The second cause of the popularity of NLP is the promise of quick and spectacular effects. At NLP courses, and particularly in short films on the internet, we are told we will cope with negative emotions, achieve our goals, have better relations with people, get rid of our fears and other psychological problems, and generally attain a higher quality of life. The effectiveness of NLP techniques is promoted primarily by its practitioners and advocates. However, there is precious little by way of documented studies. An exception is one meta-analysis on the application of NLP techniques in psychotherapy (Zaharia et al., 2015).

The third cause is linked to the "discovery" of the secrets of the mind, hidden to the mere mortal human. For example, observing the movements of eyes, one can, according to Grinder and Bandler, understand whether a given situation is recalled or constructed. If constructed, this can mean that someone is lying. The promise of recognition of lies through observation of eyeball movements is exceptionally attractive.

All of these factors contribute to the popularity of NLP. However, from the scientific perspective, we are dealing with a well-promoted set of techniques which come in small part from science, and their remainder has either not been verified at all, or the results have come back negative.

NLP—a practical guide for users

As we wrote in the introduction, the essence of evidence-based practices is the search for not just any evidence, but the best available evidence. In this chapter we have presented the evidence available on both the fundamental theoretical assumptions of NLP and the effectiveness of methods applied, as well as those concerning particular techniques. The majority of available evidence from higher levels of the hierarchy indicates that both the assumptions of NLP and the methods and techniques applied within the approach find no confirmation in empirical science. In opposition to the evidence we have presented is evidence located lower in the hierarchy, that is, subjective experiences of particular practitioners of NLP. At the same time, qualitative analysis of NLP techniques indicates that there are more cohesive and tested methods we may draw on science for.

Managers and engineers seeking to retain an evidence-based approach in working with people, during training exercises, or as part of self-development initiatives should rather look to methods whose effectiveness has been confirmed in multiple studies. This will save them time, as well as provide them with greater effectiveness and coherence in their undertakings.

Some common characteristics of pseudoscientific approaches, which we consider NLP to be, allow practitioners to effectively identify them, and facilitate selecting the most effective. Pseudoscientific methods based

on evidence low in the hierarchy or simply without any evidence in support most frequently:

1. promise rapid effects incongruent with those which are presently applied broadly;
2. are very frequently characterised as breakthrough methods in a given field of knowledge;
3. develop primarily outside of mainstream research in a given field, because science rather quickly establishes their usefulness and rejects them as unpromising;
4. explain the reluctance of scientists to engage them in terms of threat, conservatism, and the absence of sufficient competence to assess "innovative" methods;
5. as opposed to science, frequently have little or no roots in the past, which is visible in the lack of bibliographies in papers by their proponents;
6. create an internal jargon that is frequently incomprehensible for outsiders;
7. create (usually at a cost) systems for education and certification, and their methods are frequently subject to copyrights, patents, and trademarks.

The greater the number of these traits characterise the present approach on the market to trainings, the higher the probability that we are dealing with pseudoscience packed in a colourful, shiny box whose contents will not live up to the promises of its marketing.

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