded from the program (failed to attend the four initial sessions). Pre- and post- urinalysis data were available for the two excluded cases, so they were grouped with the comparison group for analysis.

Analyses of variance for several conditions were performed with no significant differences appearing between completers and non-completers whether or not positive specimens had been submitted before treatment.
Fifty-five percent of Brooklyn program graduates remained abstinent after completing the program. Roughly one-third (32.5 percent) of those who submitted positive urinalyses were determined to be in need of further treatment. Among non-graduates, 16 percent remained abstinent and 68.4 percent of the remainder was determined to be in need of further treatment. Group differences in the mean number of positive urinalysis results submitted after graduation failed to be statistically significant at either the .01 or .05 percent levels.

Among participants with documented drug use prior to the program (n=47), 70.3 percent of graduates (n=37) submitted positive urine specimens, and slightly more than half of those (51.4 percent) were determined to need further treatment after graduation. The 10 non-graduates all submitted positive urinalyses and 80 percent were determined to need further treatment. The difference in the mean number of positive urine specimens submitted by graduates and non-graduates after program completion failed to be statistically significant at either the .01 or .05 levels.

Several other variables, including treatment history and the timing of the last positive specimen submitted before graduation, revealed no significant correlations with the need for further treatment. Several of these calculations involved such a small number of cases that the analysis could not be made.

Other measures

After the original evaluation in 2002, an effort was made to provide more objective measures of positive affect and program effectiveness. Among those changes was the implementation of a testing regimen including administering the PANAS inventory to each participant in pre-treatment and post-treatment conditions. The PANAS is an affect inventory that tests the level of 20 independent, non-correlated feeling states (Watson et al. 1988). PANAS can be administered so as to examine several time frames to assess current mood or more stable affect characteristics. Watson et al. normed the instrument against several thousand college students and found that their scores averaged 32 on the positive scale and 16 on the negative with a standard deviation of 7 points for the entire instrument.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PANAS results for two groups: affect frequency for one month pre-test</th>
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<tbody>
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<tr>
<td>Normative data</td>
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<td>PANAS</td>
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<td>Post treatment</td>
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<td>Pre treatment</td>
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Table 1: PANAS results for two groups of Brooklyn program participants. (R. Gray 2009)

The PANAS was administered to two groups in 2004. Our results showed an increase of positive affect after treatment that was considerably higher than the pre-treatment scores. Although no standard deviation was computed for the study group, the measured change was more than one standard deviation as computed for the norming group. The negative affect scales decreased post treatment but remained at about normal levels. Before treatment, positive affect was typically one full standard deviation below the mean of the norming population for all participants. This change is taken to mean that although more positive, the program completers were not unrealistic.

Personal responses to the program were consistently positive. Participants reported changes in spiritual awareness and positive direction. They claimed to have reconnected with their positive pasts and had developed meaningful positive directions.
Discussion

This paper reviewed an NLP-based program for substance abusers that operated in the United States Probation Department for the Eastern District of New York between 1997 and 2004. Based on a learning model of substance abuse and seeking to capitalize on the personal strengths of the participants, the program was characterized by high rates of retention and low relapse rates.

Descriptive statistics indicated that 80 percent of enrollees completed treatment and of those, 55 percent remained drug free. When the results were narrowed to reflect only graduates who had submitted positive urine specimens before program initiation, the abstinence rate stabilized at a respectable 29.6 percent. Although not statistically significant, the success rate matches the success of more time-consuming and expensive treatment options.

The Brooklyn program has taken the radical stance that substance abuse and addiction are not diseases so much as they are learned strategies for dealing with problems which, in the course of normal learning, become the definers of reality for the client. In choosing to focus on accessing positive resources, developing choice and creating a future orientation, the Brooklyn program has achieved results that are as good as and often better than standard, problem-centered approaches. In the course of creating those results it has manifested significant savings of time and energy over standard treatment modalities.

Standard contract treatment in the Federal Probation System typically consists of two group therapy sessions and one individual counseling session per offender, per week. The basic treatment period is six months (often more). In 1999, the year the original population graduated, costs for these services ranged between $150 and $175 per week and amounted to $3,600 per offender over the course of a six month evaluation period. By contrast, the Brooklyn program operated with in-house personnel and required a maximum of 4 hours per facilitator, per week. Using only the number of program completers who required no further treatment (n=62) the Brooklyn program produced savings of more than $200,000 for the population of offenders examined.

Later examinations of the affective results of the program using the PANAS inventory indicated that program completers showed a considerable shift in mood along a positive affective dimension while remaining pragmatic about the negative realities of their lives.

Directions for further research

The program developed from an understanding of human potentials rooted in Jungian and Maslowian concepts of personal growth. It built upon these assumptions using concepts drawn from classical conditioning and NLP to create a program of experience in personal growth that provided results that are at least as good and often better than more expensive and time consuming programs.

One of the important effects of the program is an illustration of the efficacy of NLP in allowing clients to directly regulate their subjective states by creating and modifying specific affective tones and by creating and enhancing specific states of mind.

Richard Davidson and others have implicated the orbito-frontal cortex as an important element in processing positively valenced affect and as an essential element in the direction of goal directed behavior (Davidson 1993; Kringleback 2005). Likewise, Berridge, Robinson and others have described the activation of the ventral striatum in the ordering of behaviors related to addiction (Berridge and Robinson 2003). It would be instructive to compare fMRI recordings of frontal function and activity in the ventral striatum in persons who have completed the Brooklyn program with other substance abusers or dependant persons who have not learned the self regulatory practices that are at the heart of the program. We would predict that left orbito-frontal activity levels would increase over untreated controls and that activity in the ventral striatum would decrease in the presence of drug-related stimuli. These would represent reversals of the common patterns observed in substance use disorders.
The program would also profit from continued application of objective measures like the PANAS inventory. Moreover, those evaluations should continue for follow-ups for several years.

There is significant evidence suggesting that relapse and recidivism peak at two years post-treatment (MacKenzie 2006). In light of this, future studies should follow participants well beyond the one year level.

Finally this program points directly to the relevance of the tool sets derived from NLP and their capacity to ameliorate substance use disorders using simple behavioral techniques. This is a field ripe for study and should not be overlooked.

Limitations of the study

This study suffers from several limitations. Although the procedure was manualized and applied consistently, the evaluation design lacked the scientific rigor that would have rendered the results more reliable and would have insured their validity.

To begin, the study lacked random assignment to experimental and comparison groups and further suffered in that it used program drop-outs for the comparison group. These errors significantly impact the validity of the results presented. Future studies would ideally use random assignment to the two groups. Insofar as the participants were assigned to the program using arbitrary criteria (probation officers’ decision processes) these results may not generalize to a larger population.

Because the study was based on an essentially ad hoc review of an up-and-running program, there was, beyond completion statistics, urinalysis results and the lately-come PANAS testing, little in the way of useful data collected. The data was not analyzed for the impact of different drugs, different levels of substance use disorders or demographic factors. These should all be included in later replications.

In general, however, the program provides a perspective into the effective use of NLP practices in a drug treatment setting. Further research will provide continued validation of these approaches using more rigorous scientific designs.

References


Gray, R.M., 2008b. NLP and levels of motivation. Suppose, the official CANLP/APNL bilingual newsletter, Fall 2008, pp. 20–4.


Footnote

These five exemplars and the first level of stacked anchors were inspired by a set of anchors described by Carmine Baffa
EDUCATION
Applying Dilts’ ‘Disney creativity strategy’ within the Higher Education arts, design and media learning environment

Sharon Beeden

Introduction

The intention of this action-based research was to explore the effectiveness and applicability of Robert Dilts’ ‘Disney creativity strategy’ (Dilts 1994) within a Higher Education (HE) art, design and media learning environment. This enquiry is aimed at determining whether students perceived improvements in their creative and professional capabilities when incorporating the strategy within relevant learning and teaching activities. The study suggests that this strategy taken from Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) has the potential to make a valuable contribution to the advancement and progression of a wide range of learners.

Context

In February 2002, the British Government’s Department for Education and Skills (DfES) published a green paper entitled ‘14–19: Extending Opportunities, Raising Standards’ (DfES 2002). This Public Service Agreement (PSA) cited a target that by 2010, towards 50 per cent of 18–30 year olds will have had some experience of HE.

This target was initiated primarily out of two concerns; firstly, a growing awareness that Britain is facing a national shortage of employees with higher-level skills, which poses a threat to undermine the nation’s competitive position in an increasingly global economy; and secondly that every individual, regardless of social class or family circumstance, should achieve his/her potential.

These two drivers underpin a number of policy developments that reinforce the Government’s stated commitment to education and in particular its determination to significantly reduce the number of young people who leave education or training at the age of 16. In June 2008, the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) website stated that, ‘Participation in England is already 43 per cent’. This statistic highlights that the Government’s aspiration of encouraging 18–30 year olds into HE was being met.

In light of the broadening profile of intake within HE, certain subject disciplines may attract or deter entries with specific learning preferences or impairments, and the former can be evidenced within the arts, design and media subject specialisms. This is supported by percentage data from the Higher Education Funding Council of England (HEFCE) Dyslexia Project; ‘10–15 per cent of HE Art and Design students may have dyslexia.’ (Brigden and McFall 2000, p.3).
This is equally borne out at the Arts Institute at Bournemouth (AIB), which is a specialist university sector institution offering high quality education in arts, design, media and performing arts courses to approximately 2,500 students.

Statistics provided by colleagues within Learning Support and Registry relating to students at the Institute with dyslexia or other specific learning difficulty (SLD), having undertaken a ‘QuickScan’ screening (as developed by Zdzieńki; see James 1997) during their induction week:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2005–06</td>
<td>13.44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006–07</td>
<td>12.23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007–08</td>
<td>12.54%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Percentage of students with dyslexia or other specific learning difficulty at the Arts Institute, Bournemouth. (S Beeden 2009)

This screening, which consists of approximately thirty questions, identifies students’ learning preferences, whilst detecting indications of dyslexia or other specific learning difficulties.

The need, therefore, to facilitate new learning and teaching strategies to a wide diversity of learners enabling them to realise their highest potential is one of the key objectives within the strategic plan of the HEFCE, and that of the Institute.

In particular, the necessity to provide student-centred learning in accordance with widening participation plus recruitment and retention requirements, whilst recognising students’ individuality and respective ‘map of the world’ is key to good pedagogic practice.

‘NLP (O’Connor and Seymour 1995) tells us that good educators use communication that conveys visual, auditory and touch (kinaesthetic) messages to engage a broader range of learners in a more effective way. Learners may have preferred ways of receiving and handling sensory data in order to construct their own ‘map’ of reality whereas lecturers may rely exclusively on their own preferred representational systems when communicating.’

‘Awakening and enhancing the senses and associating them to learning activities can create more powerful learning. In turn, sensory stimulation alters moods and emotions and can increase learning. Consequently, the more senses we stimulate in an activity the more memorable the learning experience will become. The greater the involvement of the learners in an activity, the deeper their learning will be and therefore this will inform their future practice, thought processes and behaviours, as identified by Thayer (1966), on the role of everyday moods.’ (Beard and Wilson 2005, p. 8)

At the Institute the ‘QuickScan’ screening provides an early indicator of individual students’ learning preferences. This enables staff course teams to be aware of whether a student has a visual, auditory or kinaesthetic (VAK) learning preference and provides recommendations for optimising relevant study skills. Use of preferred language and learning activities are considered, which supports the notion of awakening of the senses.

In the context of a teaching environment, the ability to evaluate how a student is perceiving and responding to a learning activity can be extremely useful to enhance the holistic student learning experience, and is an area of particular interest. An opportunity to focus upon this aspect more significantly arose two and a half years ago, in the form of a small-scale research project, whilst studying on a Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) course at the Institute. In reflecting upon the various strategies that NLP promotes that are applicable to a HE creative learning environment, the author was keen to investigate the potential of VAK learning preferences, which could be linked directly to a studio activity and action-based research.
According to Denscombe (2005, p. 76), it is important to recognise that reflection may be of itself insufficient to make the professional's endeavour 'action research'. The reflection needs to be systematic if it is to qualify as action research. Merely thinking about your own practice – though possibly a valuable basis for improving practice – is not the same as researching that action. Here a distinction also needs to be made between a 'reflective practitioner' (Schön 1983) as one who strives for professional self-development through a critical consideration of his or her practices, and the action researcher who, while also being a reflective practitioner, adds to this by using research techniques to enhance and systematise that reflection.

Therefore, consideration was given to facilitating a visual, auditory, kinaesthetic (multi-sensory) experience for students, whilst simultaneously realising the need to provide students with a methodology to advance their skills in relation to their project work.

As a result of this investigation, the work of Robert Dilts (1994), with particular reference to the study of Walt Disney (1901–66), animator, and his 'creativity strategy', which is described more fully in the next section, fulfilled this criterion. Essentially, the creativity strategy combines utilisation of both spatial and perceptual positions, thereby effecting a kinaesthetic activity, coupled with the use of language to enhance the VAK 'sub-modalities' (a term used within NLP to describe visual, auditory and kinaesthetic qualities within our senses), which links and further relates to aspects of creativity, problem-solving and working methodology. The strategy also has a temporal aspect associated with it, in terms of recognition of past learning experiences and projection, by means of imagination, of future ones.

Accordingly, this strategy was considered appropriate for a diverse, higher education student cohort, whose ages range from approximately 19 years to 30 years, with backgrounds from previous fine art, visual communication, photography and textile pathways within foundation courses or similar, both nationally and internationally.

The relevance of Disney creativity strategy to the educational context of the creative industries was strong, and a natural choice given the framework of the Arts Institute and the nature of the subject specialism of the BA (Hons) Illustration course.

The curriculum is informed by a student-centred approach, with students initially engaging in fundamental study skills and psychomotor skills in both traditional and digital applications. The progressive structure of the course provides opportunities to contextualise work and to develop individual learning, facilitated by cognitive and humanistic learning theories. The unitised three-year, full-time course comprises twelve practical units and four theoretical units, enabling the development of expertise in a specific area of illustration, or a broader approach may be undertaken by combining a number of disciplines.

Essentially, illustration is not simply about representing objects, but about realising ideas and communicating lucidly to an audience. The concepts and outcomes may be visually stimulating, but can also be controversial, analytical and persuasive. As visual communicators, illustrators need to be curious and to have enquiring minds, questioning a whole range of topics, including environmental, social or global issues. The course philosophy is based on the idea that the function of an illustration is to comment, inform or decorate, in order to 'expand an idea in a visual way' (BA Hons 2008). Innovative ideas, problem-solving and effective working approaches are important attributes within the profile of an illustrator, whilst drawing is identified as the core activity to these realisations, through which illustration is explored.

Background to the Disney creativity strategy

Dilts studied under the tutelage of NLP founders Richard Bandler and John Grinder at the University of Santa Cruz, California, and subsequently has significantly contributed to the evolution of NLP. He has been the innovator of many new applications, informing NLP teaching programmes and training workshops worldwide. In
particular, Dilts has built on the work of Bandler and Grinder and their modelling of the strategies used in practice by three eminent therapists, Fritz Perls, Virginia Satir and Milton Erickson.

According to John Grinder, ‘NLP is an accelerated learning strategy for the detection and utilisation of patterns in the world.’ (O’Connor 2002, p. 127). The term modelling, within NLP, entails the fundamental principle that; ‘If one person can do something then it is possible to model it and teach it to others.’ (O’Connor 2002, p. 127). Therefore, modelling elicits identifying behaviour, language patterns and internal thought processes from an exemplar of good practice. By interpreting and replicating these aspects in an accessible way, it enables others to learn from such strategies.

Dilts states (1994, p. xxxii) that the purpose of modelling is not to make the one ‘real’ map or model of something, but rather to enrich our perceptions in a way that allows us to be both more effective and more ecological in how we interact with reality. In using the tools and techniques that NLP provides to analyse the practice of historical figures, and enable these ‘strategies of genius’ to be conveyed, learnt, applied and enacted within other contexts, Dilts’ stated aspirations are to contribute to the evolution of human beings.

In considering the process, not the content, of such exemplars, Dilts has facilitated the capacity to abstract the process and structure of the subjective experience, thus providing a method of teaching that encourages individuals to discover solutions for themselves within their respective contexts.

In order to model the creative process of Walt Disney, Dilts analysed quotations and anecdotes from Disney’s colleagues, read books and articles, and watched film footage from the Disney archive, resulting in an in-depth insight to his working practice.

According to Dilts, a major element of Disney’s genius was his ability to explore something from a number of different perceptual positions (Dilts 1994, p. 163). An important insight into this key part of Disney’s strategy comes from the comment made by one of his animators that: ‘There were actually three different Walts: the dreamer, the realist and the spoiler. You never knew which one was coming into your meeting.’ (Dilts 1994, p. 163).

Based on this insight, Dilts identifies the structure of creativity as a synthesis of different processes or phases. Specifically, the Dreamer state enables new ideas and goals to be formed; the Realist to transform those ideas into concrete expressions; and the Critic to act as a filter to counter overly creative or ambitious ideas but also to provide a stimulus for refinement.

Another important element of Disney’s creativity, according to Dilts, is the linking process known as ‘synesthesia’, which is the ability to overlap two or more of the senses together simultaneously, as when one feels what one sees, or sees images of sounds that one hears.

**Methodology**

The methodology of this action-based research was informed by salient texts such as, Bell (2005), Cohen and Manion (1994), Denscombe (2005). Cohen and Manion (1994, p. 194) state that action research is an approach which is appropriate in any context when ‘specific knowledge is required for a specific problem in a specific situation, or when a new approach is to be grafted on to an existing system’. Denscombe (2002, p. 27) further states that the main driving force behind a piece of research is sometimes the desire to solve a practical problem or to improve procedures. Particularly in the context of organisations and the work environment, the aim of the research is to arrive at recommendations for good practice that will tackle a problem or enhance the performance of the organisation and individuals through changes to the rules and procedures within which they operate. This is very much applied research. A good example of this approach is action research, where the agenda for the investigation tends to be set by the researcher’s own working environment and the need to make improvements to that environment through rigorous research.
Accordingly, in order to establish objectivity and impartiality to this enquiry as to whether the Disney creativity strategy could attain increased levels of performance relating to creativity, problem-solving and working methodology abilities, it was initially elected to facilitate the strategy to two different groups of students within the Institute, centred upon drawing activities.

Drawing was specifically chosen as the activity for students to engage with, as it has a generic application within the various courses in the Institute. Also, as Senior Lecturer within BA (Hons) Illustration, the author has been responsible for writing the course documentation relating to drawing and to promoting its cognitive, creative and practical approaches whilst challenging the restrictive notions of drawing. The author has also taught the subject within other subject specialisms within the Institute and led site-specific drawing activities.

With regard to the role as facilitator of the creativity strategy, having explained and implemented the process, the author maintained a supervisory presence within the session, allowing each group of students to continue their studies uninterrupted.

Regarding the first group, access was kindly granted by the Vice-President of the Student’s Union at AIB, Stuart Farwell, to the weekly sessions of life drawing classes held every Tuesday evening from 6 pm to 9 pm within the designated life room at the Institute. This self-initiated life drawing class, held to improve observation and drawing skills, consisted of a group of 16 students, with a gender ratio of 5 females to 11 males, all who were unfamiliar to me, as they came from various courses, such as modelmaking, fine art and animation within the Institute.

The second group consisted of seven illustration students, with a gender ratio of three females to four males, whom the author regularly teaches on a daily basis. However, for the purposes of maintaining parity for this exercise, a series of extra curricular life drawing activities were arranged during the evening hours with participation on a voluntary basis. To facilitate the same conditions, the life drawing room was again utilised as it provides a safe, secure learning environment. Importantly, it provides a space without distraction, allowing students to focus on the poses created by the model and also allows for an informal ambience to be created with fewer interruptions to the daily curriculum and where greater experimentation can take place, both by the lecturer and student alike.

Further enquiry subsequently transpired with a third group of students within the BA Illustration syllabus, in relation to their work within group tutorials and self-directed study. Within this particular session, 17 students were in attendance, with a gender ratio of 11 females to 6 males.

Ethical research considerations were observed within each group, using guidance from the Research Committee and the Code of Ethics (2007 version) for research activity within the Institute, and also informed by research texts. All the students agreed to participate; it was confirmed that all the feedback would remain anonymous and that it would be used solely for the purposes and context of this research work.

At the outset of each session, data collection took place in the form of students completing a diagnostic assessment of their perceived skills and abilities, allowing for a comparison to be drawn to that at the conclusion of each session, relating to a ‘pre test’ and ‘post test’ research structure. This template (see Appendix 1) consists of a series of tick boxes and required students to evaluate their levels of creativity, visualisation skills, outcome thinking, problem solving and realisation, in addition to providing information as to their learning preference, as identified within the ‘QuickScan’ screening within their respective student inductions. The template was retained by each individual student while the creativity strategy was then explained and implemented, allowing students to engage with each of the spatial and perceptual states, the Dreamer, the Realist and the Critic.

Students were directed around designated areas within the life drawing room relating to the multiple spatial and perceptual positions and asked to recall and anchor times when they were highly creative (Dreamer), demonstrated an effective working methodology or action plan (Realist), or were able to constructively analyse and criticise a plan (Critic). (Anchoring is the NLP process of associating an internal response – visual such
as a colour, auditory such as a sound, or kinaesthetic such as a feeling – to an internal or external stimulus). This was achieved by means of the facilitator eliciting these experiences with the use of predicates (words and phrases indicating a representational system) relating to the three respective modalities of VAK representational systems.

For example, within the Dreamer state, students were asked to ‘picture’ a past creative success that ‘illustrates’ their ability ‘in light of’ the circumstances, all of which are expressions that denote the visual modality. Conversely, students were required within the Realist state, to consider ‘handling’ a past creative project and realising that ‘by taking a hold’ of the situation so that a successful outcome could be achieved, which is indicative of the kinaesthetic modality. Similarly, the Critic state necessitated students to engage with the idea of proffering positive constructive criticism in relation to a past creative venture, such as providing ‘an internal dialogue’ with oneself, by recollection of questions such as, ‘What was averted?’ , ‘What was missing?’ and in turn, responding in an assertive way, which corresponds to auditory modality.

On completion of the anchorage of the three states, each of the three spatial and perceptual states were then re-visited and the anchors re-fired (or re-associated with) in relation to the context and desired outcome of the life drawing session. It was also suggested that students could revisit the spatial or perceptual positions or re-fire their anchors, as required, in order to re-engage with that particular state during the course of the ensuing life drawing session.

With regard to the third investigation, relating to a group of students within the BA Illustration syllabus, students were required to produce a ‘visual mind-map’ (Buzan 1995) of their subsequent ideas generated within the process of the creativity strategy.

At the close of each session, having undertaken the creativity strategy, students were asked to complete the second page to the diagnostic assessment template relating to their perceived abilities in terms of creativity, visualisation skills, outcome thinking, problem solving and realisation.

The diagnostic templates were then handed in, providing comparative data to be analysed.

**Analysis of data**

On studying the data within the diagnostic assessment template within the first group (those students from cross-course creative disciplines), 6 out of the 16 students participating failed to complete the second page of the diagnostic assessment template.

Of the remaining ten, four students reported no change to their profile, while six indicated an improvement to their abilities. Thus 60 per cent of those students in this group who fully completed both diagnostic assessment and subsequent feedback sheets indicated an improvement to their abilities. The areas in which these six students indicated improvement to their profile related to creativity, visualisation, synthesis and development and realisation skills, as identified within Table 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identified areas of improvement</th>
<th>Individual students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Creativity</td>
<td>✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visualisation skills</td>
<td>✓ ✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Synthesis and development</td>
<td>✓ ✓ ✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem-solving</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Realisation ability</td>
<td>✓ ✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Student’s Union life drawing class. Results relating to the perceived area of improvement to abilities. (S. Beeden 2009)
Of the seven students in the second group of students, those within the BA Illustration life drawing class, one reported change to their profile; one ‘didn’t know’; and the remaining five out of the seven students indicated an improvement to their profile within the following areas:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identified areas of improvement</th>
<th>Individual students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Creativity</td>
<td>✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visualisation skills</td>
<td>✓ ✓ ✓ ✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Synthesis and development</td>
<td>✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem-solving</td>
<td>✓ ✓ ✓ ✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Realisation ability</td>
<td>✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: BA (Hons) Illustration life drawing class. Results relating to the perceived area of improvement to abilities. (S. Beeden 2009)

In addition to an improvement to creativity and visualisation skills, synthesis and development and problem-solving abilities were enhanced as a result of undertaking the creativity strategy.

Following the two previous investigations relating to extra curricular life drawing activities, consideration was then given to determining whether the creativity strategy would have any beneficial effects to different learning and teaching activities within the curriculum. Accordingly, the creativity strategy was implemented at the onset of a session relating to group tutorials and self-directed study within the BA Illustration studio. Whilst 17 students participated initially, somewhat disappointingly only 7 students completed both sides of the diagnostic assessment template detailing their experiences.

Of this third group of students’ returns, one reported no change, whilst six reported an improvement to aspects of their profile, including creativity, visualisation and realisation abilities coupled with synthesis and development skills and problem-solving, as highlighted in Table 4.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identified areas of improvement</th>
<th>Individual students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Creativity</td>
<td>✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visualisation skills</td>
<td>✓ ✓ ✓ ✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Synthesis and development</td>
<td>✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem-solving</td>
<td>✓ ✓ ✓ ✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Realisation ability</td>
<td>✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: BA (Hons) Illustration group tutorials and self-directed study. Results relating to the perceived area of improvement to abilities. (S. Beeden 2009)

Student comment also reinforced the positive outcome, illustrated by these anonymised quotes taken from feedback from BA Illustration students within the third investigation:

‘I managed to concentrate better on the task and stay focused.’

‘Definitely helps clarify creative points in your head to aid in doing future work.’
Limitations

Limitations to this enquiry, as anticipated, included students not completing the diagnostic assessment template detailing their experiences as required. Despite several requests, both verbal and written, some students failed to complete the second part of the diagnostic assessment detailing their experiences, which was disappointing. Whilst perhaps more of a tutor’s presence could have been enforced towards the closing stages of the session, a respectful balance to the students’ needs for uninterrupted study was considered important. On reflection, in order to attain a higher percentage of returns in future, use of an electronic template could be considered for distribution, and also thought could be given to a follow-up request for completion of the diagnostic template to be returned within an appropriate timeframe.

 Whilst recognising that the aim of research is usually to secure the highest possible response rate and to keep non-responses to a minimum, several factors may account for the low return of data within some of the student groups.

First, in terms of the design of the diagnostic template, whilst the pre-coded questions afford the students a range of options to choose from in terms of evaluating their abilities within a series of tick boxes at the commencement of the lesson, the request to repeat the process at the end of an intensive learning and teaching session might be considered a negative and repetitive procedure, thereby dissuading students from completing the second side of the template.

Secondly, the low return rates in two of the student groups could be due to the possibility that those students for whom the Disney creativity strategy did not work, did not respond. As Denscombe (2005, p. 20) acknowledges, the main problem with a high non-response rate is that the researcher has no way of knowing whether those who did not respond were in some way different from those who did respond.

Thirdly, within two of the investigations, the students involved were those taught by the author on a regular basis, which may have had an influence on the response rate in terms of non-response arising from contact. Whilst the templates were completed and then returned within a box whilst the author was in the studio, albeit at a discreet distance, students might have experienced the author’s presence as a tutor disconcerting, and therefore might have been reluctant to complete the template.

Furthermore, the request for students to consider their perceived levels of creativity, problem-solving, synthesis and development skills and realisation abilities, thereby disclosing, albeit anonymously, their interpretation of their developing profiles as illustrators, may have exacerbated reluctance to complete the template. Offsetting this, both self and peer evaluation learning and teaching activities occur throughout the BA (Hons) course syllabus, which require students to analyse their work and performance objectively against respective learning outcomes and assessment criteria.

Further anticipated limitations of this exercise included aspects such as ‘auto-suggestion’, and the ‘Hawthorne effect’ (Sonnenfeld 1985), which relates to an occurrence of behavioural or performance change in people under observation. This expression originated during the 1920s and 1930s, when a study was conducted on factory workers at ‘The Hawthorne Works’, in Illinois, and found that due to increased or new attention and focus, workers recorded that their experiences were enhanced as a result.

Finally, it is acknowledged that this paper reports raw numerical data that are based on participants’ self-reports. While the response from students across the three groups was encouraging, there is no basis for claiming that the improvements reported are either verified, or significant.
Further investigations

Encouraged by the findings of the third investigation placed within a structured learning and teaching session, a more recent enquiry undertaken within the academic year 2007–08, related to the context of a second year project entitled, ‘Visual Explanation’.

The project is primarily concerned with explanatory illustration and the interpretation of objective information being conveyed in the form of visual commentary for specific target groups. The learning outcomes of the unit relate specifically to interpretation, visualisation, self-organisation and problem-solving ability, which seemed particularly suited to the use of the creativity strategy within the scheme of work. In writing the project brief, entitled ‘Form and Function’, students were required to produce a visual proposal of a selected object, using either traditional or digital applications, to be viewed within the context of a design museum, such as the Design Museum on the South Bank in London, which had to appeal to a young, global audience. Having established the frame or context of the work, the creativity strategy was then employed within the initial stages of the nine-week unit.

Upon completion of the strategy, students were required to produce a ‘visual mind-map’ (Buzan 1995) of their thought-processes within the three perceptual positions relating to the strategy and in context with their selected product. Subsequently, students elected to denote the Dreamer, Realist and Critic perceptual positions and notate them accordingly, considering aspects of resourcefulness, problem-solving, creativity and working methodology. The final realisations reflect this heightened ingenuity, as demonstrated within several time-based media animations, which highlighted innovative thinking in terms of visual and auditory content.

In response to a questionnaire, student feedback was largely positive about the exercise. The following comments were made anonymously by Level 5 students in response to the question, ‘As a result of the creativity strategy, would you say that you were more informed about the potential of your abilities relating to creativity, problem-solving and planning a realistic working methodology? Describe your experience’:

‘Yes, has helped me to link some ideas to the potential problems that may surround them, prior to the event actually happening.’

‘Definitely more informed – it was interesting to think about things in such a way and recall experiences.’

‘It was beneficial to remember what I am able to achieve and how to achieve it. I can now draw upon that when pursuing this current project of visual explanation.’

‘Yes, I have remembered why I got on this course and feel more encouraged to work on the project. I am more informed about the need to get on with work and set myself realistic targets.’

Additional investigations were undertaken at the Study Gallery for Modern Art, Poole, Dorset, with a wide range of learners at a workshop/seminar for professional artists, teachers, counsellors and therapists, and at Bournemouth University with students from cross-discipline courses, who recorded a 100 per cent increase to their creative abilities.

Furthermore, colleagues undertaking the Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) course at the Arts Institute noted the following key learning points in response to undertaking the creativity strategy in relation to a self-nominated project, a forthcoming presentation or their teaching delivery:
‘A new approach to problem-solving.’

‘Very useful for future teaching.’

‘To draw in key successful actions to inform future plans.’

Conclusion

This action-based research was undertaken in order to explore the effectiveness and applicability of Dilts’ ‘Disney creativity strategy’ within a HE art, design, and media learning environment. The main finding is that at least 60 per cent of students in each of three groups who fully completed both diagnostic assessment and subsequent feedback sheets indicated a perceived improvement to their abilities. Qualitative data in the form of student feedback support this finding.

The paper has acknowledged the limitations of this study, and further research would be needed to extend and validate these findings. Nevertheless it is suggested that this is an encouraging outcome, and that it supports further exploration of the Disney creativity strategy as a learning and teaching strategy. In particular, the Dilts’ creativity strategy is versatile; it can be applied cross-disciplines and within different contexts, and used to support and suggest ways in which to arrive at specific desired outcomes.

Further application and implementation of the creativity strategy is intended within other subject specialisms within the Institute, coupled with exploration of other behavioural strategies of genius highlighted by Dilts, such as that of Leonardo da Vinci (Dilts 1995).

Other NLP applications, such as the symptoms, causes, outcome, resources and effects (S.C.O.R.E) model (Dilts and DeLozier 2000, p. 1155), also have potential uses in HE. Recently the author’s research has encompassed the work of James and Woodsmall (1988) on ‘timeline’ interventions. This approach, which involves accessing states of inner resourcefulness within past experiences to inform future instances, was used approximately one week before a major student presentation to increase confidence in public speaking skills. This met with positive feedback from students participating in the activity, as well as from colleagues engaged in peer observation of the lessons.

Bringing such activities into the curriculum, thereby enhancing and enriching the learning experience of the growing diversity of learners, could contribute to meeting some of the challenges facing HE.

Acknowledgements

The author wishes to acknowledge and sincerely thank the following people who have been instrumental in this research work:

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Colleagues at the Arts Institute at Bournemouth

BA (Hons) Illustration students at the Arts Institute at Bournemouth

Arts Institute at Bournemouth Student Union Vice-President, 2006-07, Stuart Farwell

Brian Morton, co-founder of The NLP Dorset Forum

John Chisholm, co-founder of The NLP Dorset Forum
Dr. Paul Tosey, Senior Lecturer, University of Surrey

Jeff Lewis, Director of the NLP Education Network

Jem Main, Director of the Study Gallery for Modern Art, Poole, Dorset

Neil Francis, Bournemouth University.

References

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footnote

1At the time the project was conducted, the Arts University College at Bournemouth was known as the Arts Institute at Bournemouth.
Appendix 1

Diagnostic template

The Arts Institute at Bournemouth – Student’s Union Life Drawing Class

Dear Student

Having agreed to take part in this activity, please answer the following questions. All details are anonymous and will be used solely for the purposes and context of my research project relating to Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) and the Disney creativity strategy.

With many thanks for your help and participation,

Sharon Beeden – Senior Lecturer BA Illustration

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What is your preferred learning style?
- Auditory
- Auditory/Kinaesthetic
- Auditory/Visual
- Multi-sensory
- Visual
- Visual/Kinaesthetic

DIAGNOSTIC ASSESSMENT OF SKILLS

Reflecting upon your creativity, would you rate that your levels of ability to be –

- Very good
- good
- not so good
- fair/poor

How would you rate your ability to visualise the end outcome of a drawing?

- Very good
- good
- not so good
- fair/poor

How would you rate your ability relating to synthesis and development?

- Very good
- good
- not so good
- fair/poor

How would you rate your ability to think constructively about the outcome of a drawing and make a plan of action in order to achieve the desired outcome?

- Very good
- good
- not so good
- fair/poor

How would you rate your ability to identify or overcome problems or difficulties within a drawing?

- Very good
- good
- not so good
- fair/poor
Having undertaken the Disney creativity strategy and at the close of your life drawing session, please indicate an honest and objective appraisal of the level of your ability in relation to the following questions –

As a result of the creativity strategy undertaken, would you say your creative ability has –

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As a result of the creativity strategy undertaken, would you say that your ability to visualise the end outcome of a drawing has -

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As a result of the creativity strategy undertaken, would you say that your synthesis and development has –

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As a result of the creativity strategy, would you say your ability to think constructively about the outcome of a drawing and make a plan of action in order to achieve the desired outcome has -

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As a result of the creativity strategy undertaken, would you say that your ability to identify and overcome problems or difficulties within a drawing has -

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Please add any further comments or observations relating to the activity on the reverse of this page – thank you.

(S. Beeden 2009)
Can neuro-linguistic programming work with young children who display varying social, emotional and behavioural difficulties?

Lisa Squirell

Abstract

The study asks whether young children (aged five to seven) with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD) at a pupil referral unit can access and use neuro-linguistic programming (NLP) techniques to move them forward in ways beneficial to themselves as individuals.

The methodology was action based research, and it was an experimental study. To validate the study a mixed method approach was chosen using both qualitative and quantitative data. Five pupils were studied over a term with NLP teaching and compared to a control group that had no NLP strategies used on them.

Although it is difficult to draw generalisable conclusions from such a small-scale study, the children involved clearly showed positive responses to visualisation and language techniques. Most staff at the unit were positive and confident about using NLP. The quantitative data showed that the NLP group had, in almost all areas of learning and behaviour, improved more than the control group.

Keywords

SOCIAL DIFFICULTIES, EMOTIONAL DIFFICULTIES, BEHAVIOUR DIFFICULTIES, NLP, EDUCATION, YOUNG CHILDREN

Introduction and background

The research was set in a pupil referral unit for young children (aged three to eight) with SEBD. The reason for researching those with SEBD is that, as Bennathan and Haskayne (2007) point out SEBD children are the biggest challenge to teachers and they will fail to learn if they do not respond to teachers. To detail the prevalence of SEBD:

‘It is widely agreed that children with SEBD are the biggest challenge to the effective running of schools. These are children who do not respond to teachers' best efforts, they fail to learn... They also spoil the atmosphere for the rest of the class, consuming the teacher’s time and energy, diverting it away from children who could use it so much better. (Bennathan and Haskayne 2007, p. 41)’
This backs up the experience of the unit, in that many schools are having difficulties with these children. The question was: could NLP help these children?

The children at the unit are referred from mainstream educational settings and attend one day a week for between one and three terms. Unlike many pupil referral units it aims to work preventatively. It offers an early intervention service for pupils who are vulnerable to social and educational exclusion. The unit provides help, support and training to all those involved with the children. Therefore it is extremely important that the intervention provided for these children makes an impact very quickly.

As the Head Teacher was already an NLP Master Practitioner she thought that NLP could work with the children and invested in NLP training for the staff. Having experienced how NLP had enhanced the well-being of the staff, the aim was to investigate whether NLP could help provide these rapid changes to the children and also find out whether it could improve their progress.

The author's role within the unit was that of a specialist teacher teaching one day a week in the centre, working with children and staff in mainstream schools across Suffolk, working with parents and providing school staff training programmes. The author also had the responsibility of overseeing NLP practice across the whole unit.

Why NLP? Counselling and psychology can sometimes keep the client in a problem state for years, going over and over past events, experiences and feelings and may never move the client on. McDermott and Jago (2001) discuss this, giving examples of clients who have received counselling for many years to no avail, then discover that with NLP therapy they can start from the now instead of trawling up the past again and again: ‘... the client has already suffered, and ... the therapy should not – and does not need to – reiterate this’ (McDermott and Jago 2001, p.113).

When researching NLP, it appeared that much of the published work was aimed at businesses or adult self-help skills. Although some organisations train educational establishments, there is a limited amount of literature and even less research on the effectiveness for improving young children’s learning. Therefore, it was important to find out more from the literature and the difference it could make to children’s lives.

Literature review – the research

NLP and education for young children, at present, is a very limited field. Some of the most influential sources are as follows.

Van Nagel et al. (1985) were useful in moulding the research. They gave clear explanations, examples and evidence of research throughout the book. The tool most beneficial to the study was the use of anchors. The authors call anchors ‘Magic Buttons’, which gave them meaning for the children.

A large part of the book is about techniques such as visualisations and future pacing that can be done one-to-one with the children. Some of these, it was thought, could be quite intense for younger children. It was felt that the children, as they were so young, needed to learn to visualise first through relaxation before being taken on personal journeys.

Goodman’s (2007) interview with Terry and Churches details the training they offer in the field of education. They list their top ten NLP techniques for teachers, with the most useful for this study being: ‘Learn hypnosis for relaxation. You can also embed learning and understanding with metaphors and stories and to create and embed states.’(Goodman 2007, p. 19)

Gwinnell-Smith’s (2007) reflecting on good teaching practice, writes that she uses: anchoring (to evoke positive states of mind), visualising desired outcomes, and effective goal setting. Her favourite strategy in her behaviour support unit for SEBD children aged 11–18 is 7/11 breathing.

Craft (2001) concludes that NLP lacks awareness of learning styles. Van Nagel et al. (1985) could be cited
in counter-argument, given their clear guidance on NLP and learning styles. Craft argues from a stance of not being NLP trained, and her article is based entirely on secondary sources. In response, Tosey and Mathison (2003) consider whether NLP should be seen as a learning theory at all, or whether it should be viewed as a set of models or a collection of strategies. In their article they also observe that ‘... the academic community has shown little interest’ (Tosey and Mathison 2003, p. 371), which indicates the need for further research in this field. They suggest this may be because NLP does not belong to an established discipline, therefore has not become mainstream. They conclude with the ‘... hope of enhancing the understanding of NLP and its potential for education through scholarly enquiry.’ (Tosey and Mathison 2003, p. 384) The present study may not help this research directly, but it does open up the debate of NLP and education and hopefully it can bring new light to this field.

**Techniques to be used with the children**

It would have been impossible in the timescale of the research to try out all or many of the techniques on the children. The techniques were selected by looking at previous research, using staff instincts and teaching experience, and using those which had been successful from trials within the unit. It must be noted that the control group did not partake in any of those trials.

**Belief systems**

An important part of NLP concerns belief systems. Bandler (1985, p. 115) says: ‘The process of changing a belief is relatively easy, as long as you have the person’s consent.’ An obvious way of changing self-limiting beliefs is through questioning. Shapiro (2002) and Boyes (2006) both suggest starting with identifying beliefs and then asking questions about them, for example: ‘Is this a limiting belief … How do I want to change it?’ (Shapiro 2002, p.21); and ‘What belief might be more useful for you to hold?’ (Boyes 2006, p. 145)

**Solution focused questions**

A technique already piloted with the children was used when they said ‘I can’t …’ (a very common occurrence). The staff were trained to respond with solution-focused questions, such as: ‘What would happen if you could?’ (Van Nagel et al. 1985, p. 152), or by qualifying the belief (‘I can’t’) with ‘yet’, or ‘up until now’. This achieved quick results, particularly with one boy who was in the unit for a very short period of time. At school he was a major source of disruption to the class as he would say ‘I can’t …’ and burst into uncontrollable crying and screaming. By using this technique and anchoring his successes (see later in this section) in the unit, and also through the staff in his mainstream school practising this, he learnt to say ‘I can’. By the end of the five weeks he sometimes still said ‘I can’t’, however these were soon turned into ‘I can’ without any tantrums.

**I can/I can’t arm test**

Another related and highly valuable technique was the ‘I can/ I can’t’ arm test, a technique from Applied Kinesiology (King 2004, chapter 3) which suggests that saying ‘I can’t’ has a weakening physiological effect on the body. This complements the approach to beliefs taken by NLP. The technique requires the client with a negative perspective to hold their arm out in front of them and make it strong. The practitioner pushes down on it, with the client keeping it strong. They say ‘I can …’ (do what ever they think they can’t) and their arm will stay up. They repeat this, saying ‘I can’t …’, and their arm will become weakened and drop down. The ‘I can …’ can be repeated again so clients leave with the positive affirmation. Evidence from practice of this technique was that it worked every time.
Visualisation/imagery

Being such a large part of NLP training, it was decided that visualisation techniques would be important. Before embarking on relaxation or visualisation one of the most important things was to establish the use of 7/11 breathing.

‘The 7/11 breathing exercise works along a simply yet powerful principle. When your anxiety levels rise, your body experiences a cascade of changes ... Basically, your body begins to take in more oxygen in case it has to fight or run away. With the 7/11 breathing exercise you will reverse this process, returning your body and mind to a calm and relaxed state astonishingly quickly. And the more you practice it... the quicker you will be able to relax. (Hypnosis Downloads 2009)’

To do this one simply breathes in for a count of 7 through the nose and out for a count of 11 through the mouth, making this longer and more controlled. The count out for 11 can be difficult and experience demonstrated a need for practise.

The visualisations started by counting up through the body to focus on relaxing each body part. Then, through the use of stories, visualisation would take up whatever feeling was planned for that week (based on needs of the children). The challenge was, could the selected children access these techniques? Would they be able to access a trance-like state so that their feelings could be worked on?

Future pacing

Future pacing is defined as, ‘To mentally rehearse an outcome. A mental simulation of hoped-for futures.’ (O’Connor 2001, p. 277) To expand further on this and link it to visualisation, it can be said that whilst the client is imagining you would get them to think of a time in the future where this could happen, Young (2004, p. 290) also recommends a ‘pause to allow time for the client to get to know themselves in this changed state’.

Anchors

Anchoring ‘... happens when an emotional state, or process, is so strongly associated with a word, touch, place, sound, smell, taste or image that your current internal state is changed to match the remembered one.’ (Churches and Terry 2007, p. 105)

To build on the above section anchoring has an important part to play. First of all one needs to elicit a positive state (visualisation), then by creating an anchor that state can be recalled at any time it is needed it by firing off this created anchor. Molden and Hutchinson (2006) suggest squeezing the thumb or ear. Boyes (2006) suggests touching your knuckle or your heart, as other people are unlikely to touch these (and fire the anchor accidentally). It could be argued that it is really important that an anchor is discreet, something that can be done without people noticing. For example, using a finger and thumb to squeeze together is subtle and unlikely to draw attention. Anchors can be built upon again and again. Every time the feeling is experienced, it is anchored in the same way, in fact the more experiences the stronger the feeling evoked. This is called ‘stacking anchors’.

The piloting performed with the children at the unit on anchors worked as follows: each time the children had a success they were anchored by a hand placed on their shoulder. When they were having difficulties staff touched them on the shoulder and said something similar to: ‘do you remember when ...’ (i.e. a time when they did well/made the right choice).
Methodology and methods

It was hoped that with the data produced on the children’s progress it would be possible to demonstrate the effectiveness of NLP through using quantitative approaches. The research was action based and included some qualitative methods to strengthen it. It was also experimental in nature.

Triangulation, which Robson (2002, p. 372) defines as ‘checking the results of a qualitative method with those of a quantitative method (or vice versa),’ is just one method of combining the two types of research, Robson also points out that triangulation is valuable when analysing qualitative data, which can be untrustworthy on its own. The mixed method approach was ideal for the study, as it was based in just one organisation.

Ethics

From the literature it is clear that consent and confidentiality are two of the biggest aspects of ethics when researching. Cohen and Manion (1994, p. 353) suggest that researchers should gain parental consent for children involved, then the children’s consent themselves: ‘Our feeling is that children should be told as much as possible, even if some of them cannot understand the full explanation.’ Each week the children were asked their opinions of the mixed method approach was ideal for the study, as it was based in just one organisation.

Observations

Because the techniques of NLP were being trialled with the children it was important to observe the findings. Observational notes were taken as part of the everyday practice, so the staff did not need training or guidance on how to take the observations. They could simply carry on doing what they already did well.

The Boxall profile and QCA scales

One method of data collection used was the Boxall profile (Bennathan and Boxall 1998). This: ‘... provides a framework for the precise assessment of children who have SEBD and are failing at school,’ Bennathan and Haskayne (2007, p. 41). It enables staff to plan appropriately and focus intervention based on the results. It is divided into two sections: developmental strands and the diagnostic profile, which are then divided into strands A–J and Q–Z. There are 68 questions, which have a rating system and so score points. The child’s mainstream
teacher fills these in. Once the questions have been filled out the scores are input into the Boxall computer programme, which gives the graphs that are then analysed. The Boxall is repeated again at the end of the child’s time with the unit. It is plotted onto the same graph so that the comparison can clearly be seen.

To back up and strengthen the Boxall data, behaviour scales from the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) were used. These were introduced to: ‘… support school improvement by offering guidance on setting improvement targets for pupils’ emotional and behavioural development.’ (QCA 2001, p. 2) There are three scales (learning behaviour, conduct behaviour and emotional behaviour), with five criteria related to each, rated using a five-point scale. The scales are completed separately by staff at the unit (on the child’s behaviour in the unit) and on the child’s behaviour in school. The scores can be added up and a table constructed to display the data.

Questionnaires

Two questionnaires were designed, one to find out the staff’s opinions on how NLP was working at the unit, and one for the teachers in the schools where the NLP training had been carried out. All 11 staff working with the children at the unit returned their questionnaires. Four schools with staff numbers ranging from 3–27 were sent questionnaires. Unfortunately, not enough questionnaires from the schools were received to make analysing them viable, therefore this section of the study had to be discounted.

Interviews

As the techniques were being tested on the children, it was highly important to receive their views. This was approached through a structured interview that fitted into the everyday running of the unit so was not alien to the children.

The children

There were five children in each group: the control group and the NLP (experimental) group. The control group had no NLP teaching or influencing, and left the unit before any NLP training had taken place. These children were a group randomly picked by staff at their time of leaving for their progress to be analysed, and represented a range of children leaving the unit at that time. The children in the NLP group were a whole class that attended all together. All children in both groups had a range of SEBD but, due to the varying degrees of difficulties the children had, it was not possible to match the children exactly. Therefore the data was looked at in terms of the group’s average. The study was carried out over one term, which was the NLP group’s final term at the unit.

Results: analysis and discussion of findings

Observations

The teachers and support staff at the unit observed the children. CCTV footage was a routine part of practice, so if the staff were unsure of what they had seen or heard then the film would be reviewed. This ensured that the observations were as unbiased as possible. The observations took note of what the children were doing, their facial expressions, body language and the exact feedback the children gave.

It was found that the relaxation/visualisation techniques:

• had a positive effect on the children (from their feedback and observations of their behaviour)
• the children were able to relax and reflect on their NLP experiences and enjoy it.
• the children were able to visualise colours to match their feelings and discuss these, although they appeared not to use them subsequently. This could be built upon in the future so that the children could use these colours in other visualisations and at other times, for example if they were feeling angry, they could use their relaxed colour to help calm them down.
• the children soon became used to the routines and were able to organise themselves and begin 7/11 breathing without reminders and prompts.
• children on the Asperger’s/Autism spectrum could benefit from relaxation and visualisation techniques
• the ‘I can/I can’t’ arm test was a success.

Things to take into consideration for the future were:
• the comfort of the children
• thinking about how to introduce NLP so that children are not self conscious and keeping the first few sessions very simple and then building from there
• when designing the visualisations, more planning would ensure that they are appropriate for the children and mean something to them. A ‘smile’ visualisation worked well and this may be because it was appropriate and on the children’s level
• two children had problems feeding back to the class, therefore it would make sense to find out why.

Questionnaires

Overall staff were very positive about NLP and felt confident about using it in the unit. They were all using solution-focused questioning and most were using anchoring and 7/11 breathing. Not all staff were using NLP in schools. There was a heavy emphasis on the positive outcomes of NLP and very little negativity about it.

Interviews with the children

The interviews demonstrated that all the children liked at least something about the sessions and got something positive out of it. All could do 7/11 breathing and four out of five of them were using it outside of the unit, for example at home and/or at school.

Although three out of five children said they were using relaxation techniques only one could give an example. This was a child who had Asperger’s who was building on our visualisations before he went to sleep. This was most fascinating as children with Asperger’s often find imagination hard. At least one child was anchoring – albeit hurting their finger by squeezing too hard. However the answers indicated that more work needs to be done to help the children develop their own anchors (magic buttons). The ‘I can/I can’t’ arm test contradicted the adult’s observations. The children’s answers did not detail any understanding of it. This may be due to lack of cognitive ability to verbalise it. One child said that their arm only stayed up because of their muscles and performed a little flex of his muscles.

It must be noted that the following statistics from the Boxall profile and the QCA scores should be viewed with caution. The limitations of this data are that both groups are relatively small, had the tests been carried out with a larger sample the data may present differently.

Boxall profile results

All the strands were studied. The children in both groups had their first scores (from the start of their time at the unit) and last scores (from the end of their time at the unit) inputted. For each strand in both groups the maximum and actual scores for each child were totalled to enable a percentage difference between the groups’ first and
last scores to be calculated. This demonstrated the comparison of each group’s (control and NLP) percentage increase – or decrease – in scores for the developmental strands (learning) and diagnostic strands (behavioural).

This was then simplified in the bar chart below to show the NLP group’s percentage difference when compared with the control group.

![Bar chart showing the percentage increase for the NLP group – Boxall developmental strands.](L. Squirell 2007)

The figure shows that in all areas, except strand E (cognitive engagement), the NLP group’s Boxall scores improved more than the control group. The biggest increases of development are in strands G (accepts constraints), F (emotionally secure), I (constructive responses), and C (connects experiences). The Boxall profile shows that the children are able to function and conform in a group, have regard for others and can accept organisational constraints and requirements. It indicates that the children are secure and self-accepting with a sense of self-worth and that they trust others. They can identify with others more easily, are also more helpful and in good emotional contact. It shows that they are purposeful and self-motivated, capable of coherent and sustained thinking and can relate events to each other.

This improvement could be due to the relaxation and visualisation techniques. The 7/11 breathing changes the physiology of the body reducing the adrenalin and therefore the symptoms of anxiety, which could then have had a positive impact on overcoming fear in learning situations. The anchoring creates positive feelings, releasing serotonin and perhaps leading to more feelings of happiness. The visualisation of previous successes and positive feelings associated with this creates endorphins, which reduces adrenalin. The use of solution-focused language may also have helped the children focus on successes rather than react adversely to feelings of self-doubt or rebellion.

The only strand that has not improved is strand E (cognitive engagement), showing that the children cannot adapt flexibly and interact purposefully and constructively with others. This decrease is minor though (−2.50 per cent) and the positive gains seem to outweigh this; for example, strand I shows that they are in good emotional contact with others. Also on the individual charts one child scored very low and did not improve on his first score. This could be due to him having a diagnosis of Asperger’s, as interacting purposefully and constructively with others is difficult for children with Asperger’s to manage and strand E involves sociability, understanding and other aspects of cognitive development. This is an example of the limitations of the raw percentages, had there been more children then this may not have affected the score so much.
When reading the bar chart for the diagnostic strands, it must be noted that improvement is shown downwards towards the negative end of the scale, as the scores need to drop towards zero to show a positive increase.

![Bar chart showing the percentage decrease for the NLP group – Boxall diagnostic strands. (L. Squirell 2007)](chart)

**Figure 2:** Bar chart showing the percentage decrease for the NLP group – Boxall diagnostic strands. (L. Squirell 2007)

The diagnostic (behaviour results) do not show such a marked improvement as the developmental results. They do however show a better overall picture than that of the control group. The NLP group has improved more than the control group in seven out of ten of the strands. The areas that show good improvement are strands Q (disengaged) and T (inconsequential behaviour). The disengaged score matches the development in the learning areas, since the children have to be engaged to learn. The significant improvement in strand T demonstrates that NLP could have had an impact on this type of behaviour. It may be that the techniques used have enabled the children to focus more on positive outcomes and that the 7/11 breathing has been used as a technique to stop them carrying out inconsequential behaviour (as mentioned by the children in the interviews). According to the Boxall profile, the results show that the children are less impulse driven, are reflecting on their behaviour and are more able to direct this, and that their personal organisation and identity have developed well.

The scores for strands R (self-negating), U (craves attachment) and X (negative towards self), have all worsened in the NLP group. To expand on these areas, it demonstrates that the children can be insecure and have a fragile self-image. It indicates that the children are seeking attachments and need consistently supportive relationships and that they feel unvalued with a severely injured sense of themselves. These seem to indicate that there is still work to be done with NLP to find out whether it can develop these strands effectively.

**QCA scale results**

The bar charts in Figures 3 and 4 display the data taken from each child on their first and last scores for each area (conduct behaviour, emotional behaviour and learning behaviour), totalled and then converted into percentage averages for each group. No statistical analysis was done with this data, which is a constraint and a consideration for the future.
This shows that in all areas the NLP group has improved more than the control group when they were in the unit. On both the emotional and learning dimensions, the group improved by 9.6 per cent, which is supported by the findings in the Boxall data. It would seem, when analysing the Boxall and the QCA scores for the behaviours in the unit that the most significant area is that of ‘learning’, although there has certainly been some increase in ‘emotional’ and ‘conduct’ too.

Comparing the two sets of results it is apparent that the unit results are better than those in the school. This seems to reflect the fact that (as shown in the questionnaires) not all staff were using NLP techniques in schools.

The results were positive and demonstrate that NLP has worked in the unit. However it is important to consider these objectively, and the following factors must be taken into consideration.
• The sample was only small. Had larger groups been studied there may have been a difference in the scores and this could be reflected more positively or negatively in the mean average increase/decreases. It would have been a more reliable average because each child is different and the bigger the group the more the differences between them would level out. Therefore one cannot claim that NLP works with all children with SEBD.
• Since the control group were at the unit there were changes of staff. This could have affected the results in a variety of ways; for example through different teaching methods and styles, or different curriculum content.
• The unit consistently revises and evaluates its practices. These improvements could have enhanced learning and behaviour anyway, without the introduction of NLP.
• The high level of training could also have impacted in this way, so other techniques may have been applied to improve learning and behaviour.

Taking the above into consideration, and comparing the quantitative data with the qualitative data, the results suggest that NLP techniques should be implemented into further practice. The study has demonstrated that the techniques could work with younger children. However more research on a larger scale must be done to categorically say that NLP works with young children with SEBD.

Conclusion

What are the results?

• Children displayed positive responses to relaxation sessions, were able to relax, and in particular really liked the 7/11 breathing, which most of them were using outside of the unit to aid them in difficult situations.
• Children could use their own anchors, but their understanding of these needs to be developed.
• All staff felt that at least some of the techniques work, with the majority being overwhelmingly positive about NLP, and they have used a range of NLP techniques. Relaxation, 7/11, anchoring and visualisation have been perceived to be the most successful by staff.
• NLP can work in schools, but the delivery needs careful planning.
• NLP techniques seemed to have had a positive effect on the unit's results – the children had improved more than the control group, although this may not be down to NLP alone.
• The children have improved most significantly in: accepting constraints, being emotionally secure, having constructive responses, connecting experiences, being engaged and being able to direct their behaviour appropriately with a developed sense of identity.
• NLP does not seem to have had much of an influence on the children's sense of self-image.
• The children’s learning has improved the most significantly.
• Children have not understood the concept of ‘I can/I can’t’, even though adults thought they had.

As an outcome of the research, NLP has been taken into the schools, particularly relaxation, 7/11, anchoring and visualisation. It is constantly being reviewed. NLP has been introduced to all the training courses. Larger cushions for comfort during NLP sessions have been purchased and the author has also become a NLP Master Practitioner.

Considerations for future practice

From the research it is clear that more work on a larger scale would be beneficial and that what may be required is to research for a longer period.
The following list is some recommendations for future practice.

- Plan more carefully – keep visualisations simple and build on them weekly, also thinking about the use of stories.
- Work with the children to develop ideas for visualisations and build on visualising colours associated with feelings so that the children can use these.
- Work on the “tools” for enabling the children to further use the techniques outside of the unit.
- Work on anchors (magic buttons) with the children.
- Encourage more staff reflection on NLP practices and training for new staff.
- Think of the approach for the ‘I can/I can’t’ arm test. Look into the children's views on this more closely – this may even need to be removed from our practice.

This study set out to find out if NLP could work with young children who display SEBD. The results complemented each other in many areas and overall demonstrate that NLP has worked with the group of children. Both the staff and children's view of NLP is that it has been a success, but there is room for improvement in terms of developing it. The results also demonstrate improvement in terms of learning and behaviour.

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Leading learning through relationships: the implications of neuro-linguistic programming for personalisation and the Children’s Agenda in England

Richard Churches and John West-Burnham

Abstract

This paper is an abridged version of research published by CfBT Education Trust. The paper discusses research and thinking on the importance of interpersonal and intrapersonal effectiveness for teachers, school leaders and school improvement, and explores implications of the use of neuro-linguistic programming (NLP) in relation to personalisation and the Children’s Agenda. It documents the initial use of NLP as part of the Fast Track teaching programme (the UK government accelerated leadership development programme), outlines initial research into teacher perceptions about the usefulness of NLP and makes suggestions for further research.

Keywords

NEURO-LINGUISTIC PROGRAMMING, PERSONALISATION, TEACHING, LEARNING, INTERPERSONAL, INTRAPERSONAL, FAST TRACK, LEADERSHIP, METAPROGRAMMES

Introduction

Personalisation has emerged as a central theme in our understanding of how to re-conceptualise education provision (de Freitas and Yapp 2005; West-Burnham and Coates 2005) and has had a significant influence on government policy within Every Child Matters and the Children’s Plan (Department for Children, Schools and Families 2007). Research consistently demonstrates the centrality of teaching and learning and classroom processes in determining school effectiveness as well as the importance of leadership (Mujis and Reynolds 2005; Sammons 2007). Studies recognise the importance of skills development in a classroom context, in areas such as: engagement, levels of interaction, questioning, positive atmosphere, teacher expectations and challenge (Mujis and Reynolds 2005). The central importance of interpersonal and intrapersonal skills in both teaching and school leadership is now recognised (e.g. West-Burnham, 2002, West-Burnham 2004, West-Burnham and
Ireson 2005; Claxton 2007; Watkins et al. 2007), as is the relationship between values, behaviour, purpose and school improvement (Leithwood et al. 2006; Fullan 2007).

As a ‘toolkit’ of approaches for working on personal effectiveness (at an interpersonal and intrapersonal level) NLP appears to have much to offer, particularly in relation to state management (emotions), influential language, beliefs, values, goal achievement, questioning skills, group rapport and presentation skills (Churches and Terry 2007; Churches 2008). There are also many parallels and potential applications for supporting the development of the social and emotional aspects of learning with children (Department for Children, Schools and Families 2007). Although the potential of NLP in education has been recognised for some time (Tosey and Mathison 2003) it is only recently that NLP has been used on a large scale to support teacher development. Since 2003, over 1,000 teachers and school leaders have received NLP training as part of the UK government’s Fast Track Teaching programme and the London Leadership Strategy. Preliminary qualitative research and evidence (Jones and Attfield 2007; Hutchinson et al. 2006, 2007) suggests that NLP can make a significant contribution to the pedagogy of personalisation and school leadership effectiveness.

What is NLP? A brief outline

The term ‘neuro-linguistic programming’ was first used by Dr Richard Bandler and Professor John Grinder at the University of California in Santa Cruz, in the mid-1970s. Bandler and Grinder wrote a number of books in the late 1970s (e.g. Bandler and Grinder 1975a, 1975b; Grinder et al. 1975; Grinder and Bandler, 1976) and went on to work with several other people, such as Robert Dilts, to develop training in therapy, communication and presentation skills. Bandler and Grinder’s studies differed from other behavioural science research, at the time, in that they were primarily interested in highly effective communicators rather than the study of the general population, or dysfunctional groups. In particular, they were interested in looking at what appeared to make a difference between people who were good and those who were outstanding. To carry out their research they developed a methodology that is known as modelling. Modelling as a research methodology emphasises the mapping of phenomenological experience alongside the use of language models. Bandler and Grinder’s interest in this area was inspired by discussions with Gregory Bateson, who encouraged them to begin research in the area of therapy. Their first four books describe in detail their study of Virginia Satir, the family therapist and Milton Erickson, the hypnotherapist.

NLP tools and approaches can be said to fit into four categories.

2. Rapport: approaches for building rapport and influencing others.
3. Flexibility: techniques for developing personal flexibility and awareness of others.
4. Language: language models from hypnosis and therapy.

As well as defining areas of theory and practice in each of these areas there are specific techniques to explore values, challenge limiting beliefs and to develop influencing, communication and motivation (Churches 2008). NLP has not stayed static as a concept, or set of methodologies, and has been constantly evolving since the early publications. In this sense it has many of the characteristics of a ‘community of practice’ (Wenger 1998) rather than a specific theory or set of precepts.

The changing context

One of the reasons for the growing focus on a range of strategies to support effective learning is a significant reorientation of policy in England, which is placing the focus on the learning of the individual child or young person. The antecedents of this policy can be found in the work of Charles Leadbeater who argues that it is now:
“...about understanding and taking time and consideration to learn about what it is that the people we serve in public services really want. At its root, personalisation is about education, about morality, human social goals, connecting with the internal motivations that we need to unlock for people to really learn; it’s about moving from seeing education as meeting and imposing external standards to meet external yardsticks, to working on internal motivation and aspiration. (Leadbeater 2005, p. 14)

That is why we need a new framework to show how personal needs can be taken into account within universal equity and excellence in education. In recent years the policy agenda has grown to recognise the fact that in the context of greater diversity we can only understand these terms by putting the needs and wants of individual learners at the heart of the system. (Leadbeater 2004, p. 6)’

It is this focus on the active engagement of the individual that raises the need to explore personal capacity, strategies and skills. This is in turn reinforced by the principles underpinning the Children’s Plan:

• government does not bring up children – parents do – so government needs to do more to back parents and families
• all children have the potential to succeed and should go as far as their talents can take them
• children and young people need to enjoy their childhood as well as grow up prepared for adult life
• services need to be shaped by and responsive to children, young people and families, not designed around professional boundaries
• it is always better to prevent failure than tackle a crisis later. (Department for Children, Schools and Families 2007, pp. 5–6)

Fundamental to all of these principles is a focus on quality relationships, enhancing personal capacity and engagement; and the pivotal focus on prevention rather than cure (i.e. intervening to prevent failure). NLP can be seen as a perfect example of this approach. What is very clear is a radical shift in emphasis in education policy away from the pupil being taught to the child, or young person, becoming an active learner. Each component of the Children’s Plan sends a very clear signal about a shift in emphasis away from the provider to the client. This in turn implies the need for a substantial empowerment of the client/learner which points to personalising learning.

**Personalising learning**

There is no clear or coherent definition of personalising learning; indeed one of the challenging aspects of the current developments in England is the lack of any consensus about the nature of learning and an enabling rather than prescriptive approach by government. Personalised learning is much more than a portfolio of effective teaching and learning strategies focused on the individual. It is primarily about an ethos, or culture, which is expressed through a number of pivotal components.

1. **Achievement:** personalising learning has to be focused on maximising the achievement of every individual by the full spectrum of definitions – most notably all of the components of Every Child Matters.
2. **Aspiration:** central to personalising learning is a culture of high expectations and aspiration, again expressed in every dimension of a child’s, or young person’s, life but focused in particular on their entitlement to optimum success at school.
3. **Inclusion:** personalisation applies equally to the gifted and talented and those with special needs. In many ways it offers a powerful strategy to ensure optimum provision for all young people, which is geared to their particular needs and talents.
4. Relational: learning is an interpersonal process and personalisation offers scope and opportunities to maximise the quality of learning relationships between learners and all those involved in supporting them including parents and fellow learners.

5. Accountability: personalising learning clarifies personal and professional responsibilities and places a high significance on performance for all those involved in the learning process. It can help to remove dependency across the system and highlight individual outcomes and strategies.

The Gilbert Review (Gilbert 2006) defines personalising learning in the following terms:

‘...personalising learning and teaching means taking a highly structured and responsive approach to each child’s and young person’s learning, in order that all are able to progress, achieve and participate. It means strengthening the link between learning and teaching by engaging pupils – and their parents – as partners in learning. (Gilbert 2006, p. 6)’

The five core components of personalising learning were defined by the (then) Department for Education and Skills (DfES) as:

‘Assessment for learning and the use of evidence and dialogue to identify every pupil’s learning needs and the steps they need to take. Teaching and learning strategies that actively engage and challenge learners and develop their ability to focus on their learning skills and their capabilities to take ownership of their own progress. Curriculum entitlement and choice that allows for breadth of study, personal relevance and flexible curriculum pathways. Creative approaches to school organisation, to enable a student-centred approach which integrates performance with wellbeing and inclusive approaches with attainment. Strong partnerships beyond the classroom, both to enrich learning and support care of pupils in the wider sense through, for example, home-school links, inter-agency work, or community partnerships. (National College for School Leadership 2005, p. 17)’

Any review of the elements required for success in personalising learning has to start with establishing consensus as to the components of the personalising learning process. The Gilbert Review identified existing practice in schools that would point to the following elements being present in varying degrees in many schools:

• pioneering and evaluating approaches to learning how to learn
• using data on pupils’ learning for target-setting, tracking progress and supporting further achievement
• using ICT to enhance collaboration and creative learning
• using timetables flexibly to allow, for example, weeks devoted to intensive study on themed project work
• designing approaches to engaging and raising the achievement of underachieving groups
• establishing curriculum teams of staff and pupils to develop plans for improving learning and teaching
• increasing curriculum breadth by delivering some lessons remotely using video conferencing
• greater use of adults other than teachers to extend the range of skills and support for pupils. (Gilbert 2006 p. 12)
Summarising the various perspectives listed above produces a consensus on the essential components of any approach to personalising learning:

- learning how to learn
- assessment for learning
- a portfolio of effective teaching and learning
- strategies
- curriculum choice
- mentoring and coaching support.

**Leadership, learning and the emotionally intelligent school**

What is clear from the above list is that personalising learning requires a focus on the affective dimension as much as any other aspect of organisational life. This is not an area that will change by virtue of policy or mandate – it has to be rooted in personal behaviours. This in turn places a significant emphasis on the role of school leaders.

First and foremost is the notion of the leader as exemplar, as a model of appropriate behaviour. The natural reticence and shyness of many senior staff in schools leads them to underestimate the importance of their behaviour both as a model and as a sanction (i.e. implicitly condoning certain patterns of behaviour). If a school’s values talk about notions of ‘respect’, ‘community’ etc. then there has to be appropriate leadership behaviour. The ethical imperative has to be matched by morally consistent behaviour. There is, therefore, a moral imperative on school leaders to adopt a model of personal effectiveness, which exemplifies the values of the school and models the translation of principle into practice.

The second factor is both principled and pragmatic. Our growing understanding of neurological functioning points increasingly to the fact that learning is an emotionally based activity (Blakemore and Frith 2005). Effective brain functioning is dependent on a positive emotional environment. Anger, stress and tension will actively block appropriate brain functioning; a positive and relaxed climate will enhance the potential to learn. This applies to adults as much as it does to children. In all of the debate surrounding the concept of the learning organisation (and whether schools can ever achieve that status) the importance of the emotional climate is often overlooked. This is much more than the absence of tension; it is the creation of positive self and mutual regard and this is, in many ways, a product of leadership.

The final point focuses on educational leaders themselves. The discussion so far has tended to focus on the social environment. However, it is important to stress that the mental landscape of the individual is at least as important as the public arena. Leadership effectiveness is a product of personal effectiveness, which is in turn grounded in emotional self-awareness and emotional intelligence. What makes leadership distinctive is the high level of sustained and significant engagement with others. In the course of a day this can involve the extremes of anger and despair, joy and celebration. It is worth reflecting on the number of transactions leaders have each day, each of them rich in potential, each of them a ‘moment of truth’ and every one of them based in perception rather than logic and rationality – or at least in competing rationalities.

The level of demand and impact will, of course, vary over time and context but this aspect of the job of the leader explains why it is both so demanding and challenging and so rich and rewarding. This is also why it is so important to develop leaders who have a traditional range of knowledge, skills and qualities but who are able, in a highly sophisticated way, to create an emotionally mature and intelligent community that enables learning in both curricular and social senses.
NLP and the Fast Track teaching programme

Fast Track teaching is the first accelerated leadership development programme in education in the world. Set up in 2001, by the (then) DfES, the management of the programme transferred to the National College for School Leadership (NCSL) in 2005. Training and professional development provision has been designed and delivered by CfBT Education Trust continuously since 2001. Participants have completed a selection process that includes a behavioural assessment centre. A core part of the professional development programme involves taking on a senior school improvement role early in the teacher’s career, known as the wider school focus. As of September 2008 there will be approximately 1,900 teachers on the programme. Two of the first cohorts graduated in August 2007 and by August 2009 around 2,200 participants will have been on the programme.

Between 15 February 2005 and 27 June 2008 CfBT Education Trust, in collaboration with Evolution Training and Alistair Smith’s training company Alistr Ltd, delivered 2,126 training places on two- and three-day residential courses including NLP tools and techniques (NLP for Teacher and School Leaders; Coaching for Leadership; Making it Happen; Authentic Leadership; Getting your life back (Exploring work life balance)). During this period Fast Track teachers also had the option to attend ten other non-NLP related courses. Prior to this (in 2004), short course NLP sessions were piloted at two residential conference events with 127 Fast Track teachers who had opted for these sessions (Developing self-leadership; Using language to develop excellence in others; Communication excellence; Learning from excellence in others).

The original suggestion to include NLP within the Fast Track programme came from a facilitator/trainer, Lynn Murphy, who had industry leadership training experience and from several groups of Fast Track teachers who had experienced NLP training as part of their previous management, sales and consulting training in business and commerce. In its first three years Fast Track drew primarily from career changers with management experience in industry and wider business. Further suggestions to include NLP emerged from evaluation forms and focus group sessions on developing the Fast Track professional development offer led by Richard Churches (national lead consultant for the programme) in April and July 2003. Evaluations of the pilot training sessions were very positive and teachers suggested the inclusion and development of more extensive training in this area. Overall 85 per cent of the ratings for the NLP pilot courses were ‘excellent’ with all evaluation good or better. Research into the effectiveness of the training delivered on the Fast Track Teaching programme has shown a positive impact on teacher and school leader development (Jones and Attfield 2007).

As a result of the initial positive feedback, NLP-related training provision was developed in 2004 to include an International NLP Trainers Association (INLPTA) accredited residential course (NLP for Teachers and School Leaders) as one course option within a menu of 13 residential training courses. NLP for Teachers and School Leaders Level 1 and 2 has been delivered by Roger Terry and Henrie Lidiard since 2004. Over the last four years more than 1,000 Fast Track teachers and other school leaders and teachers have completed the INLPTA accreditation with them. In total, 17 Fast Track courses with INLPTA accreditation have been delivered between May 2006 and June 2008 with a further four events planned for the academic year 2008–09. Including the four other residential courses containing NLP tools and techniques, 75 two- and three-day residential courses, including NLP, have been delivered. This number will exceed 90 by the end of 2009. Although this represents only approximately 30 per cent of residential training provision during this period, NLP has been regularly pointed to as having had a significant impact in both post-event evaluations and in case study research (Jones and Attfield 2007) through face-to-face interview. Twelve Fast Track teachers are known to have gone on to complete INLPTA Practitioner or Master Practitioner training, which covers the broader and more advanced applications of NLP. Completion of this level of training requires a substantial investment of personal time and finance. INLPTA accredited Practitioner level training is usually 14 days in duration and Master Practitioner a further 19 days, approximately. In 2008 costs of training to Master Practitioner level varied from £4,000 to £5,000. Initially, NLP was included in Fast Track from a leadership development perspective and specifically to meet the need of
supporting Fast Track teachers to develop influencing skills and resilience – drawing on the notion that leadership is about groups, goals and influence (Northouse 2004). In line with the early programme’s development and research philosophy – of evaluating through a pilot before scaling up, the INLPTA accredited course was carefully evaluated. Initially the training was delivered as a purely NLP ‘Diploma’ level course in which the tools and techniques were trained without any specific reference to educational contexts. Indeed, neither of the two trainers have a career background as school teachers themselves.

**Researching the potential of NLP in teaching**

In order to support the development of an understanding of the potential of NLP tools, in an education context and to help the ongoing design and development of the training, a data collection and discussion session was added to the final stage of the training. At seven of the INLPTA accredited NLP for Teachers and School Leaders events delivered between May 2004 and December 2006, participants were asked to reflect in groups of six to eight people on the potential application in education of the tools and techniques that they had been trained in over the previous three days. The INLPTA Diploma accreditation requires 30 hours of training and delegates do evening sessions as well as training during the day to ensure coverage. At the beginning of the training teachers identified key areas of challenge and improving effectiveness and then reviewed these goals at the end of the course. This review included the recording of suggestions for the application of approaches and what tools they were going to apply back in their own personal context. Each group recorded their discussions and ideas on flip charts as responses to the question ‘what could you do with this?’ In total 380 delegates took part in this activity. This generated 53 flip charts with 699 individual suggestions that clustered into a total of 155 common suggestions and applications. Fifty-nine suggestions were not included in the analysis as they were too general to be categorised. Subsequent content analysis showed that the ideas generated focused on areas which could be summarised as communication skills, learning to learn and reflective practice. There was a strong emphasis in the areas of: communicating more effectively, managing emotions, behaviour management and questioning skills. This analysis can be found in the full published research paper (Churches and West-Burnham 2008). Specifically, teachers overwhelmingly identified the use of influential language as being most useful in a classroom context. However, there was a wide spread of applications and tools identified. Although by no means an exhaustive or comprehensive piece of research, this suggests strongly that the key benefits of training in NLP in education are likely to be in areas that support existing practice and in the developing of interpersonal capacity and intrapersonal resilience.

One area of NLP that would appear to have immediate application to the personalisation of learning and even one-to-one support in the classroom is metaprogrammes. Metaprogrammes can be seen as preferences for processing information that influence behaviours and as such have a parallel with the concept of traits in applied psychology and schemata from cognitive psychology (Cdaqprofile 2007). Numerous texts have been written about metaprogrammes over the last 30 years and there have been a number of attempts to design psychometric instruments and assess the application of the concept in a range of settings (e.g. Georges 1996; Brown 2002, 2003, 2004). Recently, a personality instrument, Cdaq (Brewerton 2004; Cdaqprofile 2007) has received British Psychological Society ‘three star’ accreditation (Fisher and Parkinson 2004, 2007), which suggests a level of scientific validity and reliability in line with more well know instruments (such as 16PF, Myers Briggs Type Indicator, Occupational Personality Questionnaire and FIRO-B). Research into the development of Cdaq suggested that metaprogrammes might be best understood from a combination of cognitive psychology and social behavioural theories, and specifically from the perspective of information processing (Cdaqprofile 2007). Although there are other commercial questionnaires which claim to measure the concept of metaprogrammes, Cdaq is the only instrument to have the levels of validity and reliability necessary to obtain British Psychological Society validation. Cdaq measures 11 metaprogrammes against a UK and international norm group.
1. Internal–External.
2. People orientation–Activity orientation.
4. Towards–Away from.
5. Same–Difference.
6. Options–Procedures.
8. Active–Reflective.

Significant correlations have been demonstrated between Cdaq dimensions and occupational personality questionnaire (OPQ) dimensions and Myers Briggs type indicator (MBTI) dichotomies. Furthermore, research by Cdaq profile appears to confirm the hypothesis that metaprogrammes are context-dependent patterns in contrast to traits and that therefore they may have more in common with the concept of schemata. A schema is defined as a type of representation that is used to guide actions (Rumelhart and Norman 1983; Norman and Shallice 1986). Piaget (1962) argued that an understanding of schemata is crucial to understanding cognitive development and that schemata are iterative and therefore change over time as new situations and experiences occur – resulting in alterations of mental representation and beliefs about the world. Metaprogrammes appear to have a more robust basis in relation to psychological validity and reliability than more general conceptions of learning style – the effectiveness of which is widely disputed (Davis 1988; Knight 1990; Stahl 2002; Coffield et al. 2004a, 2004b; Hargreaves et al. 2005). Because of their more specific theoretical expression, stronger validity and clearer definition metaprogrammes may be more useful to support individual differentiation and the application of personalised learning strategies. Teacher awareness of the metaprogrammes of children and consequent in the moment adaptations of approach based on these cognitive styles emerged strongly in the research on Fast Track and in subsequent follow-up work with teachers who have taken the NLP for Teachers and School Leaders, Level 2 course. In particular, adapting teaching style to accommodate learners with strong preferences for global (big picture) or specific (detailed) information processing and for children with differing motivational needs (towards (goal orientated) or away from (problem focused and failure noticing)) seems to have the most potential. Other metaprogrammes also appear to have benefits in relation to the planning of learning and the delivery of content (specifically preferences for options or procedures and sorting information by sameness or difference). As yet a detailed formal study of the use of metaprogrammes in pedagogy has yet to take place.

**Suggestions for research**

Research consistently shows that what teachers do in the classroom is at the heart of school effectiveness and that classroom practice is the factor that most influences children’s progress (Muijs and Reynolds 2005). There are a number of key areas of teacher and school leader effectiveness that NLP would appear to have the potential to support.

- The importance of interpersonal and intrapersonal skills, in particular the definition and implementation of agreed models of ‘best practice’ (West-Burnham 2004; West-Burnham and Ireson 2005).
- Effective behaviour management through the application of contingent praise (Brophy 1981), school-wide consistency (Reynolds 1992) and a continuous ‘schedule’ of positive reinforcement (Muijs and Reynolds 2005).
• The effect of body language (Rosenthal and Ambady 1993) and non-verbal warmth (Harris and Rosenthal 1985) on student expectations and self-concept.

• The relationship between self-concept, self-esteem and achievement and the issue of the moral and social status of the individual learner (Muijs 1998; Marsh et al. 2002; Guay et al. 2003) – fundamental to any attempt to personalise learning.

• The effect of teacher expectations on the climate of classrooms and school improvement (Mortimore et al. 1988; Muijs and Reynolds 2005) and negative beliefs and biases (e.g. Brophy and Good 1986).

• Effective questioning (Rosenshine and Furst 1973; Brophy and Good 1986), ‘higher-order’ questions (Mortimore et al. 1988), frequency of questions and detailed questioning approaches (Muijs and Reynolds 2000).

• The central importance of values, moral purpose and spirituality for effective school improvement. This has been demonstrated time and time again, and there is now a substantial body of work that support this (e.g. West-Burnham 2002; Fullan 2003, 2005; Leithwood et al. 2006; West-Burnham and Huws Jones 2007).

• The suggested link between leaders practising and developing behaviours that go with values associated with moral purpose (Fullan 2001) and real breakthroughs in development occurring, from not just from doing, but also from ‘thinking about the doing’ (Fullan 2007).

• The impact on learning of teacher identity, values and beliefs, especially the movement from ‘teacher’ to facilitator (Gudmundsdottir 1990; Pachler et al. 2003; Atkinson 2004; Korthagen 2004; Dragovic 2007).

References


footnote

1A full version of which is available at www.cfbt.com.
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This inaugural issue of the peer reviewed journal, Current Research in NLP, contains proceedings from the First International NLP Research Conference held at the University of Surrey, UK, on 5th July 2008. The conference was organised by the University of Surrey in partnership with the Association for NLP (ANLP International CIC).

The nine papers in this issue contribute to the widely-acknowledged need for a research-minded approach to NLP. The papers illustrate the welcome diversity of NLP usage and include papers by both academic and practitioner researchers, across sectors including education, health, business and psychotherapy. They report variously on NLP practice; conceptual issues; and applications of NLP as research methods.

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