

Harold E. Palmer, 1877–1949

RICHARD C. SMITH & IMURA MOTOMICHI



Harold E. Palmer

IN MARCH 1922, Harold E. Palmer arrived in Japan to take up a post as *Eigokkyōju komon* ('Adviser on English Teaching Methods', or, as Palmer preferred to describe his role, 'Linguistic Adviser') to the Ministry of Education (*Mombushō*). The initial arrangement was that he should stay for three years, but he remained committed to his task for fourteen. During this time, he was 'the most outstanding figure on Japan's foreign teacher scene',¹ and the Institute for Research in English Teaching (IRET), which he established in 1923 and directed until his retirement in 1936, carried out work which was to have a strong influence on approaches to teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL, or 'ELT') throughout the world. Before World War II there were no comparable centres of research outside Japan. As his friend Vere Redman was later to say:

Palmer came to Japan as Linguistic Adviser to the *Mombushō*; when he left in 1936, he had become, through the work of the

Institute and his work with and through it, Linguistic Adviser to the whole English-teaching world.²

The work of IRET only began to pay off on a large scale after the Second World War, and this occurred outside rather than within Japan. A. S. Hornby's *Advanced Learner's Dictionary* (which has sold more copies for Oxford University Press in its successive editions than any work other than the Bible) was originally conceived and developed as an innovative IRET project. Indeed, it was largely due to Hornby (Palmer's successor at IRET) that Palmer's ideas influenced the new British ELT enterprise so strongly after World War II. In 1946 Hornby, who had just been appointed 'Linguistic Adviser' to the British Council, founded the journal *English Language Teaching* (now *ELTJ*). In this he was directly inspired by his experience of editing IRET's *Bulletin* between 1936 and 1941. The essentially pragmatic ethos of British ELT in the immediate post-war years reflected Palmer's problem-oriented, non-dogmatic but principled approach. As another leading figure in the field of ELT, Reginald Close, who was the first head of the British Council in Japan after the war, remarked: 'most of what [Palmer] achieved was done in Japan. He was a creative pioneer who blazed a trail which Hornby and his disciples followed with great advantage to all of us who are concerned with English language teaching.'³

THE INVITATION TO JAPAN

As a teacher at University College London (UCL) and the recently established School of Oriental Studies (now SOAS). Palmer had, by the time he was invited to Japan, already gained a reputation as the leading authority of his day on methods of language teaching. He probably first discussed the possibility of visiting Japan with Kinoshita Masao, a colleague of his at both UCL and the School of Oriental Studies (Kinoshita was one of the first teachers of Japanese there). They had previously collaborated on a Japanese Beginner's Vocabulary, and one of Palmer's first publications on language learning and teaching theory (in 1916) had provided examples in Japanese, giving evidence of his longstanding interest in Japanese language and culture (according to his daughter he had been fascinated by Japan since childhood).⁴ More importantly, perhaps, there were many Japanese students of Spoken English in the UCL Department of Phonetics (where Palmer was mainly based); among them were visiting academics, and he was both aware of the favorable reception his recent writings had already gained in Japan and excited by the apparent prospects for reform of English teaching in that context.

Palmer se
absence to vi
tour when, in
Masataro (18
ident of Kyo
course of a v
sities.⁵

Sawayanag
Mombushō, an
for Palmer fo
development
Japanese 'mic
educational f
founder of th
considerable
current statu
(*Teikoku kyōji*)

The invita
practice of i
the moderni
adopted for
English had
then taught
English text
through Engli
of nationalis
declined. Eng
teaching bec
tions. Foreign
who were n
'studying fro
with native
learning *abou*
There wa
as the metho
translation')
century. In
report on th
century two
Okakura Yo
tours of insp
attended un
'natural met
Lambert Sau

guistic Adviser to

a large scale after the rather than within *ary* (which has sold successive editions nally conceived and d, it was largely due Palmer's ideas influ- after World War II. 'Linguistic Adviser' to *sh Language Teaching* y his experience of The essentially prag- -war years reflected rincipled approach. eginald Close, who an after the war, ne in Japan. He was by and his disciples are concerned with

L) and the recently . Palmer had, by the ation as the leading ching. He probably Kinoshita Masao, a of Oriental Studies se there). They had 'ocabulary, and one nd teaching theory ng evidence of his ture (according to childhood).⁴ More tudents of Spoken where Palmer was s, and he was both had already gained reform of English

Palmer seems to have been thinking of taking a year's leave of absence to visit Japan in order to teach English or engage in a lecture tour when, in autumn 1921, Kinoshita introduced him to Sawayanagi Masataro (1865-1927), a former Vice Minister of Education and president of Kyoto Imperial University, who was visiting London in the course of a wider tour of inspection of European schools and universities.⁵

Sawayanagi retained close contacts and some influence with the *Mombushō*, and he proposed that a special advisory position be created for Palmer for a period of three years to undertake research into the development of reformed methods for the teaching of English in Japanese 'middle' (i.e. secondary) schools. Sawayanagi was the leading educational figure of his age: he combined progressive leanings as a founder of the so-called 'Taishō New Movement in Education' with considerable prestige due both to his previous career and to his current status as President of the Imperial Society for Education (*Teikoku kyōikukai*), a nationwide organization of teachers.

The invitation to Palmer was reminiscent of the early Meiji Era practice of importing Western experts (*oyatoi-gaikokujin*) to assist in the modernization of Japan. This approach had not previously been adopted for methods of language teaching since high standards of English had been attained in the Meiji Era as many subjects were then taught in English, particularly at university level. Students read English textbooks in most of their classes, learning 'in English and through English, but never about English'.⁶ However, with the revival of nationalism, Japanese interest in practical foreign language learning declined. English became a compulsory *subject* on the curriculum, and teaching became increasingly geared towards the needs of examinations. Foreign teachers were largely replaced by Japanese teachers who were not always proficient in spoken English. In consequence, 'studying from Japanese textbooks and having infrequent contact with native speakers of English, [students] had reached the stage of learning about English in Japanese'.⁷

There was a worrying decline in standards of English proficiency as the method known as *yakudoku* ('translation-reading', or 'grammar-translation') became dominant towards the end of the nineteenth century. In response, Japanese scholars began to be sent abroad to report on the teaching methods in use there. Around the turn of the century two well-known academics, Kanda Naibu (1857-1923) and Okakura Yoshisaburo (1868-1936), were sent on separate official tours of inspection to Europe, in particular Germany. Kanda, who had attended university in the USA, was already a firm believer in the 'natural method', or 'teaching by conversation' promoted there by Lambert Sauveur (1826-1907), and he continued to advocate this on

his return. On the other hand, Okakura, who spent the years 1902-5 in Europe, found that the German reformers offered an orally-based model which sufficiently emphasized the *educational*, as well as the utilitarian value of English teaching in schools.⁸ Kanda's and Okakura's textbooks were widely used and Okakura, in particular, met with some success in diffusing his ideas as head of the English department at the principal teacher-training institution for secondary schools, the Tokyo Higher Normal School. Nevertheless, as the Taisho Era (1912-26) ended, English teaching in schools had not changed much, and standards of oral English in particular had been little improved. At the same time, the defeat of Germany in World War I had brought a collapse in esteem for German educational models, and a general shift in attention to Britain.

This was the background to the offer of an advisory role to Palmer in autumn 1921. Sawayanagi quickly contacted a wealthy businessman and philanthropist, Matsukata Kojiro, who was visiting London at the time, and Matsukata readily agreed to provide financial backing for the venture. The prospect not only of an exotic location, considerable responsibility and commensurate pay but also of the independence promised to him and the opportunity to engage in research with definite reformist potential seem to have been the deciding factors in persuading Palmer to make the relatively long-term commitment requested of him. In February 1922, he left the University of London permanently.

UPBRINGING

When he left for Japan Palmer was already in his mid-forties, and his career until then had been academically unconventional. He had never himself attended university and was completely self-taught in the fields in which he was beginning to forge his reputation.

Born in 1877 in London, he had been educated initially at local elementary schools and at home - Harold's father Edward having begun his working life as a schoolteacher.⁹ In 1883 the family moved to Hythe in Kent, where Edward opened a small school of his own, then a fancy goods and stationery shop, later giving up the school to concentrate on a local weekly newspaper called the *Hythe Reporter*, which he founded in 1890. For the next two years Harold attended a small private school very near his home.

At the age of fifteen he was sent to Boulogne on a six-month exchange visit to study French, but he did not yet show any of his father's interest in language learning; instead, most of his time was spent in the Art Gallery sketching and painting. He had hopes of

working in a museum which was prevailed upon

JOURNALISM AND

Harold gained his first job at the *Hythe Reporter*, and in the same duty he fulfilled for the next five years. In 1901 he resigned. His life to be full of excitement and away from work, but he was feeling cramped and

In February 1902 he left for German borders in order to study an English teacher's use of the Berlitz method with vigour reminiscent of his school. Here he would devise, and as a result of further study of languages - living and dead - fascinated by the what he had learned from one of several languages for during his enthusiasm for phonetics Association (IPA) he had him using a notebook very much in the same way. Indeed, she herself

Many of the methods of work had their roots in a commitment to oral teaching; deliberate avoidance of vocabulary limited at the same time, he developed and multilingual sociability, talent and 'creative verve' in his school in materials associated with

who spent the years 1902-5
 ers offered an orally-based
 e educational, as well as the
 in schools.⁸ Kanda's and
 nd Okakura, in particular,
 eas as head of the English
 ing institution for secondary
 . Nevertheless, as the Taisho
 t schools had not changed
 particular had been little
 Germany in World War I
 an educational models, and

an advisory role to Palmer
 ontacted a wealthy busi-
 Kojiro, who was visiting
 agreed to provide financial
 only of an exotic location,
 rate pay but also of the
 opportunity to engage in
 seem to have been the
 make the relatively long-
 ebruary 1922, he left the

n his mid-forties, and his
 unconventional. He had
 completely self-taught in
 e his reputation.
 educated initially at local
 's father Edward having
 1 1883 the family moved
 small school of his own,
 giving up the school to
 lled the *Hythe Reporter*,
 years Harold attended a
 ulogne on a six-month
 ot yet show any of his
 l, most of his time was
 ting. He had hopes of

working in a museum in London, but on returning from France he
 was prevailed upon to help out in the family business.

JOURNALISM AND TEACHING

Harold gained his first writing experience as a journalist for the
Hythe Reporter, and in February 1899 he became editor of the paper, a
 duty he fulfilled for almost three years. However, towards the end of
 1901 he resigned.¹⁰ His daughter explained: 'Although Father found
 life to be full of interest and excitement, he felt that he must break
 away from work that was leading nowhere. So, in his mid-twenties,
 feeling cramped and frustrated, he had the urge to go abroad.'¹¹

In February 1902 he arrived in Verviers, close to the Dutch and
 German borders in the French-speaking part of Belgium, and became
 an English teacher at a small school run along Berlitz lines.¹² The
 Berlitz method was a revelation to him, but, with an entrepreneurial
 vigour reminiscent of his father, he soon left to establish his own
 school. Here he began to experiment with teaching methods: 'He
 would devise, adopt, modify or reject one plan after another as the
 result of further research and experience in connexion with many
 languages - living and artificial.'¹³ By this time he 'had become fasci-
 nated by languages, all languages, his own and other people's,
 fascinated by the way they worked. He was naturally eager to teach
 what he had learned and to learn as he taught.'¹⁴ Esperanto was just
 one of several languages he studied, taught and wrote learning mate-
 rials for during his time in Belgium. He read widely and became an
 enthusiast for phonetics and the ideas of the International Phonetic
 Association (IPA), which he joined in 1907. His daughter recalled
 him using a notebook to transcribe the speech he heard around him
 very much in the fashion of Henry Higgins in *My Fair Lady*.¹⁵
 Indeed, she herself first learned to read through phonetic script.

Many of the themes which were to characterize Palmer's later
 work had their roots in his Verviers experience, including his attach-
 ment to oral teaching procedures, his commitment to research, his
 deliberate avoidance of dogmatism, and his use of phonetics and
 vocabulary limitation to lessen the language learning load. At the
 same time, he developed a passionate attachment to internationalism
 and multilingualism at a time of mounting international tension. His
 sociability, talent for both writing and publicity, organizational skills
 and 'creative versatility' all found expression in his work in building
 up his school in Verviers, the *Institut Palmer*, and in producing mate-
 rials associated with his own 'Palmer Method'.

WORK AT THE UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

Palmer's contributions to the IPA's journal brought his ideas to a wider audience, and, in particular, attracted the attention of Daniel Jones, who had recently founded the first department of phonetics in a British university, at University College London.¹⁶ Palmer's contacts with Jones proved useful when the outbreak of World War I forced him to return to England with his wife and daughter. In 1915 Jones offered him part-time employment at UCL, initially to give a course of three public lectures, and subsequently to take over Spoken English classes for international students and start up a year-long course on 'Methods of Language Teaching' (the first of its kind at a British university). These launched Palmer's brief but productive academic career and enabled him to distil the experience he had gained in Belgium in a series of pioneering publications which established the study of language teaching as a serious academic pursuit. In Belgium, Palmer had developed an awareness that what language teachers most required was not a 'perfect method' but a principled or 'scientific' basis for the selection of methods. He explored this insight further in his first major work, *The Scientific Study and Teaching of Languages* (London: Harrap, 1917).

At UCL, Palmer also became involved in the research work of the Department of Phonetics, and made several original contributions, notably in relation to English intonation.¹⁷ However, his interests extended beyond phonetics, and were firmly rooted in the needs of teachers and learners. His Spoken English courses enabled him to refine his 'Palmer Method' into what he began to term the 'Oral Method' (as expounded in *The Oral Method of Teaching Languages*, Cambridge: Heffer, 1921), but overall he had arrived at a position of principled eclecticism, arguing that teachers should be open to 'multiple lines of approach' and not be dogmatically attached to any one single method.

At the same time, Palmer became increasingly interested in how languages are *learned*, partly on the basis of ideas he developed for lectures on 'methods of language study' at the School of Oriental Studies. In another pioneering work, *The Principles of Language Study* (London: Harrap, 1921), he complemented the largely linguistic, though practical approach of *The Scientific Study*, with insights into the psychology of language learning.

Despite his growing renown as a language-teaching theorist, Palmer's academic status and financial circumstances remained insecure until 1920, when he was finally awarded a full-time assistantship at UCL. In the 1921-2 academic session he was promoted to a full-time lectureship. His initial high hopes of pioneering a reform of modern language teaching in British schools were not being entirely

fulfilled, and this in his work towards of the general *study* of

WORK IN JAPAN, TI

Palmer remained c envisaged in the ini pursuing the task w reasons for the resp teachers of English t

He was accorded least, a salary comm given the time and oriented research i difference'. The diff standings and oppos in Japan: he did not

Palmer was active Japan.¹⁸ Just one yea the formation of : (IRET), the first st Institute soon began and numerous publi teachers with the s undertaken to issue to profit. Initially, P: already in Japan, wh However, after the destruction of all tl more firmly focused teachers in reform.

Palmer initially s turned out - that, b to join the Institute. the educational syst English through oral a radical four-point class sizes, increase improved in-service ment of native sp university entrance English' (as opposed oral/aural testing to

fulfilled, and this may have partly motivated the shift of emphasis in his work towards offering insights for learners as well as teachers into the general *study* of languages.

WORK IN JAPAN, THE FIRST PHASE

Palmer remained committed to Japan for much longer than was envisaged in the initial three-year invitation; indeed, his 'sincerity' in pursuing the task which had been assigned to him is one of the main reasons for the respect he continues to enjoy among many Japanese teachers of English today.

He was accorded considerable status, and, in the initial stages at least, a salary commensurate with his 'foreign expert' position. He was given the time and resources necessary to pursue his own practice-oriented research in a context where he could clearly 'make a difference'. The difficulties of achieving reform, and the misunderstandings and opposition with which he had to cope also kept Palmer in Japan: he did not give up easily.

Palmer was active, indeed prolific throughout his fourteen years in Japan.¹⁸ Just one year after his arrival in March 1922 he set in motion the formation of an Institute for Research in English Teaching (IRET), the first such establishment anywhere in the world. The Institute soon began to publish a *Bulletin* under Palmer's editorship, and numerous publications were issued for both foreign and Japanese teachers with the support of the publisher Kaitakusha, which had undertaken to issue all of the Institute's publications without regard to profit. Initially, Palmer's ideas appealed mostly to foreign teachers already in Japan, who began to join the Institute in large numbers. However, after the 1923 Kanto earthquake, which resulted in the destruction of all the Institute's records, his attention began to be more firmly focused on the need to interest Japanese middle school teachers in reform.

Palmer initially seems to have believed - over-optimistically as it turned out - that, by encouraging reform-minded Japanese teachers to join the Institute, he could help bring about structural reform in the educational system, in addition to encouraging the teaching of English through oral means. The IRET conference of 1925 proposed a radical four-point programme for such reform involving reduced class sizes, increased freedom for teachers in textbook selection, improved in-service teacher education and more effective involvement of native speakers as teachers. There were also calls for university entrance examinations to be reformed to feature 'plain English' (as opposed to over-literary words and expressions) and for oral/aural testing to be introduced in counterweight to translation

tasks. Although these proposals may in retrospect seem unrealistic, they coincided with the period of 'Taishō democracy' in the early to mid-1920s, when the government appeared to be willing to act upon reformist ideas. However, the proposals were not taken up. Instead, the political climate became increasingly unfavourable as Taishō democracy gave way in the late 1920s and 1930s to the ultra-nationalism which led ultimately to the Pacific War. During the latter period there were increasingly strident calls for the abolition of English as a subject on the secondary school curriculum, accompanied by a progressive reduction in the number of hours allotted to English.

After 1925, Palmer devoted his efforts to working within the system, and avoided involvement in political debates on the status of English as a subject. It is not correct, as several writers¹⁹ have assumed, that Palmer expected to introduce his Oral Method into Japan without adaptation. Although his ideas were grounded throughout in an unswerving belief in the 'primacy of speech', he was guided also by a context-sensitive philosophy of 'principled eclecticism'. This philosophy was developed in an important 1924 document, the *Memorandum on Problems of English Teaching* (Tokyo: IRET), which offered a general statement of pedagogical principles, at the same time suggesting how reforms could be made in the Japanese context. He then devoted considerable effort to developing experimental materials for different lines of approach, and to gathering feedback from Japanese members of the Institute.

On this basis, and as Palmer learned more about Japanese priorities, a reader-centred oral approach emerged as most favoured, and Palmer's energies were increasingly directed towards the provision of readers amenable to oral work, materials for extensive reading and supplementary teacher's guides. In *The Reformed Teaching of English in the Middle-grade Schools* (Tokyo: IRET, 1927) Palmer clearly recognized the importance in the Japanese context of enhancing writing and reading abilities, maintaining nevertheless that 'direct' oral procedures rather than translation were the best means for pursuing these goals. Having established the need for a 'reader system', by 1927 (when Sawayanagi died) Palmer had produced a set of *Standard English Readers* (Tokyo: IRET, 1926-7), with accompanying resource books to aid teachers with oral work.

Throughout this initial period, Palmer had to cope with far more resistance than he had probably expected when initially invited to Japan. He seems to have realized early on that any 'advice' he gave would be unlikely to be implemented directly by the *Mombusho*, and this realization may have partly motivated the establishment of the semi-official Institute to support, provide a focus for and diffuse his

research and reform energies were (Ministry's more housed in the Ministry's more its activities some officials seem to devices, offering was also surprised minded Japanese after ten years v previous factional failure in the early Okakura Yoshisa education reform arrival, meant that with Okakura ne This lack of s acknowledge the tional and cult assumption was t spoken or its wr underestimated tl

For the Japare of a high 'practical' beliefs in its 'utarian effect

Being through in his own appment, nor – des visual sphere – c emphasized by r day. His own er little to endear l members of his English 'gentlen teacher commur Languages). Amc foreign teachers and evident com him converts. H Japanese English down on and sic

research and reform efforts. From early on, most of his considerable energies were channelled through IRET rather than via the Ministry's more labyrinthine channels. Although the Institute was housed in the *Mombushō* right up until the Pacific War, and this gave its activities some prestige in the eyes of Japanese teachers, Ministry officials seem to have preferred to leave Palmer largely to his own devices, offering little further support to his reform efforts. Palmer was also surprised by the factionalism he encountered among reform-minded Japanese teachers and teacher trainers. His proudest boast after ten years was that the Institute had succeeded in replacing previous factionalism with a focused reform movement. However, his failure in the early stages to recognize sufficiently the contributions of Okakura Yoshisaburō, previously the doyen of English-language education reform in Japan and effectively sidelined by Palmer's arrival, meant that a significant faction of Japanese teachers associated with Okakura never fully supported his efforts.

This lack of support was partly related to a failure by Palmer to acknowledge the significance in the Japanese context of the educational and cultural value of English studies. Throughout, his assumption was that a practical mastery of English - whether in its spoken or its written form - was the main educational goal, and he underestimated the strength of sentiments such as the following:

For the Japanese ... the advantages of studying foreign languages are of a higher and more intangible nature than are its so-called 'practical' benefits. In some ways the most valuable advantage lies in its 'unpractical' aspect, namely, in its hidden and unutilitarian effect on the mind.²⁰

Being through and through a rationalist, and resolutely utilitarian in his own approach, Palmer had no truck with this kind of statement, nor - despite his well-developed aesthetic sensibilities in the visual sphere - did he have much interest in literary appreciation, as emphasized by many Japanese scholars of English down to the present day. His own entertaining, indeed somewhat flamboyant, style did little to endear him to some of the more conventionally 'scholarly' members of his audiences; nor did he seem to fit the image of an English 'gentleman' (as represented to best effect in the foreign teacher community by A. W. Medley at the Tokyo School of Foreign Languages). Among progressive-minded Japanese teachers, and among foreign teachers generally, his theoretical but down-to-earth approach and evident commitment to practical improvements did begin to win him converts. However, there were always significant sections of the Japanese English education establishment who found reasons to look down on and side-step his efforts.

WORK IN JAPAN, THE SECOND PHASE

According to Palmer's daughter, the first phase of his work in Japan had been one of 'pioneering and experiment':

He was getting to know Japan and the Japanese set-up as applied to the teaching of English, and it takes fully seven years to do just that. He was breaking new ground in his professional sphere. He was an iconoclast, a revolutionary and an innovator. He was always 'fighting' this, that or the other.²¹

In the second phase he 'fought' much less. He was just as much engaged in analysis and experimentation, but his statements became less combative and more authoritative: 'this authoritative accent was increasingly accepted and respected by the Japanese. He became an established institution and as such enjoyed considerable prestige and this not only in academic circles.'²²

One honour had been conferred on Palmer early on - that of tutoring Prince Chichibu in English prior to his departure to study at the University of Oxford in 1926. In later years he began to give regular broadcasts entitled 'Current Topics' for JOAK (the predecessor of NHK), and thus became, literally, a 'household name' in Japan. He was also a keen participant in activities of the expatriate British community in Tokyo: the Asiatic Society of Japan, the Association of Foreign Teachers, the Tokyo Amateur Dramatic Society, and so on. He found time also for his many hobbies and interests including geology, map-making, typography and printing, and motoring. Accounts of his personality all emphasize his seemingly boundless energy, curiosity and versatility. One obituary was entitled 'Harold E. Palmer, phonetician, entertainer, philosopher, scholar, teacher, traveller, author, friend'.²³

The second phase of Palmer's stay in Japan (between around 1929 and 1936) was taken up largely with intensive research into vocabulary, motivated, at least initially, by the need to determine appropriate linguistic contents for the various levels of the secondary school English curriculum. Enlisting the aid of A. S. Hornby (1898-1978), who had come to Japan in 1924 to teach at a university in Kyūshū, and who had subsequently become an active member of the Institute, Palmer embarked on an ambitious classification of vocabulary (including collocations). This research programme was to bear fruit not only in revised versions of the *Standard English Readers* and graded supplementary readers published for Japanese secondary schools but also in the *Interim Report on Vocabulary Selection for the Teaching of English as a Foreign Language* (London: King, 1936) compiled with colleagues overseas.

In parallel, Ja
the 1930s to e:
'reformed meth
Bulletin and er
annual Institute
when foreign
supporters.

The work o
the world, and
partly to furthe
funding, since M
bankruptcy in tl
this stage on a s.

As the inter
became better k
consider leaving
awarded a D.Lit
publications.

'RETIREMENT'

On returning to
Wood') in Felb:
Japanese-style ga
represent the 's
termed these a 's

In February 1
room were ship
Japanese teacher
graphs back to
Cooper's Wood.
Museum. Palmer
and he used the
on the tatami flo
garden, and deve

On 17 March
Club of the Jap
Japan'. In this tal
been taken up
majority of Japar
mistic view of IF

Palmer was st
writer, mostly fo
cations of the pe:

In parallel, Japanese teachers showed more and more willingness in the 1930s to experiment with, adapt and appropriate the Institute's 'reformed methods', increasingly contributing articles to the *IRET Bulletin* and engaging in innovative demonstration lessons at the annual Institute Conventions. This contrasted with the first phase, when foreign teachers had been the most prominent IRET supporters.

The work of the Institute had become well-known throughout the world, and Palmer undertook trips abroad of increasing length, partly to further publicise this work but also (he hoped) to acquire funding, since Matsukata's financial support had dried up as a result of bankruptcy in the depression years and the Institute was being run by this stage on a shoe-string.

As the international situation deteriorated and as IRET work became better known on a world stage Palmer and his wife began to consider leaving Japan. Prior to their departure in 1936, Palmer was awarded a D.Litt by Tokyo Imperial University for three of his major publications.

'RETIREMENT' YEARS

On returning to England, Palmer bought a house (named 'Cooper's Wood') in Felbridge, Sussex.²⁴ Here he set to work to construct a Japanese-style garden, combined with a model railway which would represent the 'syntax plan of the English language'. Together he termed these a 'syntax-scape'.

In February 1937 materials for the construction of a Japanese-style room were shipped to England as a token of appreciation from Japanese teachers of English, and in November Palmer sent photographs back to show that he had installed it in the sunroom at Cooper's Wood. After his death, this room was donated to the British Museum. Palmer took to wearing Japanese-style dress when at home and he used the Japanese room as his study, spreading out his papers on the tatami floor. He also engaged in Japanese-style archery in his garden, and developed his skills in the art of *bonkei*.

On 17 March 1938 Palmer was invited to address the Luncheon Club of the Japan Society, London, on 'The English language in Japan'. In this talk he expressed some frustration that his ideas had not been taken up more enthusiastically by the *Mombushō* and the majority of Japanese teachers. At the same time, he presented an optimistic view of IRET achievements.

Palmer was still working on a freelance basis as a consultant and writer, mostly for Longmans, Green. Several of his best-known publications of the period show the clear imprint of previous work carried

out under IRET auspices, for example *The New Method Grammar* and *A Grammar of English Words* (both London: Longmans, Green, 1938) as well as his later *International English Course* (London: Evans, 1943–6). Although he seems to have hoped to establish an equivalent to IRET in the UK, his proposals fell on deaf ears.²⁵

During the World War II Palmer served as an air-raid warden. A letter to his daughter dated 23 January 1940 reveals that he had been offered a senior lectureship in Japanese at SOAS, which he had declined, expressing a lack of confidence in his Japanese abilities.²⁶ Although during his time in Japan he had displayed a keen interest in Japanese, he had not mastered the written language. He had, however, made an important contribution to the contemporary debate on the romanization of Japanese, with his *The Principles of Romanization* (Tokyo: Maruzen, 1930), and his influence on the wartime and post-war history of teaching Japanese as a foreign language was to be profound, due to the work of his former assistant and publisher Naganuma Naoe (1894–1973).²⁷

Following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, both Hornby and Redman were interned. Owing to the strong opposition to any teaching of the enemy's language, the IRET Board of Administration in February 1942 changed the name of the *Bulletin* to *Gogaku kyōiku* (Language Education), and in March the IRET itself metamorphosed into *Gogaku kyōiku kenkyūjo* (literally, the 'Institute for Research in Language Education'). The Institute survived the war and retains the same Japanese name - often shortened to '*Goken*' - to this day.²⁸ On 20 April 1942 Kaitakusha succeeded, against all the odds, in publishing the *Idiomatic and Syntactic English Dictionary*, which had been instigated by Palmer and compiled by A. S. Hornby with two IRET colleagues, E. V. Gatenby and H. Wakefield. This was later (in 1948) to be photographically reprinted by Oxford University Press and reissued as *A Learner's Dictionary of Current English*.²⁹ In 1942, Redman and Hornby were permitted to return to the UK.

In July 1942 Palmer's only son, Tristram, was killed in action over Holland. Palmer never really recovered from the shock and from then on his health deteriorated. He did manage to undertake a lecture tour in South America in 1944, but he was forced by ill health to return prematurely to England. On 16 November 1949 he collapsed suddenly and died of acute heart failure 'surrounded by his beloved books'.³⁰

PALMER'S LEGACY

Despite the undoubted achievements of IRET, overall assessments of Palmer's work in reforming Japanese English education have tended

to be rather negative, based on false premises. He was invited to reform the research and 'ultimately appropriate.

Nevertheless, Palmer's role of leading a full-scale assessment in his special events, and to the 'enemy's language'. Indeed, *yakudoku* teaching in Japan is to reform it.

However, Institutional teachers, who adapt importantly, Palmer Japanese teachers are based on sound tradition. He was in Japan, but as a consequence in arguing for a language teaching has continued to whatever their special post-war years the appeared more attractive had a major role in study for secondary a visit to Japan in 'American influence' Michigan, is the newly remembered and appreciated.

The Institute's efforts to reform English in the 1960s.³⁴ IRLT contributions for secondary trainers in Japan, and publications and organization Convention, still very. Recently, members of Harold E. Palmer (termed in August 1999 IRI) commemorate the first granddaughter, Victoria

to be rather negative.³¹ To some extent these assessments have been based on false premises about his mission - he had not, after all, been invited to reform teaching in Japan single-handedly but to engage in research and 'ultimately' suggest methods which teachers might find appropriate.

Nevertheless, Palmer himself seems to have had high initial hopes of leading a full-scale 'Reform Movement'. Despite his optimistic assessment in his speech to the Japan Society, London, in 1938, political events, and the increasing perception that English was the 'enemy's language', ultimately conspired to undermine his efforts. Indeed, *yakudoku* has continued to dominate foreign language teaching in Japanese schools in the post-war era, despite all attempts to reform it.

However, Institute ideas were appropriated by a number of Japanese teachers, who adapted them to their own contexts in the 1930s. More importantly, Palmer succeeded in firmly implanting the idea among Japanese teachers and teacher trainers that language teaching needs to be based on sound, scientific principles, not simply the dictates of tradition. He was not the first to introduce Western methods into Japan, but as a consequence of his own personal commitment and success in arguing for rational procedures, a tradition of conceptualising language teaching in terms of 'method' was established, and this has continued to guide progressive Japanese teachers of English, whatever their specific methodological persuasion. In the immediate post-war years the latest ideas on language teaching from the USA appeared more attractive, but Japanese supporters of Palmer's ideas had a major role in writing the first post-war *Mombushō* courses of study for secondary schools, proposed in 1947 and 1951.³² Following a visit to Japan in 1956, Hornby wrote to Palmer's daughter: 'American influences are strong now (Fries, of the University of Michigan, is the new star)', but he found also that 'Palmer's work is remembered and appreciated'.³³

The Institute experienced something of a revival as American efforts to reform English teaching foundered towards the end of the 1960s.³⁴ IRLT continues to be one of the most important associations for secondary school English teachers and university teacher trainers in Japan, and is active in promoting research work, editing publications and organizing teacher training seminars and an annual Convention, still very much under the influence of Palmer's ideas. Recently, members of the Institute have edited *The Selected Writings of Harold E. Palmer* (ten volumes, Tokyo: Hon-no-Tomosha, 1995) and in August 1999 IRLT organized a special programme of events to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of his death (Palmer's great-granddaughter, Victoria Angela, was the special guest of honour).

Whereas Palmer's memory is very much kept alive in Japan (although his ideas may be seen to have had a lasting impact only on the more 'methodologically aware' members of the English teaching profession), his work is largely ignored in the UK, where it ended up having a much more pervasive influence.

Although the emergence of ELT as an independent, professional enterprise has occurred in Britain largely in the post-war era, it was, more than anyone else, Harold Palmer who, 'with his detailed and theory-based models of syllabus and course design and his principled but practical approach to classroom methodology ... laid the essential groundwork on which the profession could build a strong and flexible structure'.³⁵ Until recently the greater part of the work he published in Japan has remained unavailable outside that country, and the full scale of his achievement there unrecognized in ELT circles. However, with the recent foundation of a British Institute of English Language Teaching (BIELT), it seems possible that his pioneering work will finally gain the recognition in Britain, which it has always enjoyed in Japan.

William 190

WILLIAM EMPSON
critic the English-
appearance in 192
written with such
searching and imag
main feat of inven
on to produce a
Versions of Pastora
Milton's God (19
Literature and Cultu
During the lat
University and sp
from the Japanese
worked as Chinese
among his closest
five years, witnessi

8. *Ibid.*, p. 244–57.
9. *Japonica*, London 1891, pp.62, 123,127.
10. T. S. or Thomas Seccombe wrote the entry for Edwin Arnold in the DNB 1912.
11. The story of *Adzuma*, 1893, is based on the legend of Endo Morito, or the future Mongaku Shonin, and Kesa Gozen.
12. *Letters from B. H. Chamberlain to Lafcadio Hearn*, compiled by Kazuo Koizumi, Tokyo 1936, p. 22 and 18.
13. *Handbook of Colloquial Japanese*, revised edition 1907, p. 238. The late Sir John Pilcher, (1912–1990), Ambassador to Japan 1967–1972 took great pleasure in using and pronouncing the word 'naruhodo' in the various ways described by Chamberlain. For a biography of Sir John Pilcher see Sir Hugh Cortazzi's portrait in *Biographical Portraits, Volume III*.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 239–40.
15. For an account of the Yokohama dialect see Sir Hugh Cortazzi's *Victorians in Japan*, London, 1987 pages 340–5.
16. Toshio Yokoyama, *Japan in the Victorian Mind: a study of the stereotyped images of a nation 1850-1880*, London, 1987.
17. She was still living in London in 1945. Do any readers remember her?
18. Three *uta* are reproduced, with calligraphy and translation, at the end of his Preface to *Japonica*, p. ix.
19. The cartoon from *Punch* is reproduced in Sir Hugh Cortazzi's 'The Japan Society: a Hundred-Year History', in *Britain and Japan, 1859–1991, Themes and Personalities*, ed. Sir Hugh Cortazzi and Gordon Daniels, London, 1991. The *Punch* cartoon must have been galling to Sir Edwin, who was always concerned to correct Western misconceptions about Japan derived from the superficial effusions of globetrotting *flaneurs* Mr Gilbert and Sir Arthur Sullivan also had something to answer for by reason of their lively misrepresentation of Japan in the comic opera entitled *The Mikado*. The characters and the general *mis-en-scène* were 'so ridiculous to the Japanese eye partly because of the gross disrespect offered to the growing empire and its sovereignty', that the piece could never be produced in Japan. Nor was *Punch* to be exonerated, with his cartoon of a diminutive 'Jap the Giant-Killer' trampling on a colossal Chinaman'. *East and West*, 1896, p. 275.
20. *Autobiography of Alfred Austin*, 1911, Vol. 2, p. 259–60.
21. See, for example, E. F. Benson, *As We Were*, 1930, p. 192–6.

Chapter 21 RICHARD C. SMITH & IMURA MOTOMICHI *Harold E. Palmer, 1877–1949*

1. Lecture on 'Foreign Teachers in Japan', given by Sir Vere Redman to The Japan Society on 11 October 1966, in *Japan Society Bulletin*, 51 (1967), p. 9.
2. *ibid.*, p. 10

3. Cite
Annual K
4. Dor
to Harok
London:
5. For
Imura M
English in
6. H. V
(1931), p.
7. Willi
schools'.
8. For
reformers
Foreign L
2000, and
Teaching:
Okakura,
Tokyo: Jiy
9. Deta
presented
years (187
57 (1998)
Smith, T
Tomosha,
10. In th
11. Ande
12. Full
The Writin
13. Ande
14. *ibid.*
15. Ande
16. See I
Life and C
17. For
SOS, see
publicatio
Writings, C
18. For n
and Ozasa
okeru tenk
Methodol
Dai-ichi

3. Cited in Tanaka Masamichi, 'Harold E. Palmer after he left Japan', *Annual Review of English Language Education in Japan* 2 (1991), p. 184.
4. Dorothee Anderson, 'Harold E. Palmer: a biographical essay', Appendix to Harold E. Palmer and H. Vere Redman, *This Language-Learning Business*, London: Oxford University Press, 1932/1969, p. 143.
5. For more on the circumstances and nature of the invitation to Japan, see Imura Motomichi, *Palmer to nihon no eigokyoiku (Harold E. Palmer and Teaching English in Japan)*, Tokyo: Taishukan, 1997, pp. 28–40.
6. H. Vere Redman, 'English teaching in Japan', *Oversea Education* 11 (1931), p. 79 (italics in original).
7. William Cullen Bryant II, 'English language teaching in Japanese schools', *PMLA* 71/4, part 2 (1956), p. 25 (italics in original).
8. For more on Sauveur's 'natural method' and the work of the German reformers, see A. P. R. Howatt and Richard C. Smith (eds.), *Foundations of Foreign Language Teaching: Nineteenth-century Innovators*, London: Routledge, 2000, and A.P.R. Howatt and Richard C. Smith (eds.), *Modern Language Teaching: The Reform Movement*, London: Routledge, 2001, respectively. On Okakura, see Imura Motomichi and Takenaka Tatsunori, *Okakura Yoshisaburo*, Tokyo: Jiyusha, forthcoming.
9. Details of Palmer's life up to his departure for the Continent are presented more fully in Richard C. Smith, 'Harold E. Palmer's formative years (1877–1901)', *Area and Culture Studies (Tokyo gaikokugo daigaku ronshu)* 57 (1998), pp. 1–37. See also Anderson, 'Harold E. Palmer', and Richard C. Smith, *The Writings of Harold E. Palmer: An Overview*, Tokyo: Hon-no-Tomoshia, 1999, Chapter 1.
10. In the *Hythe Reporter*, 21 September 1901.
11. Anderson, 'Harold E. Palmer', p. 136.
12. Full details relating to Palmer's work in Verviers are provided in Smith, *The Writings*, Chapter 2.
13. Anderson, 'Harold E. Palmer', p. 136.
14. *ibid.*
15. Anderson, 'Harold E. Palmer', p. 141.
16. See Beverley Collins and Inger M. Mees, *The Real Professor Higgins: The Life and Career of Daniel Jones*, Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1998.
17. For more details of Palmer's lectures and research work at UCL and SOS, see Richard C. Smith, 'Harold E. Palmer's London lectures and related publications (1915–21)', *IRLT Bulletin* 12 (1998), pp. 55–85. Also, Smith, *The Writings*, Chapter 3.
18. For more detail on Palmer's work in Japan, see in particular Imura, *Palmer*, and Ozasa Toshiaki, *Harold E. Palmer no eigokyojuho ni kansuru kenkyu: Nihon ni okeru tenkai o chushin to shite (A Study of Harold E. Palmer's English Teaching Methodology, with Special Emphasis on its Development in Japan)*, Tokyo: Dai-ichi Gakushusha, 1995. Also, Richard C. Smith 'The Palmer-Hornby

- contribution to English teaching in Japan', *International Journal of Lexicography* 11/4 (1998), pp. 269–91, and Smith, *The Writings*, Chapters 4 and 5.
19. Including Norman Y. Yamamoto, 'The Oral Method: Harold E. Palmer and the reformation of the teaching of the English language in Japan', *ELT Journal* 32/2 (1978), pp. 151–8.
 20. Nitobe Inazo. 'The teaching and use of foreign languages in Japan', *Sewanee Review* 31 (1923), pp. 338–9 (as cited by Lynn Earl Henrichsen, *Diffusion of Innovations in English Language Teaching: The ELEC Effort in Japan, 1956–1968*, Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, pp. 121–2).
 21. Anderson, 'Harold E. Palmer', p. 153.
 22. Anderson, 'Harold E. Palmer', p. 154.
 23. By W. Rudolf F. Stier, in *Gogaku kyoiku* 210 (1950), pp. 12–14.
 24. Further details of Palmer's final years are provided in Tanaka, 'Harold E. Palmer after he left Japan'. See also Imura, *Palmer*, Chapters 17–20, and Smith, *The Writings*, Chapter 6.
 25. See Tanaka, 'Harold E. Palmer after he left Japan', p. 154.
 26. In the personal files of Victoria Angela.
 27. Naganuma's own methodology and textbooks were clearly based on Palmer's work for English. For example, his *Hyōjun nihongo dokuhon* (Standard Japanese Readers), Tokyo, 1931, reflect the contents as well as the title of Palmer's *Standard English Readers*.
 28. See IRLT (eds.) *Zaidanhōjin gogaku kyōiku kenkyūjo nanajūsshūnen kinenshi* (A History of IRLT to Commemorate the Seventieth Anniversary of its Foundation), Tokyo: IRLT, 1994.
 29. See A. P. Cowie, 'A. S. Hornby, 1898–1998: a centenary tribute', *International Journal of Lexicography* 11/4 (1998), pp. 251–68.
 30. Anderson, 'Harold E. Palmer', p. 181.
 31. For example, Vere Redman, 'Harold E. Palmer: pioneer teacher of modern languages', *English Language Teaching* 22/1 (1967), pp. 10–16, and Yamamoto, 'The Oral Method'.
 32. See Bryant, 'English language teaching'.
 33. Hornby to Dorothee Anderson, 13 October 1956, in the personal files of Victoria Angela.
 34. On these efforts see Henrichsen, *Diffusion of Innovations*.
 35. A.P.R. Howatt, Foreword to Smith, *The Writings*, p. viii.

Chapter 22 JOHN HAFENDEN *William Empson, Poet and Writer, 1906–84: Japan 1931–34*

1. Sumie Okada, *Western Writers in Japan* (Basingstoke, Hants.: Macmillan Press, 1999), p. 44; Kyohei Ogihara, 'About Emp-san', *Eigo-Seinen (The Rising Generation)*, 106: 10 (1 October 1960), p. 32.
2. Peter Quennell, *A Superficial Journey Through Tokyo and Peking* (1932; reprinted Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 99.

3. Quennell,
4. See *The*
- 1964–1965 (Tc
5. Rintaro F
- The Man and 1*
- 1974), p. 22.
6. Empson, 'T
- of Shakespeare's*
7. Okada, *Wē*
8. See Sir H
- Japan Biograph*
- Katharine San
- Florida: Diplon
- (1883–1965): F
- Themes and Pers*
- & New York: R
9. *The Com*
- (Harmondswor
10. S. F. Bolt, le
11. David Wev
12. See FO 26
13. FO 371/
- Public Record
- Embassy, Tokyo
- 1939).

Chapter 23 JA

1. Professor E
- place book as la
2. Catalogue
3. 'My interes
- simultaneously
- basic interest i
- collecting *netsul*
4. *Harmsworth*
- pp. 553–62.
5. *Harmsworth*
- this strange pec
- caused a very p:
- 301–302).
6. *Harmswort*
- Transactions and*
- 119.

Britain & Japan

The
Japan
Society
Founded 1891

BIOGRAPHICAL PORTRAITS

VOLUME IV



EDITED BY

HUGH CORTAZZI

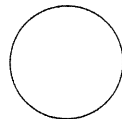


BRITAIN & JAPAN

Biographical Portraits

VOLUME IV

Edited by
HUGH CORTAZZI



JAPAN
LIBRARY

JAPAN SOCIETY PAPERBACK EDITION Not for resale

BRITAIN & JAPAN: BIOGRAPHICAL PORTRAITS
Volume IV
Edited by Hugh Cortazzi

First published 2002 by
JAPAN LIBRARY
Japan Library is part of Taylor & Francis Ltd
11 New Fetter Lane, London, EC4P 4EE

© Japan Society Publications 2002

All rights reserved.
No part of this publication may be reproduced or
transmitted in any form or by any means without
permission from the publishers in writing, except
for the use of short extracts in criticism.

ISBN 1-903350-14-X [Case]

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A CIP entry for this book is available
from the British Library

Set in Bembo 11 on 11½ point
Typesetting by Mark Heslington, Scarborough, North Yorkshire
Printed and bound in Great Britain by Bookcraft, Midsomer Norton, Avon

Tal

Introduction by Hugh C.
British Personalities and
Lists of Biographical Por
Alphabetical List of Con

PART 1: DIPLOMA

- 1 Mori Arinori, 1847-8
ANDREW COBBING
- 2 Kato Takaaki, 1860-1
Japanese Foreign Mir
IAN NISH
- 3 Sir Francis Plunkett,
HUGH CORTAZZI
- 4 Hugh Fraser, 1837-9
HUGH CORTAZZI
- 5 Sir Ernest Satow (18
IAN RUXTON
- 6 Sir William Conyngh
to Japan, 1912-19
PETER LOWE
- 7 Sir John Tilley, 1869-
1926-31
HARUMI GOTO-SHIB,
- 8 Sir Francis Lindley (:
IAN NISH
- 9 Sir Robert Clive, 18
1934-37
ANTONY BEST