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Butterflies in a Box

THERE ARE RUMOURS that the name was just a joke: *Neuro-linguistic Programming!* However, the label 'NLP' has no doubt helped to successfully market a package of marvellous ideas and techniques. But I want to argue here that the very label that links NLPers throughout the world also causes all their troubles.*

Prelude

In the spring 1977 I took an exam on Bandler and Grinder's *Structure of Magic* as part of my BA in psychology. I was more than excited about their approach: it seemed to me that clinical psychology had at last moved on to its next stage of development. And although I noticed that it was a bit 'far out' for most academics, I was sure that this new paradigm would prevail. The fact that a psychiatry professor nicknamed Bandler and Grinder 'Bandit and Swindler' in class did sting at the time but not yet alarm me.

To read that Bandler and Grinder called their work 'NLP', gave me a strange feeling. But I didn't give it much attention – what's in a name? *Frogs into Princes, Reframing* and *Tranceformations* were totally revolutionary. NLP. *Wow!* It was as if science fiction psychology had become real!

In the first practitioner training on the Continent I met at least ten other psychologists; several hypnotherapists, a body therapist, trainers, psychomotor therapists, linguists, a doctor, a nurse, a Jesuit monk, a behavior therapist, a psychiatrist and some holistic healers. All these pioneers agreed that NLP was new, was fine, was the best.

* Just as we were preparing this article for publication, a letter appeared in the journal of the (British) Society of Authors, recommending NLP – 'a dreadful and off-putting name for a truly remarkable set of techniques ...' (*The Author*, Autumn 2000, p.143).
Editor