

Research Revealed

Current Research in Neuro Linguistic Programming (NLP): VOL. 1 or “Why isn’t NLP taken more seriously?”

By Martin Weaver

On a cold January evening just passed, 40 people across a wide spectrum of NLP activity and even outside the NLP world gathered in a room in Portcullis House at the Houses of Parliament to greet the next big step in the development of NLP.

We’d finally done it. Well, I say “we” and I say “it”, my part in this production was fairly small and came right at the end. Its a journey that began for me in 1999 collecting data, went via the University of Surrey then many hours of writing and re-writing and came to rest at the Houses of Parliament. For the first time in our history we had a peer reviewed research journal all about NLP. To give it a good send off into the world, we choose the centre of London and the seat of democracy.

Our evening was given over to the major players whose vision, commitment, sense

of purpose and positive leadership had resulted in the successful production of the NLP Research Journal.

Karen Moxom set the opening scene like some murky political thriller. “We met in an underground café in Canary Wharf in 2007”. She set out the opening players; Charles Faulkner, Paul Tosey and herself. The outcome was very easy to state: Create a research journal for NLP, the strategy had much more detail. From cafe to International Conference in 2008 to published Journal in 2009 to launch in 2010 – “that is the power of NLP” she reminded us.

She thanked Ann Keen MP who was our host for the evening and told us of all the work that had been undertaken over the past years and outlined the many people involved without whom the Journal would not have been brought into this world.

Her final rationale for all this work was that “research underpins understanding” and that was her main message for the Journal.

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Dr. Paul Tosey set a more sombre scene. He reminded us that this Journal was but a first step. Important it undoubtedly is, there is much more to do. This Journal he said would “increase the quality of the enquiry”. Rigorous, discerning and critical were the qualities he said that NLP requires in the future. He said we should set ourselves the goal of enquiry above that of proof.

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accessible to those outside the world of NLP. This includes those at national policy level who are looking for joint working between academic and real world activity. Like any bridge between two worlds the Journal can help build traffic, trade and understanding to joint working.

He ended by thanking all those involved and by pointing out that there is increased work in academia, more PhDs are being undertaken

and that neuroscience, cognitive linguistics and consciousness studies are all showing support for NLP. This Journal will help make connections between these activists more effective and productive.

“Did you know that the future is less than 200 years old and there is a hidden history of scientific breakthroughs?” Charles Faulkner does and that was the title of his presentation. He talked about the lucky accidents of Fleming with what became penicillin, of the “outsiders” like Freud and Darwin and their theories and discoveries. Sometimes it’s only when we look back, that we can see the paths of discovery that were created, he suggested. Further, we can only notice change when we have evidence to see and experience it. He said that it is only our generation (today) that has the firm idea that the future will be different from today.

By calling on some 2000 years of history he linked our Journal to being on the brink of a paradigm shift like many other shifts; from



Galileo to Newton, from the acceptance of “elements” to the creation of the periodic table. He noted that Bandler and Grinder were outsiders and not scientists, who were taking on a new perspective of the world. Bateson understood this shift in his introduction to “The Structure of Magic.”

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This shift has helped NLP anticipate mirror neurons discovered in the 1990s. Damásio works on the importance of emotions to decision making. Eckmen’s studies state that physiology creates emotions and Seligman’s positive psychology to name a few. NLP is also playing a part in Social Neuroscience.

“We are in the process of making history” he said. Working together and with people outside the field, the curious, the interested, “I can’t think of anything more exciting than doing that and letting you know that you are doing that. Congratulations on this Journal.”

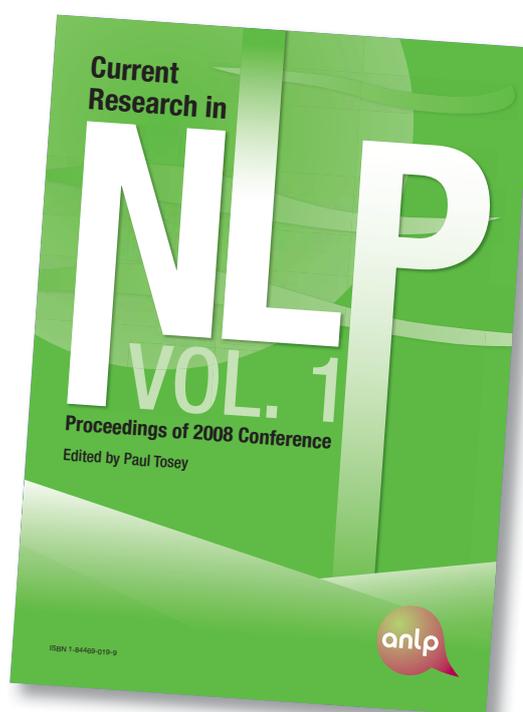
The final and spirited presentation came from Richard Churches. His presentation was called “So what?” We have the journal – so what? It’s a rare occasion for there to be the launch of a new journal in a new field of study, he said. He pointed out that not everyone likes new things and showed us that X-rays, cars, alternating current, the humble light bulb and home computers were all dismissed by quite eminent people at the time.

In education, the existence of research journals is vital to keep the balance between innovation and evidence. NLP, he said “needs to move to the place where theories can be tested and then revised”. In the field of education there is a move to development and research.

The Journal moves from just saying to proof and evidence. Business and Industry want both skills and understanding from their staff with the ability to work in teams and that’s what NLP can deliver. However, he agreed with a quote from The Times that some of NLP is common sense, that a lot is unproven and it’s not mainstream psychology.

He reminded us that NLP has unique points that need to be made more clearly. NLP values first person experience and thus makes it unique and its use of language marks it out as different.

He ended by marking out some challenges; how to stop people



going too far in their explanations of brain function, some of which have been overtaken by new research and the Journal will help those conceptual challenges. We need a balance between innovation and research. Some things may need to be rejected and lastly we need to accept that not everyone in NLP will be happy. We need the Journal to move on and to support us develop NLP.

So that’s why we were there and that’s why so much work has been put into the Journal. Because of the Journal, every Member of Parliament knows about NLP and the ANLP because they were all invited to attend the launch. They are some of the influential people who will help take our NLP philosophy and practice so that it can be applied more widely across business, health care, education, politics and more. As the Journal is read and quoted, so more and different people will hear about NLP and confidence in our work will grow.

And maybe, as the Journal shows that we take our work seriously, so others will do so as well. Pace and lead, pace and lead, pace and lead. ■

The Journal is available as a PDF, or as a bound copy, and can be purchased from the dedicated research conference website, www.nlpresearchconference.com
If you are a member of ANLP you can purchase the bound copy with 40% discount by contacting ANLP direct on **020 3051 6740** or emailing members@anlp.org