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### **NLP and TA**

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# NLP and TA

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## Abstract

*In this paper it is presented an eagle eye view of reality and fantasy, followed by the presentation of the two trends - NLP and TA. Neuro Linguistic Programing and Transactional Analysis are rooted in two metaphors: mind as map and mind as computer. Their concepts are selectively described with the help of a movie: Finding Neverland (2004). In a nutshell, the world is like a web of thread, lile a web of concepts, disposed in an orderly contradicton.*

## Keywords:

*TA (Transactional Analysis), NLP (Neuro Linguistic Programming), reality, hiperreality,*

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## Introduction

My presentation is based on the following three points of view:

**Peter Pan** (2003) is a movie about a boy who refuses to grow up. He spends most of his time on a magical island – **Neverland** – the place where mermaids and fairies live. **Peter Pan** is the leader of **The Lost Boys** and he is fighting against **Captain Hook**, the leader of the **Pirates**. However, from time to time, Peter returns in the real world – in **Kensington Gardens** – where **Wendy, John and Michael** grow up in the Darling's family. So, Peter invites Wendy, John and Michael to Neverland to tell stories. Once there, Wendy, John and Michael help Peter Pan to defeat Captain Hook. But, once Captain Hook is defeated, they return to Kensington Gardens, taking with them the Lost Boys, while Peter Pan continues his adventures in Neverland.

**Finding Neverland** (2004) is a film about the life and the work of the playwright **James Matthew Barrie**. After the failure of his play **Little Mary**, Barrie meets the **Llewellyn Davies'** family in **Kensington Gardens: Michael, Jack, George, Peter** – the four boys, and **Sylvia** – the mother. From now on, he becomes a platonic lover for Sylvia and a faithful playmate for the boys. The plays with these children are inspiring him to write the play "**Peter Pan**", named after the young Llewellyn Davies. However, after the success of the play, **Mary** – his wife, being neglected, divorces him; and Sylvia – his lover, being sick, dies. In Sylvia's will both James Barrie and **Emma du Maurier** – Sylvia's mother – will take care of the children, a fact agreeable to both.

**Lost Boys** (2004) is an article written by Anthony Lane that depicts also the lives of Llewellyn Davies' family. When **Peter Pan** is played for the first time, Arthur – the husband of Sylvia – is still alive. In 1907 **Arthur** dies from cancer of the jaw. In 1910 **Sylvia** dies of lung cancer. In 1915 **George** is killed in the First World War. In 1921 **Michael** is drowned while swimming with a friend. And in 1960 **Peter**, an esteemed publisher, commits suicide on a subway train in London.

## The framework

**Jean Baudrillard**, in *Simulacra and Simulation* (1981), presents the relationship between fantasy and reality (Richard Lane, 2000, chapter 5)

At the first level, labeled “**reality**” there is an identity between the world and the representation of it: thinking means existing (“**I think, so I am**” is the conclusion of Rene Descartes). And the article “**The Lost Boys**” (2004) is written with a modern feather

At the second level, there is a clear distinction between “**reality**” and “**maps**”: you could draw many maps on the same reality; or you could have on the same map many realities; so, there is an incomplete match between the world and the representation: thinking differ from existing (Alfred Korzybski became famous with “**The map is not the territory**”) This is the case of “**Finding Neverland**” (2004)

Finally, the third level is labeled “**hiperreality**” because the world doesn’t exist any more: the only thing that matter is the representation. A representation is a representation of another representation and so on and on – like the albums of great pictures sold all over the world are the representations of the already mentioned great pictures; and those albums could, also, be faked and sold with a cheaper price. So, the only thing that exists is the process of thinking (and we would agree with G W F Hegel and his “**The Spirit exists alone**”) And this is beautifully depicted in the movie “**Peter Pan**” (2003)

## Mind as maps and Mind as computers

Alfred Korzybski was among the first to establish the relationship between maps and realities. In his work three assumptions are powerful: “**the map is not the territory**”, “**the map depicts parts of the territory**” and “**maps of maps condense the territory**”. But only the first is largely used

The model of the mind as map, depicted by Alfred Korzybski, was reconsidered by George Miller, Eugen Galanter and Karl Pribram as the mind as computer. To the notion of organism, they added other notions: the inputs and the outputs. So, the generic T.O.T.E. is a) **T means test**, b) **E means exit** – these two steps being the inputs and the outputs, and c) **O means operate** – or, the intervention of the organism

These distinctions are applicable both to **TA (Transactional Analysis)** and to **NLP (Neuro Linguistic Programming)**. There are many differences between these two approaches starting from the techniques used and ending to the background area stated – the psychoanalysis for TA, and cybernetics for NLP. However, as modus operandi, NLP is concerned with the relationship between parts and whole, while TA is concerned with the relationship between causes and effects

Near the end of the movie **“Finding Neverland” (2004)** is a dialogue between James and Sylvia, about change. In fact, they are disputing what should be dream and what should be reality

**Sylvia** “You showed us we can change things by simply believing them to be different”

**James** “A lot of things, Sylvia, not everything”

**Sylvia** “But the things that matter”

### Neuro Linguistic Programming

NLP was born as an alternative school to psychotherapy. It was initiated by **John Grinder** and **Richard Bandler**. However, there are many more contributors to this school as: **Gregory Bateson, Virginia Satir, Fritz Perls, Milton Erickson, Robert Dilts**, and so on and on. Below I present a table with the main concepts. However, I describe only the bold concepts.

Vision		Outcomes
Mission	Self	
Beliefs	Presuppositions	
	Strategies Levels & parts	
Capabilities	Models Imprints Anchors Frames Filters Generalization Distortion	

Behavior	Deletion				
	Rapport VAKOG				
Environment				Symbols	
	Ego	Alter	General ized Other	Culture	Nature

**Outcomes.** The term is used generically to embrace **goals, intentions, desires, responses**, and so forth and so on (Harry Alder, 2002, p 28)

Everyone in the movie has at least one outcome: Charles Frohman (the theater’s owner) wants good investments, James Barrie wants good plays, Mary Barrie wants a faithful husband, Sylvia Llewellyn Davies wants a platonic lover, Michael, Jack, George and Peter Llewellyn Davies want a faithful playmate. And the list can continue

**Self.** The self is composed of two parts: the **mind** that is expressing through verbal language; and the **body** that is impressing through non-verbal language (Ian McDemott, 2001, pp. 67-85)

The great question in Finding Neverland is “Who is Peter Pan”? At the beginning of the movie, we find that Peter Llewellyn Davies is Peter Pan. Peter has lost his father and is trying to grow up quickly. But, surprisingly, at the end of the movie, we find that James Matthew Barrie is Peter Pan. James has lost his brother and he refused to ever grow up. In the first case, the time is stopped because the boy wants to grow up too fast, while in the second case, the time is stopped because the boy refuses to grow up at all

**Presuppositions** relate to **beliefs and values** embedded in the structure of **knowledge**. They can’t be proved to be wrong or false; but they role is to be the foundation of the future knowledge. NLP has 4 presuppositions: 1) the maps is not the territory, 2) the mind and the body are systemic processes, 3) all behavior is positively intentioned and 4) to adapt and to survive someone needs to be flexible ([www.nlpu.com](http://www.nlpu.com))

The most powerful presupposition found in Finding Neverland is: the map is not the territory. Porthos, the dog, the Newfoundland’s dog, could be a bear (James is scandalized: “Porthos is dreaming of being

a bear and you want to dash those dreams saying he is just a dog?”) or it could be a nanny (on the stage full of actors, James presents the fluffy dog as the lovely nanny)

**Models.** NLP describes three perceptual positions from which the information could be gathered and interpreted: the **first position** (eg. the actors) the **second position** (eg the director) and the **third position** (eg the audience). Briefly, they are: the self, the other and the generalized other (Philip Hayes, 2006, pp. 55 – 60)

In Finding Neverland (2004) James Barrie is the director. The actors are either his wife, Mary – the main character in the play “Little Mary” or the four Llewellyn Davies’ boys: Michael, Jack, George and Peter – the main characters in the play “Peter Pan”. Of course, the audience is homogeneous: while at the play Little Mary is invited only high society, at the play Peter Pan are invited orphans as well as aristocrats

The relationship, or the **rapport**, between two persons could be of: **pacing, mirroring and leading** (Philip Hayes, 2006, pp 30 -50)

The movie depicts the changes of Peter Llewellyn Davies from a child to a grown up. We meet Peter as a boy pacing his mother and grandmother. Then, he mirrors James writing a play. And we leave Peter as a grown up, leading his mother, his grandmother and James. In a nutshell, James Barrie describes the phenomenon like that: “Young boys should never be sent to bed. They always wake up a day older. And then, before you know it, they’re grown”

The symbols, as the modalities, are filters. The difference is that while the modalities pertain to the behavioral level, the symbols pertain to the environmental level. These filters are constraints placed between maps and territory (Byron Lewis & Frank Pucelik, 1990, pp 20-23)

In Finding Neverland (2004) are many symbols: symbols of an epoch – the horses and the cars, the servants, the dinner, etc; the symbols of classes – some people are rich, some people are poor, etc; symbols of gender – the men’s activities, the women’s dresses, the children’s plays. But the most important symbols are the symbols of fantasy – the way to write a novel or a script. And James Barrie is reflecting on these issues: “Neverland is a wonderful place” where everyone, one day, will come back

## Transactional Analysis

TA was born on the foundation layed down by the freudian psychotherapy. It was initiated by **Eric Berne**, and there are great names between its contributors like: **Thomas Harris, Stephen Karpman, Rene Spitz, Claude Steiner**, and so on and so forth. Below I'll systematize the main concepts into a table, but I'll present only few of them, that are bold marked (Dave Barker, 1979 & Alain Cardon, Vincent Lenhard & Pierre Nicolas, 2002)

	Causes	Effects as causes	Effects
Time	Time structuring	Transactions	Scripts
Space	Life positions	Rackets	
Objects	Ego states	Stamps	
Relationships	Strokes	Games	

**Ego states.** The personality of a human being could be divided in three states: **Parent** – the values espoused by the individual, **Adult** – the cognitions of the individual, and **Child** – the emotions. It could be drawn a parallel between the vision of Freud and the vision of Berne. While Freud presented the personality divided between id-ego-superego, Berne divided the personality between child-adult-parent

In Finding Neverland, Peter is the child and James is the adult. The “crime” of the four Lewellyn brothers is being “children”, a fact that James could not change. However, James is a “writer”, a famous “playwriter”, a fact that the Lewellyn boys find “amazing”.

**Life positions.** Harris, in his book “I’m OK, You’re OK”, presents 4 life position. These positions are relationships between ego and alter, so between two persons. For example, **I’m OK, you’re Ok** is expressed in the formula “we are the champions”, **I’m Ok, you’re not OK** is expressed as “It’s only your fault”, **I’m not OK, you’re OK** is expressed as “It’s only my fault”, and, finally, **I’m not OK, you’re not Ok** is expressed in the formula “we are the losers”



It's easy to discover, in *Finding Neverland*, that Peter has a life position of a victim (I'm not OK, you're not OK), while James has a life position of a rescuer (I'm OK, you're not OK). Peter, while playing indians and cowboys, shouts at James that "you are not my father", so "I'm not your son". James, however, trying to "teach Peter as his own son" recognizes that Peter is a "different boy since his father died"

**Strokes** are the exchange of forms of recognition. They were first defined by Rene Spitz. They were defined in many ways, but the most common classification is that of being an doing. Both these two forms could be positive or negative

So, James gives Peter positive strokes of being – "I teach you as my son", and positive strokes of doing – he gives Peter a journal to start a carrer as a writer. More than that, it's worth to mention that Peter gives James negative strokes of being – "You are not my father", but positive strokes of doing – he accept the journal and accept the challenge to become a writer

**Time structuring.** The question "how our time is structured?" has many answers spreaded on an axis starting "**with the others**" and ending "**without the others**". So, there are many forms to structure the time: **withdrawal** means having no contact with others, while **intimacy** means having loving contacts with others; these two are the oposites of the axis. In between there are many other forms like: rituals, activities and pastimes. It's worth mentioning that the **activities** are in the middle of the axis, and they could be exemplified with the "work" and "hobbies"

In *Finding Neverland*, Peter positions himself "without the others" and James positions himself "with the others": Peter is flighting because his father died, but James is fighting because his brother died. It's a moment, in any play, when Peter withdraw: when James is imagining that his dog is a bear, Peter asks the proof; when the children are playing indians and cowboys, Peter stops the play because James is not his father; when James, Sylvia and his brothers are playing the pirates, Peter withdraws from the play because Peter is Peter and this makes imposible to imagine Peter as a pirate. In what is concerning James, he has closed relationships with two women and four children. The relationships with the women finish dramatically: one of the woman leaves, while the othe woman dies. However, the relationships with the children are continuing in his life and fantasies.

**Script.** A script is a schema, and is used especially in artificial intelligence. It has three levels: the **Needs** – that are evident in the Child ego state, the **Patterns** – used by the Adult ego state, and the **Values** – present in the Parent ego state.

On the one side, the needs of Peter are centered on “faithful playmates”, a fact recognized by Madame du Maurier at the Barrie’s dinner. On the other side, James is full of fantasy, a pattern that made him a great writer: he transformed a dog into a bear; then, the same dog is a nanny; then, he transformed a wood scepter into a gold scepter and so on and on.

### **Conclusion**

The **time** is an ever fascinating subject. It could be heavy like in the case when it is measured with a clepsydra, or it could be light as when measured, in solitary nights, by the light of a candle.. And the same is true for the **space**. It could be an object, like the earth that is gravitating around the sun, or it could be a relation between objects, like the relation between earth and sun.

In sociology is a great debate between **causality**, or the relations between causes and effects – and **meaning**, or the relations between means and goals. Both causality and meaning are related to the debates centered on time and space. When dealing with past events and stable objects, the scientists are dealing with causality. But when dealing with future events and changing objects, the researchers are dealing with meanings

So, **Transactional Analysis** is a domain dealing with causality and objective time and space, while **Neuro Linguistic Programming** is a domain where meaning, and subjective times and spaces are the main concepts.

It is easy to deal with them, when it is not the subject of reflection. Also, it is hard to deal with them, being aware of that. All in all, there are many concepts entangled in a single vision of life, like a texture composed of a web of thread. So, please, try them, buy them and recommend them. It’s worth every single penny

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