

Beyond myths and methods: historiography in language teaching

Richard Smith, University of Warwick

[www.warwick.ac.uk/elt_archive/
publications](http://www.warwick.ac.uk/elt_archive/publications)

Plan

- 1) Critiquing myths and methods
- 2) Deconstructive history: insights from historical research into the roots of 'ELT'

Q & A

1) Critiquing myths and methods

Myths

Some common beliefs about language teaching

- Children learn L2 better than adults
- We learn L2 best in the way we learned L1
- Native speaker teachers are better
- Coursebooks and tests developed in Europe are superior
- Language teaching should be instrumental
- Language teaching should focus on the spoken language
- You should not use students' mother tongue in the classroom
- The target standard should be that of a native speaker

These are dominant 'myths', with little or no factual basis, or simply matters of taste, opinion or ideology.

Methods

Progression myth – the past has been a progressive procession of methods:

GTM -> [DM ->] ALM -> CLT [-> TBLT]

Origin myths –

Applied linguistics -> ELT

Colonial education -> ELT

Procession and origin myths – What are the limitations of these ways of characterizing language teaching?

GTM -> [DM ->] ALM -> CLT [-> TBLT]

Applied linguistics -> ELT

Colonial education -> ELT

‘There is no best method – why?’ (Prabhu) One size cannot fit all – and teachers have always been eclectic in practice

Methods serve the interests of their promoters, not necessarily of teachers or learners (Pennycook)

Methods are associated with UK / USA export industry (Phillipson) / ‘native speakerism’ (Holliday).

The procession portrays a US-/UK-centric reality

‘Tissue rejection’ -- we need ‘appropriate methodology in social context’ (Holliday)

We live in a post-method era (Kumaravadivelu)
– but we don’t, in fact!

We are supposed to live in a 'post-method era', but ...

- the concept of 'method' still predominates as a way for conceptualizing teaching;
- 'methods-in-materials' are dominant in practice;
- in-service teacher training and teacher association events are often set up for the provision of 'recipes' / quick-fix 'solutions'
- externally imposed teaching competency frameworks are increasingly dominant

- the concept of ‘method’ is still dominant as a way for conceptualizing teaching (cf. pre-service training);

Because of ...

the academic and commercial interests ‘methods’ serve – and a continuing fetishism of / lack of understanding of the limitations of ‘science’ and of applying science in our field

- ‘methods-in-materials’ are dominant in practice;

because of ...

hard-selling of materials and associated testing systems – and the deskilling / decline of teacher agency they entail;

- in-service teacher training and teacher association activities are often set up to favour 'recipes' / quick-fix 'solutions' and (celebrity-centred) entertainment;

Because ...

Advertising is a powerful force -- it is said that busy teachers want entertainment and recipes – not something heavier. But it creates / reinforces dependency

- externally determined teaching competency frameworks are increasingly dominant

Because ...

We do not define teaching competence for ourselves

So, how do we change this situation (if we want to!)?

1) Deconstruction –

Deconstruct allegiance to methods, (misapplied) science, commercial interests, published materials and testing systems, recipes / quick-fix ‘solutions’, celebrity-centred entertainment, externally imposed teaching competency frameworks

2) Construction-

After methods – what then? (tomorrow’s lecture)

Within teacher education / development,
a key concept has emerged for me:

‘Teacher-learner autonomy’ – Teachers’
ability to take control of / responsibility
for their own learning (their own
professional development)

Learner autonomy is characterised by a readiness to take charge of one's own learning in the service of one's needs and purposes. This entails a capacity and willingness to act independently and in cooperation with others, as a socially responsible person.

('Bergen definition' , in Trebbi 1990)

Teacher-learner autonomy is characterised by a readiness to take charge of one's own learning in the service of one's needs and purposes. This entails a capacity and willingness to act independently and in cooperation with others, as a socially responsible person.

(based on 'Bergen definition', in Trebbi 1990)

2) Deconstructive history: insights from historical research into the roots of 'ELT

Why research ELT history?

- A continuing 'paucity of studies' (Stern 1983)
- Help to build a relatively new field
- Fill the many gaps (e.g. geographical)
- Correct wrong or over-simplistic accounts (e.g. Direct method)
- Counter dominant myths (e.g. AL influence) / develop critical accounts
- Develop teacher autonomy
- Affirm and celebrate! (cf. IATEFL 50th)

How research? (Historiography)

Many existing overviews are not 'methodologically informed' . Dangers to avoid:

- over-reliance on other secondary sources
- over-literality (e.g. 'activity')
- anachronism (e.g. 'Reader')
- being over-celebratory or excessively partisan in other ways (e.g. Berlitz history)

Some basic 'rules'

- Use but be critical of existing secondary accounts
- Refer to primary sources (do 'original' research)
- Attempt to make only evidence-based assertions
- Explicitly state sources of evidence

Where to start?

- What do you already 'know'?
 - what are your preconceptions?
- What secondary accounts are there?
 - what contradictions do they reveal?
 - what are their sources?
 - what questions still need to be answered?
 - what other sources can we imagine?
- Start to make a chronology, bibliography and primary source list

Consult *primary* sources

‘Primary sources’ =

‘Documents or artifacts closest to the topic of investigation. Often they are created during the time period which is being studied (correspondence, diaries, newspapers, government documents, art) but they can also be produced later by eyewitnesses or participants (memoirs, oral histories)’

Source: [http://](http://research.library.gsu.edu/primaryhistory)

research.library.gsu.edu/primaryhistory

Scoping and ‘immersing yourself’ in sources

- Scope available sources / seek out further relevant sources
- Immerse yourself in primary sources, and secondary sources beyond AL
- Keep asking questions – what still needs to be answered? What further sources do I need? Proactively seek them out, but ...
- Know when to stop!

Being critical of sources

- Triangulate (compare and contrast) different sources (e.g. IATEFL birthdate)
- Become aware of sources' biases and limitations (e.g. Lee re. idea for IATEFL)
- Select in a principled way from available sources (e.g. for textbook analysis)

But ...

Imaginatively reconstructing the past

- '[immersing] myself in the past until I know it well enough for my judgment of what is or is not representative to seem acceptable without undue epistemological debate' (Thomas 2010)

Illustrative case: A brief history of 'ELT'

The Warwick ELT Archive: www.warwick.ac.uk/elt_archive



OXFORD
APPLIED
LINGUISTICS



A History of English Language Teaching

SECOND EDITION

A.P.R. Howatt
with H. G. Widdowson

OXFORD

ELT EFL TEFL EIL ELF

ESL ESP

TESL EOP

ESOL EAP

EAL TESOL

What do I mean by 'ELT'?

(defined here as) 'post-World War II, UK-based enterprise in the field of English teaching to speakers of other languages'

When did ELT begin?

ENGLISH
LANGUAGE TEACHING

A Periodical devoted to the Teaching
of English as a Foreign Language

Volume I

No. 1

October, 1946

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THE BRITISH COUNCIL
3 Hanover Street, London, W.1.

Hornby, Review
Hill, Reviews

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VOLUME XIII · NUMBER 1

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Perren: Bilingualism

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TEACHING**

ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN OR SECOND LANGUAGE

VOLUME XVII NUMBER 1 OCTOBER 1962

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E.L.T. SELECTIONS 1

**Edited by
W. R. LEE**



**Articles from
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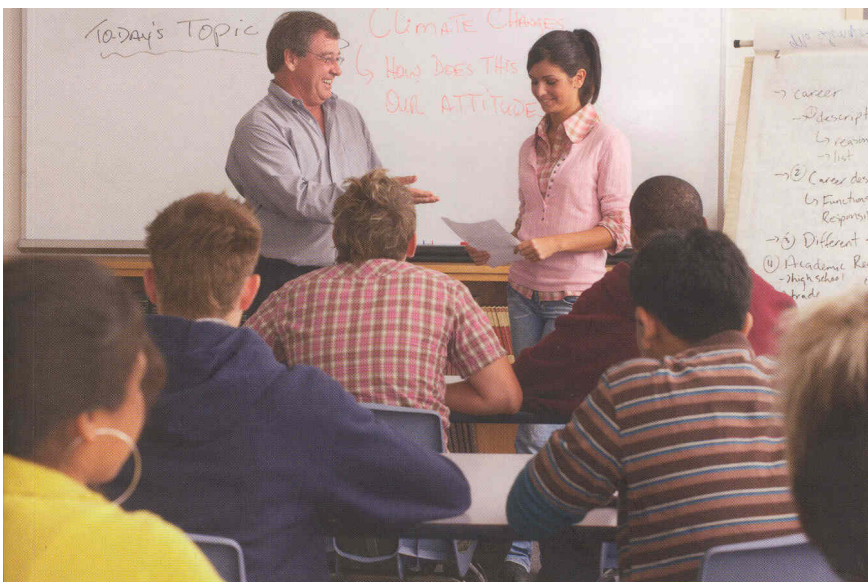
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ELT

English Language Teaching Journal

VOLUME XXVIII NUMBER 1 NOVEMBER 1973



An international journal for teachers of English to speakers of other languages

Volume
66/1
January 2012

ELT journal

Articles

A.S. Hornby and the Hornby Trust
Learning of routine formulae
The myth of the natural-born linguist
Developing speaking
Developing multiliteracies in ELT
Learner negotiation of L2 form
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Editor: W.R. Lee

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Hill, Butlins

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Editors (1950-61):

R.T. Butlin

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Published by
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**A.S. Hornby
(1898-1978)**

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Language
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OUP,
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London

THE ADVANCED LEARNER'S DICTIONARY OF CURRENT ENGLISH

BY

A. S. HORNBY

E. V. GATENBY

H. WAKEFIELD

SECOND EDITION

LONDON

OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

aqualung ['ækwɒlɪŋ] *n.* cylinder of oxygen strapped to a person's back for underwater swimming.



An aqualung

aqua marina [ækwə'mɪn] *n.* [C & U] bluish green seaweed.

aqua plane ['ækwəpleɪn] *n.* wide board on which a person stands while being pulled along by a fast motor-boat. *v.t.* ride on such a board.

aquarium [æ'kwɒrɪəm] *n.* (pl. -ia), -ium) building with an artificial pond or tank for keeping and showing living fish and water plants.

aquatic [æ'kwɒtɪk] *adj.* 1. (of plants, animals, etc.) growing or living in or near water. 2. (of sports) taking place on or in water (e.g. rowing, swimming).

aquatint ['ækwɒtɪnt] *n.* [U] process of engraving on copper, the picture being made by letting acid bite into a plate covered with a layer of resin dust; [U] picture made in this way.

aqueduct ['ækwɒdʌkt] *n.* artificial



An aqueduct

channel for supplying water, esp. one built of stone or brick and higher than the surrounding land.

aqueous ['ækwɪəs] *adj.* of or like water; *an ~ solution of sth.* in water.

aquiline ['ækwɪlɪn] *adj.* of or like an eagle; *an ~ nose*, curved like an eagle's beak.

Arab ['ærəb] *n.* name applied to any of those people who speak Arabic and claim descent from the inhabitants of the Arabian Peninsula who, in the 7th century, were conquerors of N. Africa, Syria, and Mesopotamia; *the military conquests of the ~s*; *the ~ League*; *the United ~ Republic*.

arabesque [æ're'beɪk] *n.* [C] elaborate design of leaves, branches, scrolls, etc.

Arabian [æ'reɪʃɪən] *adj.* of Arabia or the Arabs; *the ~ Nights*, famous stories of the Arabs in ancient times.

Arabic ['ærəbɪk] *adj.* of the Arabs; ~ numerals, the signs 0, 1, 2, 3, etc. *n.* language of the Arabs.

arable ['ærəbəl] *adj.* (of land) suitable for ploughing; usually ploughed.

arbitrator ['æbɪ'treɪtə] *n.* 1. person with complete control (of sth.). 2. arbitrator.

arbitrament [æ'bɪ'treɪmənt] *n.* [U] the deciding of a dispute by an arbitrator; [C] decision made by an arbitrator.

arbitrary ['æbɪ'trɪəri] *adj.* 1. based on opinion or impulse only, not on reason. 2. dictatorial; using despotic power.

arbitrate ['æbɪ'treɪt] *v.t.* sb & t. (VP 1, 2) decide by arbitration; judge between two parties to a dispute (usu. at the request of the two parties); *Mr X has been asked to ~ the dispute (sb ~ between the employers and their workers)*. If countries would always ~ their quarrels, wars could be avoided.

arbitration [æ'bɪ'treɪʃən] *n.* [U] settlement of a dispute by the decision of sb. chosen and accepted as a judge or umpire; *refer a question to ~*; *submit a dispute for ~*.

arbitrator ['æbɪ'treɪtə] *n.* legal term for arbitrator; person appointed by two parties to settle a dispute.

arboreal [æ'brɔ:riəl] *adj.* of, living in, connected with, trees; ~ animals (e.g. squirrels, monkeys).

arbour [U.S.A. æ'bo:; U.K. 'æbə] *n.* shady place among trees, esp. one made in a garden, with climbing plants growing over a framework.

arc [ɑ:k] *n.* part of the circumference of a circle or other curved line. **arc-jump**, **arc-light** *an.* brilliant light produced by electric current flowing across a space between two carbon rods.

arcade [ɑ:'keɪd] *n.* covered passage, usu. with an arched roof, esp. a passage with shops along one or both sides; *an arcaded ~*, hall with pin-tables, machines for gambling, etc.

Arcaean [ɑ:'keɪʃən] *adj.* of an ideal rustic simplicity; simple and innocent *n.* person with ~ tastes.

arch [ɑ:tʃ] *n.* 1. curved structure supporting the weight of what is above it, as in bridges, aqueducts, windows, etc. (See the Illustr. at aqueduct.) 2. (also ~way) curved structure built as an ornament or gateway. 3. any curve in the shape of an ~, e.g. the curved under-part of the foot; a structure



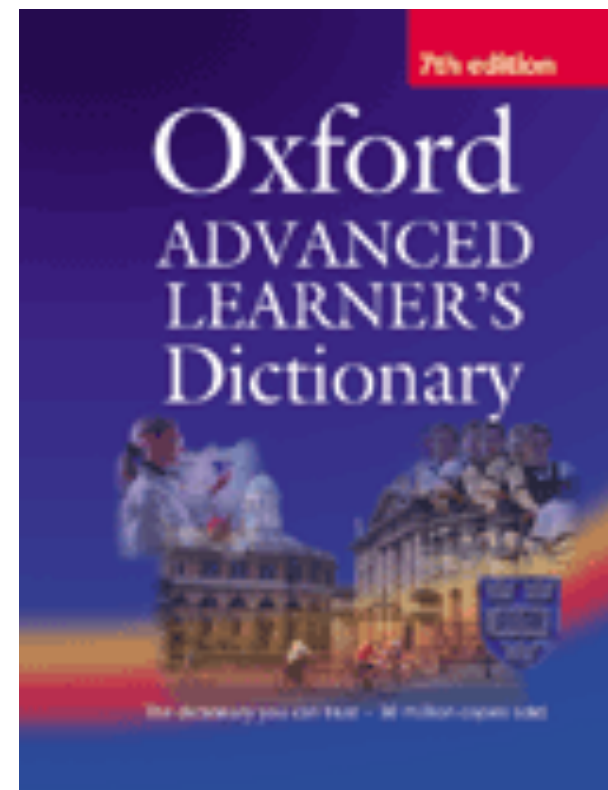
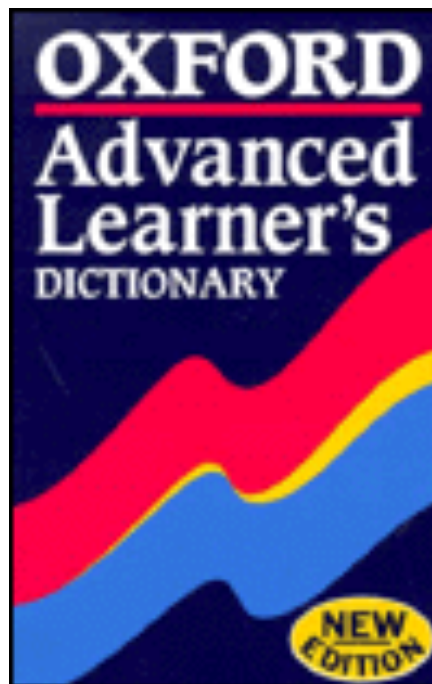
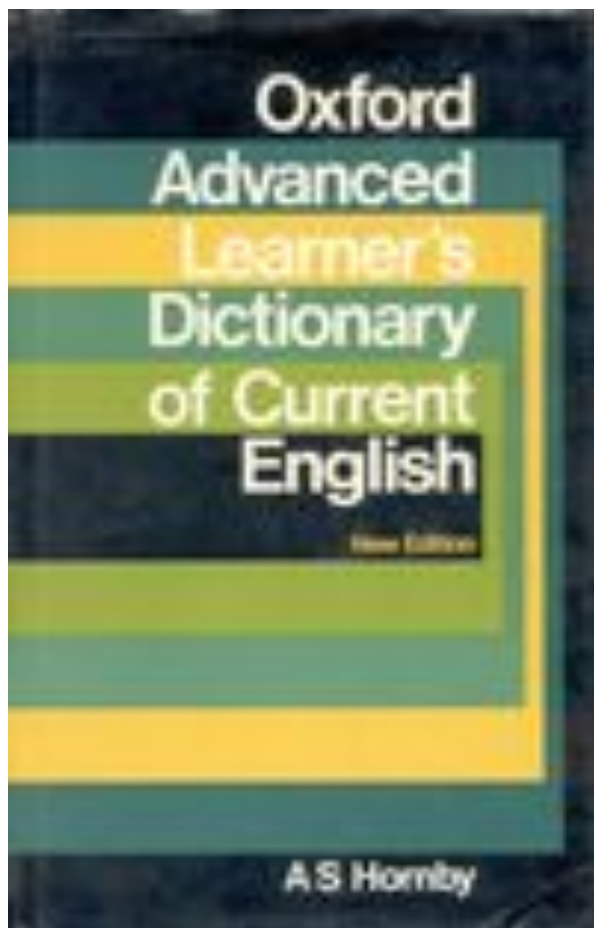
An arcade



An archway



E.V. Gatenby





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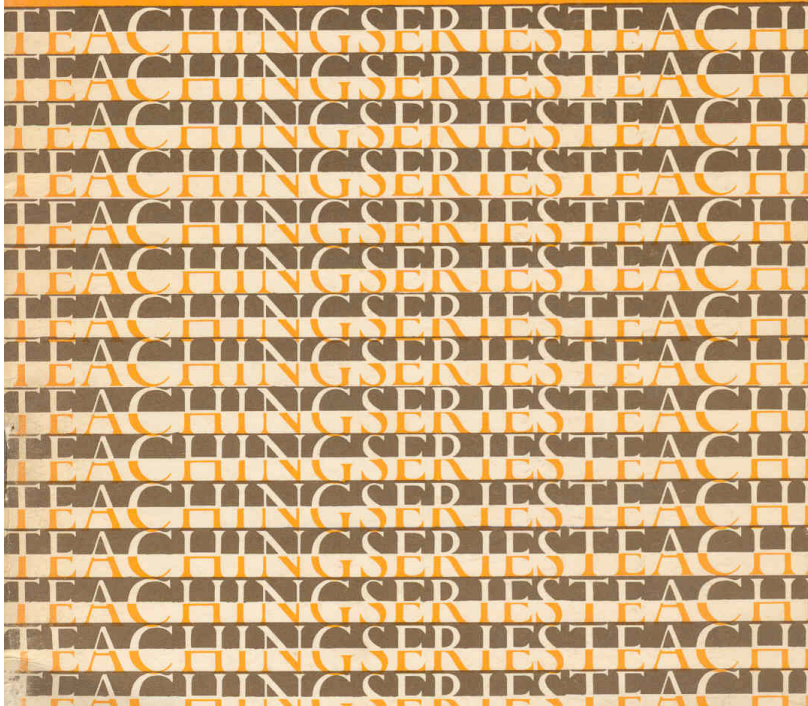


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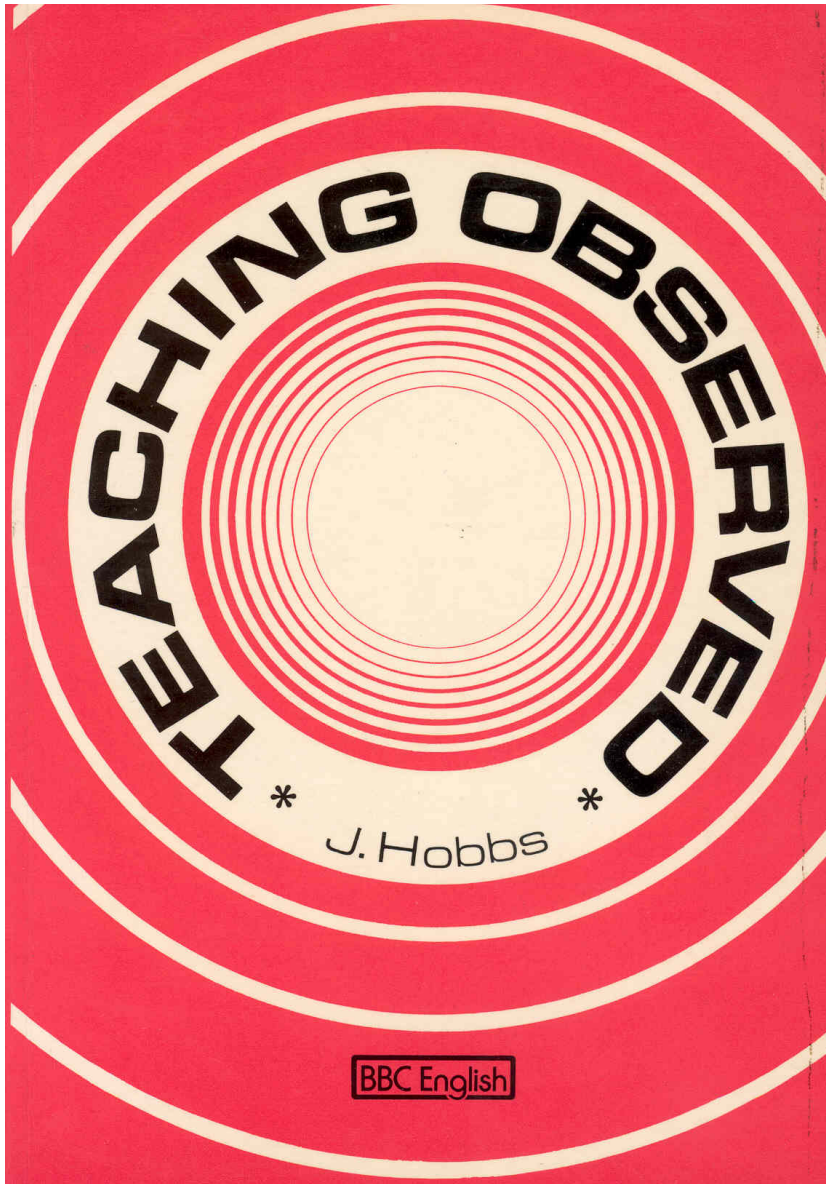


The 'situational approach' / (in India) the 'Independence method'

Structural

Oral

Situational



TEACHING OBSERVED

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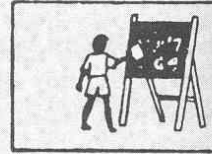
J. Hobbs

BBC English

LESSON UNIT – SEVEN

Language Practice

I (a) Ranjit is cleaning the blackboard.



Ranjit has cleaned the blackboard.
There are no words on it now.



(b) Sarath is painting a picture.



Sarath has painted a picture on the wall.
It is very beautiful.



(c) Kamala is washing her clothes.



Kamala has washed her clothes.
Her clothes are in the sun now.



(4) Make ten sentences from this table:-

Nimal My friend she	has	bought	a book a pencil an umbrella a bag	today.
---------------------------	-----	--------	--	--------

(5) Make ten sentences from this table:-

Our friends The villagers The children	have	eaten bought	some mangoes. some oranges. some chocolates.
--	------	-----------------	--

(6) Make 12 sentences from this table:-

My brother Sena He	has	sent given made	me us you	a toy. a kite. a parcel.
--------------------------	-----	-----------------------	-----------------	--------------------------------

(7) Re-arrange the words and phrases in the following and make sentences:-

- have/four lessons/we/in/our English book/done/.
- at the fair/Kirihamy/has/all his pots/sold/.
- has/our classroom/Kamala/today/swept/.
- left/have/the fair/all the people/now/.
- our Principal/us/given/a new blackboard/has/.

(8) Put the statements in Exercise 3 in the negative form:-

Example:

My friend has bought a new pen.

My friend has not bought a new pen.

Our friends have bought some oranges.

Our friends have not bought any oranges.

(9) Change the statements in Exercise 3 to questions:-

Example:

- My friend bought a new pen

Where did ELT 'come from'?

DER
SPRACHUNTERRICHT
MUSS UMKEHREN!

EIN BEITRAG
ZUR
ÜBERBÜRDUNGSFRAGE
VON
QUOUSQUE TANDEM
(WILHELM VÉTOR).

DRITTE, DURCH ANMERKUNGEN ERWEITERTE
AUFLAGE.



LEIPZIG.
O. R. REISLAND.
1905.

Wilhelm Viëtor (1850-1918)

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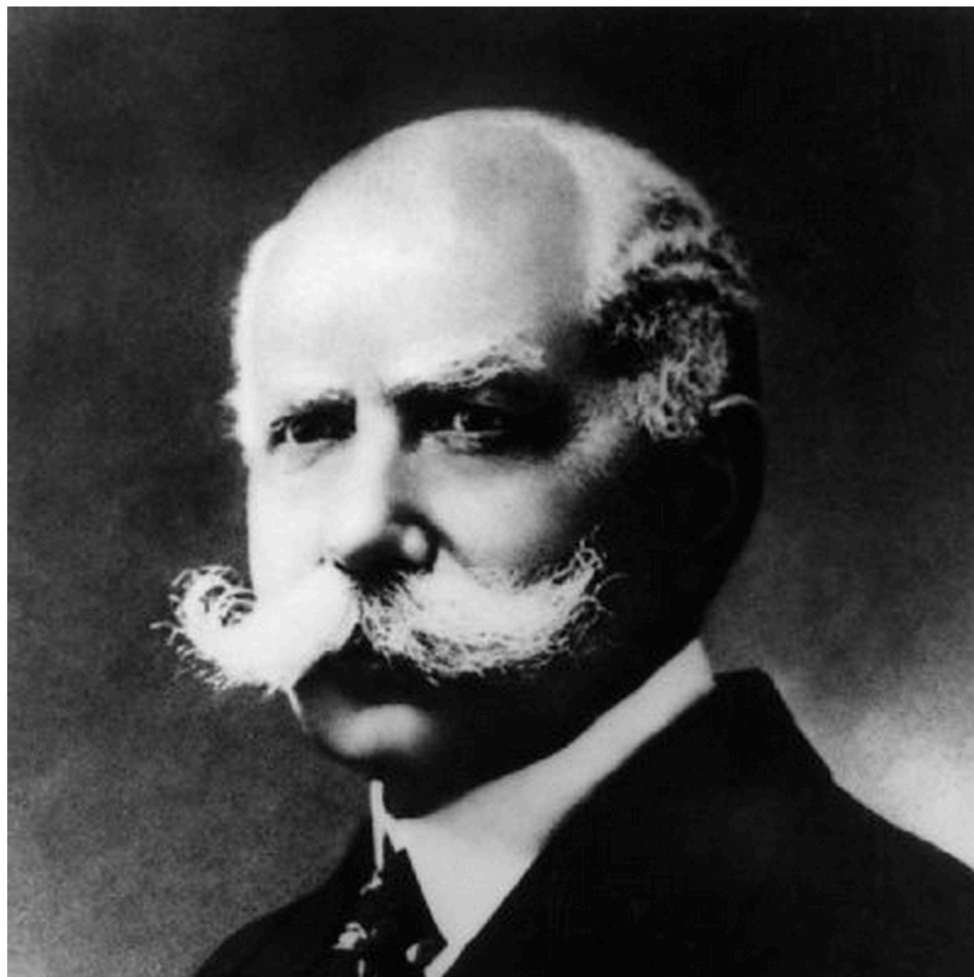
Life

Works

Archive



Maximilian Berlitz (1852-1921)



Life

Works

Archive

Paul Passy (1859-1940)



Life

Works

Archive



**Harold E.
Palmer
(1877-1949)**

THE BULLETIN

OF

THE INSTITUTE FOR RESEARCH IN ENGLISH TEACHING

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, TOKYO, JAPAN

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Vol. I, No. 1.

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June 1, 1923

Institute for Research in English Teaching Established

Mr. Palmer's Office at the Department of Education will be the Centre of Language Teaching Research.

On Tuesday May 1, the special committee of the Department of Education, consisting of Messrs C. Matsuura, T. Komatsubara, S. Ichikawa, Y. Okakura, J. Nagaya, S. Mikami, K. Fujioka appointed to advise in matters pertaining to the work of Mr. Palmer in Japan, met at the Mombusho to hear from Dr. Sawayanagi the plans of the Institute for Research in English Teaching.

The committee approved the Institute, and as individuals they consented to become members of the Advisory Council of the Institute.

It was also resolved to entrust the details of administration and research to a committee which shall be nominated by Dr. Sawayanagi.

Dr. Sawayanagi has therefore with Mr. Palmer appointed the following as the Administrative Committee of the Institute: Dr. M. Sawayanagi, President of the Imperial Education Association; Mr. T. Komatsubara, Inspector of the Department of Education; Prof. Shigeharu Kimura of the Tokyo University of Commerce; Prof. Rinsiro Ishikawa of the Higher Normal School, Tokyo; Prof. Tsutomu Chiba of the School of Foreign Languages, Tokyo; Prof. Shigeru Araki of the Peers's School, Tokyo; Miss Ai Hoshino of the Tsuda Eigaku Juku Tokyo; Prof. Eishiro Hori of Keio University, Tokyo; Prof. J. Victor Martin of Aoyama Gakuin, Tokyo; and Mr. W. E. Laxon Sweet, of the Kokusai News Agency.

English Phonetician Recommends American Pronunciation for Japan; Whereas, American Phonetician Recommends "Southern English."

Professors Daniel Jones and C. H. Grandgent Differ as to a Standard of English Pronunciation for Japanese Schools.

Prof. Daniel Jones, head of the Phonetics Department of University College, London, in a recent letter to the Pronunciation Committee of the Commission on English Teaching by Foreigners in Japan, suggests that it might be found desirable to adopt for teaching purposes in Japan a pronunciation intermediate between the Public School Pronunciation (PSP) of England, (sometimes referred to as "Southern English") and American speech. At this point Prof. Jones suggests that if this committee thought such a course desirable that the west of England pronunciation be adopted especially as it is transcribed in Cassell's French and English Dictionary (new edition).

As an alternative he suggests the adoption of American pronunciation as shown in Krapp's book, "The Standard Pronunciation of English in America". The full text of Prof. Jones's note on this subject will be published in a subsequent Bulletin.

In the same mail Prof. Charles H.

Grandgent of Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass., one of America's foremost phoneticians advised this same committee to adopt "Southern English" as that type of pronunciation is the only one that has been scientifically recorded on a phonetic basis.

Again, in the same way Miss Anne M. Rae, a teacher of phonetics at the Girls High School, New York City, in an article called "Cultured Speech", (to be reproduced subsequently) intimates that there is one standard of cultured speech among educated peoples in the leading centres of the English-speaking world which may be studied in Jones's Pronouncing Dictionary.

The members of the Institute who have seen these statements consider them very significant as well as interesting, and they have expressed a hope that here in Japan there may be discovered the standard that is neither too English to be incomprehensible to Americans, or too American as to be displeasing to the ears of English people.

Kaitakusha Appointed Distributors of Institute Publications.

The Japanese Y. M. C. A. Press (Kaitakusha) of 10 Omote Saragaku-cho, Kanda, Tokyo have been appointed distributing agents and business brokers of the Institute. Mr. Kobayashi, the manager of the Press, acts as a secretary of the Institute and voluntarily tends to all of the business of the In-

stitute. This relieves the other secretaries for the technical work of research which is so important for the Institute to concentrate its efforts on.

Arrangements are also underway with Mr. Palmer's British publishers to make Kaitakusha their stock depository for Japan so that there will always be an adequate supply of Mr. Palmer's books in Japan.



Prof. A.S. Hornby





What a piece of work is man! How noble
in reason, how infinite in faculty! In form, in
moving, how near his essence to a divine being!
O, that we could see the world as it is,
in its true beauty! O, that we could see
the world as it is, in its true beauty!

THE BULLETIN

OF
THE INSTITUTE FOR RESEARCH IN
ENGLISH TEACHING

Department of Education, Tokyo, Japan

No. 126

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Editor: A.S. Hornby





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Palmer
(1877-1949)**

ENGLISH THROUGH ACTIONS

(THIS FORMING PART OF THE "ORAL OSTENSIVE LINE OF APPROACH" OF THE STANDARD
ENGLISH COURSE IN PREPARATION BY THE INSTITUTE.)

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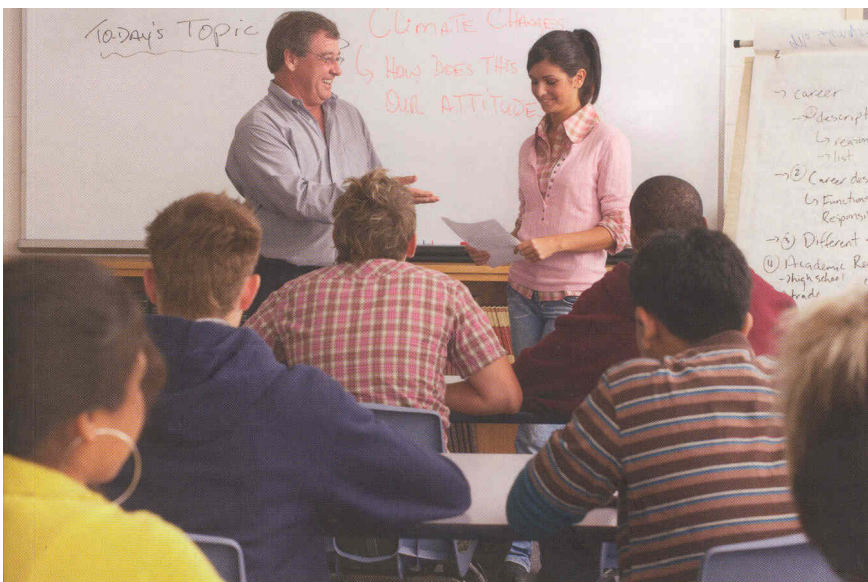
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Articles

A.S. Hornby and the Hornby Trust
Learning of routine formulae
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The Construction of English: Culture, Consumerism
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IATEFL 2010 Harrogate Conference Selections
Shakespeare on Toast
Provoking Thought: Memory and Thinking in ELT
Towards Multilingual Education
Service, Satisfaction and Climate: Perspectives on
Management in English Language Teaching
The Language and Intercultural Communication Reader
Developing Courses in English for Specific Purposes

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Some provisional conclusions

- History can form a useful basis in teacher education, to deconstruct dominant myths / foster teacher autonomy
- History reveals the importance of a 'theory from practice' approach (vs applicationism)

- An applied linguistic approach – going back to 1880s ‘Reform movement’ – has an important contribution to make in counteracting commercial methods. Cf. (1950s) ‘methodics’ / Stern’s (1983) *Foundations of Language Teaching*. The ‘post-method’ viewpoint is not new.
- Ideas surrounding focus on spoken language, on proficiency, on use of target language arose in progressive non-native speaker teacher Reform Movement, not specifically in colonial education
- However, after World War II, ‘linguistics applied’ (SLA or ELF may appear as recent manifestations) and inappropriate exports of methods arose.

- Critique of 'linguistics applied' (Widdowson) and of 'methods export' needs to be continued – as does valuing of a tradition of experience theorized
- Towards an 'alternative applied linguistics' – more bottom up, more governed by – and feeding into -- 'real world problems', more concerned with teachers' contexts, experiences and theories, less 'applicationist'

Q & A