

Carol Harris



NLP

made easy

- Straightforward NLP techniques and how to use them
- How NLP can improve your life – with rapid results
- Using NLP to be your best – at work and at home

An easy-to-follow introduction to NLP

Carol Harris

NLP Made Easy

Аннотация

This is the most straightforward introduction to NLP on the market. Leading NLP practitioner Carol Harris explains exactly what NLP is in no-nonsense style. Shying away from complicated terms or hard-to-grasp techniques, she gives practical advice on using NLP in everyday life to get what you want. Contents

Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) focuses on the way we think (Neuro), the Linguistic ways in which we communicate, and the personal Programs that govern the way we behave. By observing and copying the best practices of successful people we can be successful too.

- Discover the history and development of NLP.
- How NLP can improve your life – with rapid results.
- Straightforward NLP techniques and how to use them.
- Using NLP to be your best – at work and at home.
- Advice for those who want to take their interest in NLP further.

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NLP Made Easy



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Preface

My first encounter with NLP was reading the book which many other people had also acquired as their primer – *Frogs into Princes*. This book was both fascinating and confusing; it left many questions unanswered, as it was as a transcript of training rather than a stand-alone publication. However, for me, it was the impetus to further study and led to my professional life having a major focus on NLP.

If this book adds to the store of available knowledge on the subject of NLP, I hope it does so utilizing two concepts which have been important to me personally: structure and simplicity. I have aimed to make the book as straightforward as is possible; I have also aimed to use a structure which is easy to follow and where specific items can be pursued without having to wade through irrelevancies and jargon.

I would like to suggest a key in reading this book – and that is curiosity. Curiosity has long been a cornerstone of NLP. Attitudes of curiosity and exploration have led to the major developments which established NLP as a field in its own right and it is those same attitudes which continue to inform its progress. I would encourage you to approach each section of the book with these attitudes. Once you have read the book, it would be excellent if you could take the attitudes of curiosity and exploration forward into your life, extending your own personal

search for knowledge, experience and creativity.

Finding your Way around this Book

Welcome to *NLP Made Easy*. There are many books on NLP, but what I have aimed at here is to provide a structured guide to the various elements of the topic. For the first time, there is a history of NLP in the UK; most published material has been based on the early origins of NLP in the United States, but it has a sound base in the UK, which deserves to be recorded. For this part of the book I am indebted to the writers who have submitted articles to *Rapport* (the magazine of the Association for Neuro-Linguistic Programming, of which I am the editor), giving their thoughts on the early days of NLP in the UK. I have also aimed to give a rather more detailed explanation of some of the NLP terms than is generally found in book glossaries. NLP can be very jargon-filled, which is perhaps understandable, given its history, but it can easily be practised without the use of complex terminology. However, given that that terminology is part of the inheritance of NLP, in the last section of the book I have provided some simple examples which I hope flesh out the basic terms in an understandable way.

The book is in three main parts:

- ★ Section One is about the origins and development of NLP and contains information on its history, notable people involved in its early development, and models, frameworks and techniques associated with it.

* Section Two is about how you can apply NLP in your own life. This section includes three broad areas: personal growth, social relationships and business situations.

* The appendices outline practical steps you can take if you wish to find out more about NLP, make use of the services of NLP-trained practitioners or pursue professional training in NLP yourself.

Each section has a brief introduction, outlining what is included and giving an overview of the topics covered. A more detailed explanation then follows.

The book can be read in a variety of ways, as each part has been designed to stand alone as well as to integrate with the rest of the book. You can choose to read it from start to finish, or you can select those sections which interest you most. If you prefer, you can look at the applications chapters first and then go back to read about the origins. A few topics are mentioned in more than one part of the book; this is intended to make the various sections as self-contained as possible.

NLP is very grounded in experience and I recommend that you take the time to do some of the exercises and activities. This will make the subject more real for you and give you a feel for how NLP actually works in practice. You might find it helpful to work through some of the exercises with another person and might also like to create a personal action plan, which will help you bring what you learn into everyday use.

I hope you enjoy finding out about this fascinating subject

which has made a tremendous impact on so many people's lives.

Section One

This part of the book is about the history and development of NLP. [Chapter 1](#) begins with some definitions of NLP and then goes on to put NLP in the broader context of developmental techniques. [Chapter 2](#) covers the history of NLP and the contribution made by some of the notable figures in the NLP world. [Chapter 3](#) introduces some of the best-known NLP frameworks, models and techniques.

Because NLP is continuously growing and developing, this section gives only a snapshot taken at the present time; five or ten years from now there will, no doubt, be further changes and innovations. If you are seriously interested in NLP, it is worth keeping up with its development and the appendices give you some ideas on how you can do that.

Chapter 1

What is Neuro-Linguistic Programming?

This chapter introduces you to Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) and gives an outline of where it originated, what it covers and how it works, together with some of its links with other disciplines. It also considers popular misconceptions about NLP and gives a brief guide to ongoing developments in the field.

You probably already ‘do’ NLP and are likely to know a good deal about some of its approaches. This is because NLP has its roots in real-life behaviour, rather than in theory and research. NLP is about how people become successful at things; how they achieve what they aim for and enhance their lives. NLP encompasses a wide variety of processes and techniques, and has an overriding emphasis and approach – that of curiosity, exploration and action. NLP can offer you many things, but it helps if you are willing to be adventurous, open to change and fascinated by life and all that it brings.

NLP’s main aim is to help people get better at what they do. Its focus on performance has a number of principles, some of which are as follows:

- ★ Excellence in performance can be modelled (analysed) and transferred from one person to another.
- ★ High performance requires both the development of skills and development of corresponding mental and physical states.

* Mental and physical states can be broken down into small measurable elements and modified to achieve desired results.

What distinguishes NLP from many other disciplines is its focus on modelling (*see Chapter 3*). Briefly, modelling is the elicitation of sets of patterns; in NLP, patterns which demonstrate how people achieve excellence in performance. These patterns can be copied by others in order to replicate the achievements of high performers. Characteristic features of NLP are its specific techniques for analysing the components of performance, especially how the mind processes information and installs strategies for achievement. It can do this across all areas of personal and professional performance, including motivation, learning, maintaining good health, sports performance, communication, negotiating, public speaking, teambuilding and change management.

NLP's processes of modelling are distinct from NLP's applications (for example techniques for enhancing sales, negotiating, teaching and so forth). Many people believe that NLP *is* its techniques, but the techniques are simply a minor part of a field of study which is, in essence, a holistic and systemic approach to understanding personal and organizational effectiveness.

Richard Bandler, a co-founder of NLP, has been quoted as saying that, to master NLP, it is necessary to 'let it completely permeate your thinking and feeling' and that it involves 'a ferocious spirit of "going for it" – characteristics of "excitement,"'

“curiosity,” “high level state management of your own moods,” “passion” and “commitment” (Michael L. Hall, *The Spirit of NLP*, The Anglo-American Book Co Ltd, 1996). John Grinder, another co-founder of NLP, says that people wanting to train or represent NLP in any way ‘need to possess qualities of personal congruity, sparkling intelligence, a deep bottomless curiosity, a driving desire to discover new patterning, a phobic class response to repeating themselves, a continuous scanning for evidence that they are mistaken in every aspect of their personal and professional beliefs, solid personal ethics, physical fitness, actual real world experience in any field in which they intend to present NLP and an excellent sense of humour’ (Internet interview – Inspirative 1996).

NLP provides ways of helping anyone become more competent at what they do, more in control of their thoughts, feelings and actions, more positive in their approach to life and better able to achieve results. If people do not have, within themselves, the knowledge or resources to achieve what they want, NLP makes it possible for them to adapt other people’s skills and ways of thinking and incorporate them within their own lives in order to be more successful. NLP is, as one definition has succinctly put it, ‘the Art and Science of Excellence’.

Definitions

Because of its nature, different people perceive different things in NLP and gain different things from it; definitions of NLP, therefore, are numerous and varied. As well as the one given above, they have included the following:

- ★ ‘an attitude which is an insatiable curiosity about human beings with a methodology that leaves behind it a trail of techniques’ (Richard Bandler)

- ★ ‘an owner’s guide to the mind’

- ★ ‘the study of subjective experience’

- ★ ‘the study of the structure of subjectivity’ (Dilts, Bandler, Grinder, DeLozier, *Neuro-Linguistic Programming: Volume 1*)

- ★ ‘software for the brain’

- ★ ‘a new Science of Achievement’

- ★ ‘the study of human excellence’

- ★ ‘the ability to be your best more often’

- ★ ‘the science that teaches how to use the neurological and linguistic resources in order to follow the program of self preservation, health and happiness in union with other people and nature’ (Luis Jorge Gonzales)

- ★ ‘a manual for the structured use of creativity’ (Roz Carroll)

- ★ ‘how to think positively so you can enhance your performance’

- ★ ‘an adventure in experience’

As most of these definitions focus on personal improvement, one way of thinking of NLP is to consider it as providing a way of helping people move from situations which could be improved to situations which are better. Whereas other disciplines, such as psychology, give insights into human behaviour and motivation, NLP actually provides practical ways of improving performance. So it incorporates a technology for bringing about change in people, a set of approaches and tools which combine to offer ideas and skills for enhancing how people do things.

This can be summed up by saying that NLP helps people identify their present states (how they think and feel, what they do and the results they achieve), consider their desired states (what they would really like instead) and learn how to move from one to the other. It is not prescriptive about what the desired states should be, leaving that to the individual. For example, two people might both wish to become better at responding to other people's criticism. The first person might become upset when criticized (their 'present state') and wish to 'be able to accept criticism in a positive way', while the second person might become defensive when criticized and wish to 'be able to be receptive and use the criticism to bring about personal change'. Both people could be helped to achieve their aims using NLP techniques, but NLP does not tell them that one aim is 'correct' or 'more desirable' than another (although it can help them consider the advantages and disadvantages of each).

To achieve the transition from present state to desired state,

there are three elements which NLP considers: *you* (your own situation and disposition); *others* (those with whom you are dealing) and *flexibility* (the possibility of varying what you do in order to be effective).

Origins

We will be covering the history of NLP in the next chapter; the following is just a very brief outline to put the rest of this chapter into context.

NLP in its present form originated in the early 1970s in the USA, although much of it was based on concepts and approaches that were considerably older. The contribution of the founders to NLP as a discrete field of study was twofold: first, the codification, enlargement and extension of previously existing concepts into a practically useful developmental tool; and second, the promotion of ‘modelling’ (*see Chapter 3*) to replicate excellence in performance.

NLP stands for Neuro-Linguistic Programming, a title given to it by two of its major founders, Richard Bandler and John Grinder, although the term ‘neuro-linguistic’ had been coined by Alfred Korzybski much earlier and appeared in print in his book *Science and Sanity* in 1933. *Neuro* relates to the mind and how it works; *linguistic* relates to the ways in which people express or communicate their experience of the world; *programming* relates to the fact that people behave according to personal ‘programmes’ which govern their ways of being in the world. So NLP encompasses the ways in which people think and act in their everyday lives.

California in the 1970s was a hotbed of ideas and activities.

Richard Bandler and John Grinder (see [Chapter 2](#)) began exploring how really effective people achieved their results. They turned their attention to a number of individuals, each of whom excelled in their own field, the three best-known of whom were Milton Erickson, Virginia Satir and Fritz Perls (see [Chapter 2](#)).

In studying these people who excelled in their professions, Bandler and Grinder were curious to explore what was ‘the difference that made the difference’ – in other words what, specifically, led these people to excel. They found that each of their subjects exhibited specific personal patterns of behaviour and thinking, and it is these patterns, with their component elements, which form much of the basis for NLP.

So what are the elements involved in people’s patterns? Although not originally put into a specific unified model, certain discrete elements are involved; in particular thoughts, feelings and behaviour – in other words, how people *think*, how they *feel* and what they *do*. These three elements are the foundation of performance. Other elements can be added, in particular *objectives*, *beliefs/values/attitudes* and *spirituality*. (In taking these elements as key, I have drawn upon the work of David Gordon, Graham Dawes and Robert Dilts, and the next part of this chapter is based especially on the Experiential Dynamics model of Gordon and Dawes; see [Chapter 3](#).)

What Bandler, Grinder and their colleagues noticed was that the people they studied had ways (or patterns) of thinking, feeling and behaving which made them effective. The people

were not always aware of these patterns, but they could be noticed by keen outside observers. The conclusions reached were that once you can observe and describe such patterns, they can be copied by others. This meant that other people could learn to follow the same patterns in order to achieve similar results.

Now there is nothing startlingly new in this process; it is how much learning takes place. For example, to learn how to tie a shoelace a child has to copy (model) how someone else does it. What makes NLP particularly effective is its ability to break performance down into very small elements and to take account of 'internal' processes such as thoughts and feelings, as well as 'external' behaviour, when helping others to learn and develop.

Utilizing and Working with the Patterns

If we take each element of a pattern in turn – objectives, behaviour, thoughts, feelings and beliefs – we can see how NLP enables people to explore and enhance their performance. Later I will be returning to some of these aspects and showing how you can use them personally in your own development.

Objectives

There are already well-established approaches to objective setting, for example the SMART approach (*see [Chapter 6](#)*). NLP goes beyond these, and helps define objectives in a way which makes it much more likely that they will be achieved. To do this, NLP uses what it calls Well Formed Outcomes, or WFOs. The WFO model for setting effective objectives is covered in detail in [Chapter 6](#) and is the foundation for effective NLP work; by ensuring that objectives are well defined, progress and change are facilitated.

Behaviour

Behaviour is the only thing which is observable by others; they cannot see into your mind or know how you are feeling unless you either tell them or show them – and both of these processes (telling and showing) are behaviour. So NLP works with all aspects of behaviour, helping people to observe and respond to behaviour in useful and appropriate ways.

Some specific ways in which NLP works with behaviour are the following:

Helping people to learn skills

This often involves ‘role modelling’ someone with excellent skills in a particular field and learning how to transfer these skills to another person. Examples of this could include playing a musical instrument (finding out which techniques are used by professional musicians and emulating them) or taking part in sports (selecting top performers in different sporting fields – for example golf, athletics, tennis – and breaking down their performance into component parts in order to replicate it).

Creating and maintaining rapport and influence

NLP has specific ways of enhancing rapport and influence, notably the concept of ‘matching’ (or copying) other people in order to make them feel at ease. The idea is that most people feel comfortable with others who are similar to themselves, so by making yourself a little more like another person you can enhance their feelings of comfort and acceptance (*see also Chapter 5*).

Using language to communicate and influence

There are a number of aspects here, including the following:

- ★ recognizing people's personality and motivational patterns through their language patterns
- ★ recognizing which senses people favour or rely on, through listening to the actual words they use
- ★ being able to use either precise or imprecise language where appropriate to achieve particular results
- ★ using indirect language for persuasiveness and influence
- ★ respecting the actual words and phrases used by individuals, as those words represent their experience of reality

Language will be covered in more detail in [Chapters 4–6](#).

Thoughts

The elements of thought involve seeing (visualizing), hearing (imagining sounds or having ‘internal conversations’ or dialogue in one’s head), experiencing sensations (emotional or tactile), sensing smells or sensing tastes. In each of these areas, NLP enables people to notice their thoughts and then, if needed, to modify them and thereby their experience.

For example, you might ask someone to think about a flower. First they can imagine how the flower looks (its colour and shape), then imagine how it smells (its scent), then imagine how it feels (its form and texture), then imagine how it sounds (perhaps its leaves rustling in a breeze), then imagine how it tastes (some flowers are edible!) So far, the experience has been imitating reality – you have asked the person to imagine a real flower, as it is usually perceived. Now for the interesting part: you can ask the person to manipulate their mental experience to create something entirely new. So, for example, you might ask the person to imagine the flower a different colour, a different size, with a different smell, making an unusual sound, and so forth. The ability of the mind to make these changes is a foundation for learning and innovation, and if you have never experimented in such a manner, you may be amazed at the changes in experience which such shifts can bring about.

Because of its ability to manipulate the senses, NLP can help

people create more (or less) pleasant experiences for themselves. And in case you are wondering why they should want to create a less pleasant experience, think of how to teach someone to avoid putting their hand in a hot fire, or how to make sure they don't drive after they have been drinking.

Feelings

NLP was largely founded on the activities of therapists and it has continued to emphasize the importance of a balanced emotional state in achieving effective performance. It has techniques for managing emotions, many of them involving the sensory shifts referred to in the previous section. Emotional responses are often brought about by thoughts and are certainly closely linked to them, so by changing thought patterns it is often easy to change emotional responses.

Another way in which NLP engages the emotions is through its association with behaviour. Because there is a close link between body and mind, by making changes in the body, changes in the mind – and thereby the emotions – often follow. An example of this is posture. Most people have habitual postures associated with different emotional states, for example being more upright when energetic and taking up less space when apprehensive. By changing posture it is possible to change the thoughts and feelings which follow. So, to get someone to feel more energetic, it is possible to identify their personal posture for energy and then help them re-create it; once they have done so, they are more likely to feel energetic. The same goes for states such as calmness, relaxation, motivation, enthusiasm and so forth – certain postures are more likely to produce each of these states in a given person.

Beliefs

One of NLP's strengths is its ability to influence change at deep levels. Although change can be brought about by teaching people new skills, it is beliefs, values and assumptions which are the foundation of each individual.

Much of NLP is about changes in beliefs, values and attitudes, sometimes direct and sometimes indirect. For example, a direct belief change could be brought about by confronting a person with an example which contradicts their previous experience; maybe showing them a yellow tomato if they believed tomatoes were always red or encouraging a person from a minority group to apply for (and get) a senior job which they had believed was beyond their reach. An indirect belief change could be brought about through exposing a person to different learning situations which, cumulatively, resulted in them changing their beliefs, for example giving a person who believed they were poor at public speaking the opportunity to practise until they were convinced they could do it. Equally, assumptions may be changed when a person gains a different perspective on a situation, for example a person who thinks a neighbour is being indifferent to them, but then finds out the person is hard of hearing and has not been able to hear what is being said.

The interesting thing about the way in which NLP works to effect such changes is that it can help people experience

changes in their mind, rather than having to put them in ‘real-life’ situations to face real (or imagined) obstacles. It has been found that people have actual mental ‘locations’ for beliefs and that by helping a person to locate and utilize these locations, it is possible to influence the strength of their beliefs.

Spirituality

NLP also offers ways of exploring what is 'beyond' everyday experience. Spirituality is a rather different concept from the other elements I have been discussing, ie behaviour, thoughts, feelings and beliefs. These elements are easier to communicate, as people are likely to have more of a shared understanding of them. For example, in discussing behaviour, it is relatively easy to discuss whether a shop assistant has been helpful or uninterested, or whether a student is listening or distracted; these things are relatively easy to observe and construe. With spirituality, however, each person's experience is both 'internal' and personal and the vocabulary with which to discuss it is frequently more limited.

For example, two people may visit an area of countryside where they can enjoy seeing the landscape, hearing the sounds of animals, feeling the sunshine and being aware of the scents in the air. One person may simply experience this as a pleasant day out; for the other person the outing may provide an awareness of something beyond the immediate experience, perhaps a sense of fulfilment, of integration, or of a power or quality which permeates the senses. While being acutely conscious of this personal experience, it may be difficult for the second person to explain in everyday language what their awareness actually is.

Despite these limitations, many people working with NLP are

helping others to develop their spiritual sense and awareness.

Features of NLP

NLP has some specific features which mark it out; other disciplines may have one or more of these, but the combination of all makes NLP distinctive. What are these features?

It takes a holistic approach

NLP takes the view that all parts of a person are interrelated and that changes in one part impinge or reflect on all the others. This approach ensures that the overall consequences of any change process is considered.

It works with micro-details

In contrast to being holistic, NLP is also often concerned with minute detail. An example of this is the way in which it works with specific elements of thought processes, such as how people visualize and how they use ‘internal dialogue’. NLP enables people to analyse such processes in a way that helps them be more effective. Working with detail often helps understanding and assimilation and makes it possible to work on one element at a time, rather than being swamped by multiple activities.

It is based on competency and role modelling

NLP is very much to do with individual skills and abilities. In this respect it ties in well with current approaches to training and development. The foundation of NLP is ‘modelling’ (see [Chapter 3](#)), especially ‘role modelling’ effective people, finding out precisely which elements of their performance are contributing to their success, and then helping others to perform in a similar manner.

It focuses on mental processing

Although a good deal of NLP is about behaviour, much of it is about how people's thoughts influence their performance. NLP offers ways of modifying mental patterns (or strategies) and helping people make changes in these to help enhance their lives.

It utilizes specific language patterns

Utilization of language patterns provides powerful techniques for interacting with others and bringing about change. NLP has a wide range of language processes and patterns that can be applied in a variety of contexts.

It works with both the conscious and the unconscious mind

The terms ‘conscious’ and ‘unconscious’ have been used in various parts of this book. The state of consciousness is generally recognizable as an awareness of oneself or elements in one’s environment (or beyond).

The term ‘unconscious’ is commonly applied to states such as sleep, anaesthesia or fainting, but can also be used to describe mental processes that are ‘out of awareness’. These ‘out-of-awareness’ processes can include a wide range of things; for example having a mannerism of which one is not consciously aware, becoming familiar with a language simply by being exposed to hearing it rather than consciously taking time to learn the words or grammar, or responding to something in an automatic way without being aware of why that is happening (for example considering a person attractive because the pupils of their eyes are dilated, but not being aware that that fact is influencing your reaction).

Although there are differing views on how, or whether, unconscious processes actually exist (they could simply be pre-programmed behaviour rather than evidence of an ‘unconscious’ part of the mind), there is a general acceptance that the unconscious mind does exist and has a powerful influence on our attitudes and behaviour. This influence may be either positive or

negative, resulting in behaviour which either achieves beneficial results or hinders them. The recognition of the influence of the unconscious mind informs much of NLP's work, so that, although it is possible to use NLP to work solely at a conscious level, for example to break down a skill into concrete parts in order to teach it, it is probably most effective when it integrates conscious/unconscious processing. For example, when teaching a skill to people who believe that they will find it hard to learn, it is possible to manage the process of teaching so that it incorporates elements which reach the unconscious mind and are directly absorbed by the learner at a deep level.

A note of caution should be added here. Because some techniques appear to work directly at an unconscious level, bypassing conscious awareness, they could be open to misuse or could inadvertently cause undesirable results. Such techniques should therefore only be used after sufficient training and with the safeguards of respect and concern for the person who is 'on the receiving end'. For this reason, certain techniques have only been described in outline in this book, so that they will not be practised without sufficient guidance and skill.

It is rapid in its processes and results

A major feature of NLP is the speed with which it can produce results. Many NLP techniques are extremely rapid in their application (the most famous probably being the ‘fast phobia cure’, which can successfully be carried out in a matter of minutes). Because of the speed of such processes, many people do not believe they can really work and are therefore sceptical about NLP as a whole. Current thinking, however, is that the brain works (and learns) speedily and therefore change can be brought about rapidly. This is in contradiction to many traditional approaches, especially that of psychoanalysis, which maintain that lengthy courses of treatment – often running into years – and taking people back into the past, instead of having the future focus that is characteristic of NLP, are necessary to bring about insight and change.

It is neutral as an approach

NLP as an approach is neutral. It is a tool, not a prescription. How NLP is used depends entirely on the practitioner and the user/client. There are as many ways of using NLP as there are people working with it.

It is respectful in how it treats people

An interesting thing about NLP is that one of its principles involves respect for others; its importance is instilled from the early stages in training. Because of this, attention is paid to what is termed 'ecology', which in NLP means the circumstances surrounding any particular intervention. To be ecological means considering the broader context of an intervention, paying attention to the needs and wishes of the person/s with whom you are working, taking into account their point of view as well as your own beliefs about what is desirable. This emphasis on ethics makes NLP stand out from many other disciplines.

Presuppositions

Another feature of NLP is its 'presuppositions'. These are statements which are not necessarily held to be 'true', but used as *assumptions* which influence strongly the behaviour and responses of those using NLP. Here are some of NLP's commonest presuppositions:

Experience has structure

There are patterns to how we think about/organize our experience, and if we change these patterns, our experience changes with it.

A map is not the territory

People's perceptions are subjective; what you perceive is selective, not a complete, or necessarily true, account of reality. So, for example, a colour-blind person would not perceive certain distinctions in colour, but this does not mean they do not exist. Similarly, a person might construe another's behaviour as malevolent, but this might not be the case. We see and respond according to our own selectively filtered 'maps of the world' and helping people understand theirs, and acknowledge those of others, is a feature of NLP.

The mind and body are one system

What we do with our minds and our bodies is interlinked. For example, sitting in a particular posture can lead us to feel a particular emotion; similarly, a positive thought will have an effect on our physiology. There is currently much emphasis on the interrelation of mind and body on health (for example the use of visualization in helping fight cancer) and the field of PNI (psychoneuroimmunology) is demonstrating such links on an ongoing basis.

People work perfectly

Instead of thinking of people as faulty because they do not do what seems to be appropriate, conventional or effective, it is useful to think of them as being extremely effective at getting particular results, even though these results may not be the 'best' in the circumstances. So, for example, someone who has a phobia, say of spiders, is excellent at maintaining a frightened response; this may be inappropriate for house spiders, but could be a real help in keeping away from poisonous spiders in a tropical country.

If something is possible for one person it is possible for everybody

This does not mean that everyone can be an Olympic athlete, brain surgeon or artist; it simply means that if something *can* be done by one person, then *potentially* everyone could do it, given suitable resources. This presupposition is helpful in encouraging people to extend their performance beyond what they might previously have believed possible.

Everyone has all the resources they need

People have within themselves a vast reservoir of 'internal' abilities and attributes; achievement is generally more about what you bring to a situation than external elements.

There is no failure, only feedback

If you do not achieve what you set out to, this can be taken as useful information to help you in your future endeavours, rather than as evidence that you are incapable of achieving what you desire.

If what you are doing isn't working, do something else

Flexibility is a key to effectiveness; if you vary what you do until you get a result, you are more likely to be effective than if you continue to carry out behaviour which is not getting you to where you want to be.

You do the best you can at the time

Although, with hindsight, many things could be done differently, we can only make the best choice at the time. This does not mean that we always make the ‘right’ decision; simply that decisions are based on ‘best guesses’ at the time. (‘New code’ NLP might take a different view of this and help us listen more to our ‘body signals’, but more of that in [Chapter 3](#).)

Every behaviour has a positive intent

Even the most negative-seeming behaviour is done for a purpose. This is a useful assumption to make when dealing with others, as it enables you to consider why they behave as they do, to explore their real needs and, possibly, to find alternative ways of meeting them.

The meaning of the communication is the response you get

It is the perception of the receiver that determines the effectiveness of interaction, not the intention of the initiator.

Almost all the presuppositions have been debated at length, for example the proposal that all behaviour has a positive intent, or the fact that what is possible for one person is potentially possible for all. However, the point of the presuppositions is to enable people to extend themselves and to perceive opportunities and benefits in situations. By acting as if the presuppositions were true, it is amazing what can be achieved.

Associations

Where did NLP come from? Many of the ideas used in NLP originated in much earlier times. Certainly many of the concepts were known about decades ago and some were mentioned, although in very different terminology, centuries ago. There are, however, a number of specific connections between NLP and other established disciplines, in particular the following:

★ **Applied psychology:** It is easy to think of NLP as a branch of applied psychology. To label it in this way is really to diminish its impact, as it goes beyond the bounds of traditional psychology, but it is probably a good initial way of considering it. One explanation of how NLP goes beyond conventional psychology is as follows: ‘While traditional clinical psychology is primarily concerned with describing difficulties, categorizing them, and searching for historical causes, NLP is interested in *how* our thoughts, actions, and feelings work together right now to produce our experience.’ (Faulkner) There is also a link with psychometric testing (and some Jungian ‘traits’) in the use of one of the NLP language patterns called Meta-Programmes (*see Chapter 5*).

★ **Gestalt psychology/psychotherapy:** One of the early role models for NLP was Fritz Perls, the reputed father of Gestalt psychotherapy. Gestalt relates to the linkages between elements, so that an entity can be understood through the interrelationships

of its parts; the parts alone do not necessarily make sense. (One area of NLP deals with ‘parts’ and that will be covered in more detail in [Chapter 3](#).)

★ **Ericksonian hypnosis:** Another early role model was Milton Erickson and his influence on NLP has been enormous. Unlike classical hypnosis, the Ericksonian approach is seemingly low key and unobtrusive. Much use is made of indirect language, suggestion and utilization of the patient/client/subject’s own patterns of speaking, breathing and moving in order to bring about change. Erickson himself was expert at adapting his approach to the specific needs of the individual with whom he was working and this way of working has informed many of NLP’s later practitioners (although the indirect approach is closely linked with Erickson, he was substantially influenced by classical hypnosis and did use a lot of direct techniques himself).

★ **Systems thinking/cybernetics:** Much of NLP utilizes systems thinking. Work by Ashby, Beer and others has had a major impact on how NLP has developed and been used and many of the NLP models presented in [Chapter 3](#) explore the systemic nature of different areas of experience.

★ **Linguistics:** Much of NLP originated in the work of linguists, including Korzybski and Chomsky. Such people had laid down many of the principles which underlie NLP’s language patterns. Some of the connections which have been made are with the ways in which language represents experience, especially in a metaphorical sense, and the ways in which

language demonstrates people's underlying motivational and Behavioural patterns.

In addition, some topics that are becoming associated with NLP are:

* **Accelerated learning:** Accelerated learning puts much emphasis on the needs of the individual and the helpfulness of recognizing and utilizing individual patterns in order to enhance learning and development. The earliest writer on this topic was the Bulgarian Georgi Lozanov, working in the 1960s, and other famous names in the field are Ostrander, Schroeder and Jenson, who have written at length about how to improve trainer/trainee relationships. In particular, accelerated learning puts the onus on the trainer to ensure that the learner is in a resourceful state in which to learn, and this means that learning is not simply a one-way process of pushing information towards a recipient and hoping it will stick, but involves creating an atmosphere and an environment in which interaction and mutual respect can lead to individual growth.

* **Bodywork:** NLP is increasingly being associated with the field of physical development as well as psychological enhancement. Some examples of current links are the Alexander Technique, Feldenkrais, kinesiology, tai chi, voicework/singing, and so forth. With all of these techniques, practitioners use a mixture of body movement and mental/emotional control to achieve results.

NLP constantly draws upon other disciplines and approaches

to integrate appropriate parts of them with its own ways of working. Because of this, NLP is evolving all the time and, while it remains recognizable, is fluid and flexible.

Misconceptions

Having explained what NLP is, it is also important to mention what NLP is not. There are several popular misconceptions about NLP and the following questions are often asked by people new to NLP:

Isn't NLP just positive thinking?

Well, yes, in a way, but it goes far beyond simply having nice thoughts and actually gives people a way of knowing *what* to do in order to think positively. For example, some years ago a training video was produced on presentation skills. The video told viewers that it was important, when making a presentation, to *feel confident*. However, no advice was offered on how to do that! NLP makes it possible to offer such advice by being able to identify specific things that can be done to master thoughts and feelings as well as behaviour.

Isn't NLP manipulative?

Most things can be used in a manipulative way, although they themselves are simply neutral tools. For example a motor car can be driven in such a way that it becomes a hazard, or a person collecting money for an animal charity could take along a sorry-looking small furry animal to elicit feelings of sympathy in passers by. NLP as an approach, like the motor car or the small animal, is neutral; it does not impose rules for its use. So how you use NLP is as important as what you use it for; it is ultimately up to you to determine whether it is used ethically or not.

How can NLP be taken seriously if it claims to work so quickly?

The problem with this question is that it presupposes certain limitations. If you are used to things taking a long time, speed may be suspicious. For example, you could say it takes years of study to learn the differences between wild plants, but one encounter with a stinging nettle could well imprint its appearance, smell and feel indelibly on your mind! Because conventional psychological approaches have traditionally been time-consuming, it can be difficult to believe that work with NLP can be as fast as it is; the proof, however, is in the results, not in the hype.

Is it really a separate field of study?

This question often comes from people used to thinking about subjects in a very tightly defined way and it has been said that NLP draws on so many other disciplines that it is not a discrete field in itself. Although it has drawn upon many other disciplines, NLP does have unique elements of its own, some of which were covered at the beginning of this chapter in the section on 'Features of NLP'. It is probably the focus on the practical applications of mental processing which most distinguishes NLP from other disciplines. It also has established programmes of study, with recognized qualifications at different levels, making it a discipline which is unique and identifiable.

The Future of NLP

From the start, NLP has been evolving and developing. Its main founders are still active and developing new concepts and approaches, as are others newer to the field. For the future, we can anticipate further refinements, more applications and innovation and creativity in NLP's further development.

Chapter 2

The History of NLP

In the last chapter, some of the origins of NLP were discussed and some people associated with its development mentioned. This section takes a more in-depth look at these origins, both in the USA and the UK, and at some of the people who have been a great influence on the emergence and continuation of NLP, some by contributing new techniques and approaches and some by popularizing NLP to a wider audience.

NLP in the USA

NLP as a defined field of study originated in the USA in the early 1970s although, as mentioned in the last chapter, there were many influences on its development, going back decades (including likely links to US Air Force/CIA research on language, modelling, eye movements and so forth) or, in the case of some of the ideas themselves, centuries.

In the late 1950s, a group of people had come together in Palo Alto, California, in what became known as the Communication Research Project. Led by Gregory Bateson (*see below*) it studied communications, psychotherapy, brief therapy and animal behaviour. A further group was set up later at the Mental Research Institute (MRI), the best-known members of which were Paul Watzlawick and the late David Weakland. This group was generally referred to as the Palo Alto Group. The group looked at the approaches and techniques of current practitioners, including Perls, Satir, Erickson and Huxley, considering what they did and said that had an effect on others; in other words, their processes as well as the content of their communications and activities. The Palo Alto work led to further research at Stanford University and was a major influence on the early developers of NLP.

The focus of activity for NLP itself was, initially, the University at Santa Cruz, California, where the Dean had a vision

of creating an environment where different disciplines, ideas and models could come together in a creative way. This whole area of California was a hotbed of ideas and development, including Santa Cruz, Palo Alto and Big Sur, where the famous Esalen Institute was to be formed. In this climate, a group of people at Santa Cruz became interested in personal enhancement, creativity and communications. The underpinning drive which lay behind most of the group's activities was that of curiosity. This period has been written about in many books on NLP, including *The Wild Days: NLP 1972–1981* by Terrence L. McClendon, which gives a highly personal account of the period.

NLP's best-known founders, Richard Bandler and John Grinder, became part of the wider group at Santa Cruz, working on aspects of development. Bandler studied a range of topics – initially physics and computing, then psychology, philosophy, maths and other subjects. He was also a talented musician. Becoming disillusioned with existing university courses, he explored ways of bringing about practical changes in the fields in which he was working. One of his particular interests was Gestalt psychology and he started to teach seminars in Gestalt Therapy.

Bandler formed a close association with John Grinder, who was Assistant Professor of Linguistics at Santa Cruz. Grinder had gained a PhD in San Francisco, where his language studies included the theories of Noam Chomsky, the American linguist. He had been an interpreter in the US army and had engaged in covert operations. He was very experienced in working with

language through ‘modelling’ (see [Chapter 3](#)), and had learned several languages using this process.

As Bandler had exceptional skills in absorbing other people’s behavioural patterns (in the early days he was referred to as a sponge, because of this ability to ‘become’ another person) and Grinder had great experience of modelling (and was sometimes referred to as a chameleon because of his ability to ‘change his colours without changing himself’), they began working together, with Bandler showing Grinder what he did and Grinder helping him model it. Together they analysed the performance of many people, including some leading therapists – initially Fritz Perls and Virginia Satir, and later Milton Erickson. Although Virginia Satir and Milton Erickson were available face to face, Perls had already died and Bandler’s analysis of how he worked came from studying videotapes of him. It has been reported that Bandler became so focused on Perls that after lengthy periods with the video machine, he would emerge looking and sounding just like Perls, with a German accent and a stoop, and smoking heavily.

Together with Bandler and Grinder, a group formed, working on the various elements which became the foundations of NLP. Each of the emerging techniques was explored and refined on an ongoing basis. As well as working on NLP, people were experimenting with hypnotic techniques and language, including deep trance states, positive and negative hallucination, time distortion and amnesia. Terrence McClendon, in *The Wild Days*, remarks on the association between NLP and hypnosis: ‘You

could say that the NLP techniques are the conscious mind's model of how the unconscious mind works in hypnosis.'

It is difficult to attribute the emergence of a particular NLP technique to a particular 'creator', as the efforts of the whole Santa Cruz group often interrelated in order to allow these forms to emerge. As work continued, the different elements of NLP gradually emerged and many of its original creators and developers are still making further refinements and extensions.

Personal associations were also formed during the period in California. In 1977 Bandler married Leslie Cameron and she became Leslie Cameron Bandler. They were married by Grinder, who was a preacher from the Universal Light Church. The marriage lasted only a year or so. Grinder himself later married Judith DeLozier, with whom he formed Grinder, DeLozier and Associates after parting company with Bandler in the 1980s. His marriage also came to an end some while later and he is now in partnership with Carmen Bostic St Clair.

While they were still working together, Bandler and Grinder set up the Society of Neuro-Linguistic Programming, originally as a partnership between Bandler's company Not Limited and Grinder's company Limited Unlimited. They also formed a publishing company called Meta Publications, which was responsible for many of the notable books in the field of NLP.

In 1977 the Division of Training and Research (DOTAR), a training, development and research operation, was set up in Santa Cruz by Richard Bandler, John Grinder, Judith DeLozier, Leslie

Cameron, Maribeth Anderson, Robert Dilts and David Gordon. This was the first NLP training institute and Leslie Cameron was overall Director, David Gordon was Director of Training and Robert Dilts was Director of Research.

By late 1976, some of the people who had been attending Bandler and Grinder's workshops started to run their own. These people included Byron Lewis, Robert Dilts, Terrence McClendon and Steve Stevens (later Andreas). Also Leslie Cameron Bandler and Judith DeLozier began presenting workshops together.

As the field grew, so some of the original associations began to change and, in particular, the partnership between Richard Bandler and John Grinder came to an end in the early 1980s. Their interests had begun to diverge and they also had different ideas about what the future held in store for NLP. Both, however, continued to be driving forces within NLP and continue to train and write to this day.

NLP was, from its inception, very much about practicalities and application, rather than theory. Questions such as 'How can this be used?' and 'How can this be taught?' were asked frequently. The legacy of the Santa Cruz group lies, at least in part, in the attitudes of curiosity and usefulness which informed its work. As NLP continues to develop, questions about application and transfer are still foremost in the minds of many working in the field.

NLP in the UK

While NLP began life in the USA, the United Kingdom became a focal point for much activity and innovation, with two main strands to its development, involving Eileen Watkins Seymour and Graham Dawes. Together with Gene Early, Ian Cunningham and David Gaster, they made contacts which led to the foundation of the UK Training Centre for Neuro-Linguistic Programming (UKTC).

In Eileen Watkins Seymour's account of how the field developed in Britain, she relates how in 1979 she was contacted by a fellow student on a humanistic psychology master's programme in London and agreed to host a meeting with Gene Early and others who were interested in the subject.

Around a dozen people gathered and from this original meeting a study group was formed, which met on a fortnightly basis. Some of the people involved at that time were Michael Mallows, Willie Monteiro, Graham Dawes, Vivienne Gill, John Watson and Frank Kevlin, who later became Chair of the UK Association for Neuro-Linguistic Programming.

By the following year, members of the group became interested in starting some NLP training and Eileen, Gene Early, Graham Dawes, David Gaster and Ian Cunningham initiated the first Diploma programme in the UK, at the London Business School, and the UK Training Centre (UKTC) was born. The

Diploma programme lasted eight months, with a focus on quality in both the training and the elements surrounding it. At the time it was the only full-scale NLP training anywhere outside North America.

The aim of the UKTC was to grow people, not to make money, and the whole ethos of the organization reflected this. Sessions ran from Friday evening through the entire weekend. The first group consisted of 30 people, many of them therapists, and as well as the weekend training, everyone went to a weekly study group. Early trainers on the programme included Gene Early, Barbara Witney, David Gaster, David Gordon and Robert Dilts. Charlotte Bretto and Dave Dobson were also early trainers. Later, master's programmes were offered, as well as speciality workshops given by visiting trainers from overseas.

By 1987, David Gaster had moved on and Gene Early and Graham Dawes felt it time to hand over the reins. Dudley and Regan Masters, trainers who had graduated from the UKTC, were given the Centre. Eileen was still keen to continue, but decided to 'let go of [her] baby'. The UKTC only lasted for two further years and was then wound up. Dudley and Regan Masters have not been seen on the NLP scene since and word has it that they became born-again Christians. David Gaster, sadly, died a few years ago. Eileen, in conjunction with Clive Digby-Jones (now her husband), founded and still runs the Ravenscroft Centre in London. Graham Dawes continues his activities in NLP, as does Gene Early. Both are respected figures in their

communities.

Several early graduates of the UKTC subsequently set up their own training centres in the UK. Some of the earliest ones were PACE, John Seymour Associates, NLP Training Program, Pace Personal Development and Sensory Systems, as well as associated bodies such as British Hypnosis Research and the Proudfoot School of Hypnosis.

Currently there are over 50 UK training organizations and although it is increasingly difficult to pinpoint individuals or individual organizations as 'leading edge', there are many innovative steps being taken which contribute to the development, and professionalism, of NLP in the UK.

In addition to the training organizations, numerous networking and practice groups have sprung up throughout the UK and these provide an opportunity for people at all levels of experience to meet, exchange ideas and work on their own personal and professional development. The most prominent of these started life as the Paddington Group, meeting near Paddington station in central London in the 1990s. This group introduced a wide range of people to NLP and acted as a forum for prominent practitioners from the UK and outside.

The Association for Neuro-Linguistic Programming (ANLP)

Formed in 1985 as a non-profit making organization, the Association for Neuro-Linguistic Programming was, until recently, a registered educational charity, recognized internationally as probably the leading association for those interested in, and using, NLP. Originally set up by Eileen Whicker following an inaugural meeting at the London Business School on 8 May 1985, it was envisaged as an umbrella organization for the development of NLP; in Eileen's words, 'setting core standards for training and practice, being a basis for exchanging information and experience, creating links with other NLP bodies, setting standards and ethics, promoting research, keeping abreast of legislation and representing NLP in a professional capacity to Government and serving on the Steering Committees then being set up'.

The preparatory meeting held to form the Association was attended by Eileen Whicker, Eileen Watkins Seymour, Basil Jones, Dudley Masters, Valerie Beeby and Surya and John Watson. Support was also obtained from Eric Robbie and Willie Monteiro as well as Gene Early. A steering committee was then set up, consisting of Eileen Whicker, Nigel Gowland, Eileen Watkins Seymour and Roy Johnson, and the first meeting, on 12 April 1985, resulted in an open invitation being sent to other

interested people.

The inaugural meeting was held at the London Business School on 8 May 1985 and around 60 people participated. The first executive committee consisted of: Chair: Eileen Whicker, Vice Chair: Peter Rust, Treasurer: Roy Johnson, Secretary: Regan Masters, Membership Secretary: Paul Clarke. Eric Robbie helped to prepare the Association's first newsletter and Frank Kevlin, later to become Chair, helped set up and print the first issue of *Rapport*, currently a quarterly magazine of international reputation.

From these beginnings, ANLP expanded to around 1,000 members in the late 1990s, worldwide, in all walks of life. After Eileen, Chairs of the Association were Frank Kevlin (who died very tragically at a young age), Sue Burke, Peter Child, Carol Harris and Derek Jackson. In 1996, the Psychotherapy and Counselling Section (PCS), which had existed for several years, became a wholly owned subsidiary company of ANLP, catering for those involved in therapeutic applications and leaving the main body of ANLP covering those in business, personal development work and a myriad of other activities, with its main activities being public information, recognition of training organizations, conference organization and magazine production.

Recently, PCS separated from ANLP, the Association's charitable status stopped and it ceased recognizing training organizations or courses. It is now simply an information and networking organization rather than a professional body. No

longer a leading international entity, its future development is likely to be limited if it pursues its present path.

People

Let us now turn to some other people who were involved in NLP's development, contributed ideas which were seminal to its progress, or helped popularize and promote it as a field of activity.

Richard Bandler and John Grinder

As mentioned above, these two men are recognized as NLP's major co-founders. Although they are generally credited with 'creating NLP', many of its ideas and principles had come from earlier thinkers, or been based on their ideas and writings.

Alfred Korzybski

Recognized as the founding father of general semantics, Count Korzybski had a major effect on the development of NLP and, in particular, the 'Meta-Model' (see [Chapter 3](#)).

Born in Warsaw in 1879, Korzybski trained as an engineer. He served in the First World War, attached to the General Staff Intelligence Department of the Second Russian Army, and later served in the US and Canadian military services, remaining in the USA from 1921. He developed his theory of time-binding around 1921 and published his first book, *Manhood of Humanity*, in 1921 and his most famous work, *Science and Sanity*, in 1933.

Korzybski was founder and Director of the Institute of General Semantics, which was established in 1938 as a centre for training in his work. One of its aims was 'neuro-linguistic' research and education. Korzybski was the first person to use the term 'neuro-linguistic' and it appeared in *Science and Sanity*; he continued to write and lecture until his death in 1950.

Noam Chomsky

Chomsky was a professor of linguistics whose work, based on Korzybski's earlier ideas, was key to much of the development of NLP. Now a revolutionary figure prominent in US politics, he became very anti-establishment at the time of the Vietnam War. Chomsky's work on general semantics first appeared in a range of published papers and culminated in the 1957 publication *Syntactic Structures* (now out of print). This work established the transformational model of language, with its concepts of deep structure and surface structure, elements which feature heavily in NLP's approach to precision in language. Chomsky's 1965 book *Aspects of Theory and Syntax*, published by MIT Press, is an easier publication for the general reader.

Gregory Bateson

Bateson was a British anthropologist and author who influenced several of NLP's leading proponents. His father, a geneticist who coined the word 'genetics', named him after the famous Russian geneticist Gregor Mendel.

Bateson wrote on a range of topics including communications, systems theory/cybernetics, psychology, psychiatry, anthropology, biological evolution and genetics. He received a Guggenheim Fellowship for his first attempts to synthesize cybernetic ideas with anthropological data. He was 'ethnologist' at the Veterans Administration Hospital at Palo Alto from 1949 until 1962. At the time he was married to Margaret Mead, another famous anthropologist, who also worked with him on many projects.

Later, Bateson's communication studies were extended to the animal kingdom and, together with his then wife, Lois, he kept about a dozen octopuses in their living-room! He went on to become director of a dolphin laboratory in the Virgin Islands, where he continued his studies on communications in animals for about a year. In 1963 he went to the Oceanic Institute in Hawaii to work on problems of animal and human communication and it was there that he wrote most of his book *Steps to an Ecology of Mind* (1972).

Bateson also led the Palo Alto Group (*see page 35*) and

lectured at the University of Santa Cruz at the time that Bandler and Grinder were developing NLP. He was a neighbour of Bandler's and it was he who suggested that Bandler and Grinder visit Milton Erickson (*see Erickson, page 40*).

Bateson considered that ideas were not abstract concepts, but the basis for the way people live their lives. He said that people should think and act systemically, by allowing both conscious and unconscious processes to shape their decisions, and by developing congruity in diverse parts of the mind. In the preface to Bateson's *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*, Mark Engel says:

The central idea in this book is that we create the world that we perceive, not because there is no reality outside our heads ... but because we select and edit the reality we see to conform to our beliefs about what sort of world we live in ... For a man to change his basic, perception-determining beliefs ... he must first become aware that reality is not necessarily as he believes it to be.

Carlos Castaneda

An anthropologist and writer whose works greatly influenced Bandler and Grinder and their associates, Castaneda made great use of metaphor, often in conversational dialogues, and some of his ideas were to form the basis for therapeutic interventions. His thoughts on ‘stopping the world’ – a concept where the mind is stilled to allow expansion of consciousness – was one of the underpinning elements of New Code NLP (*see [Chapter 3](#)*).

Ross Ashby, Stafford Beer and Peter Checkland

These systems thinkers and writers have strongly influenced NLP. Ashby originated the Law of Requisite Variety in 1956, emphasizing that it is important to keep exploring variations when working towards results. The principle behind his theory is that, in any system, the part that has the most flexibility will predominate, and as a system becomes more complex, more flexibility is required. Beer provided models which can be used with both individuals and organizations, and Checkland was the developer of 'soft systems' thinking.

Albert Ellis

A psychotherapist, writer and lecturer whose work was a major influence on several people working in NLP, especially Robert Dilts and Judith DeLozier, Ellis felt that traditional therapy sessions were too long and tried a more active approach based on work by early philosophers. His technique – Rational-Emotive Therapy, or RET – was a synthesis of psychology and philosophy. It has been described as ‘perhaps the most widely practised form of the cognitive-behavioural therapies’ (Yankura and Dryden, *Doing RET: Albert Ellis in Action*, Springer Publishing Company, 1990). Ellis concentrated on an individual’s beliefs and identified both rational and irrational beliefs during therapy; his work also incorporated shifts in time in a similar way to that employed by NLP (see [Chapter 3](#)).

Roberto Assagioli

Assagioli is known as the founder of psychosynthesis, on which he published the seminal book in 1965. In recent years, his work has been rediscovered and Michael Hall, an American therapist and NLP trainer, has written of it in the American NLP publication *Anchorpoint*

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