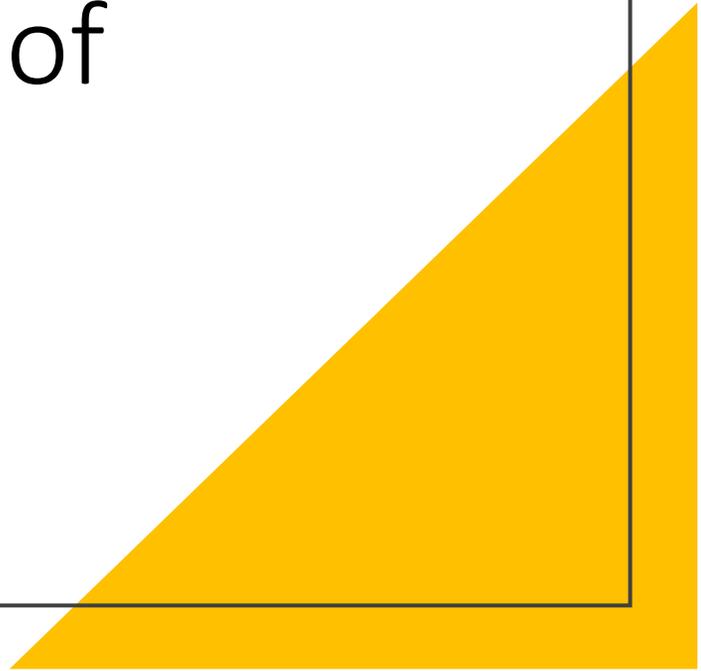
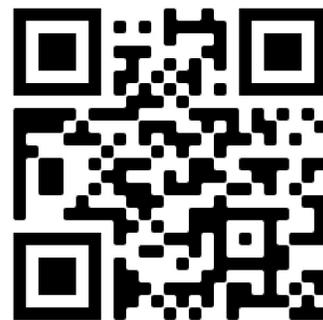


# Practical research in ELT: The legacy of Harold E. Palmer and IRET

Prof. Richard Smith, University of Warwick, UK

<https://bit.ly/palmerlegacy>





# Plan

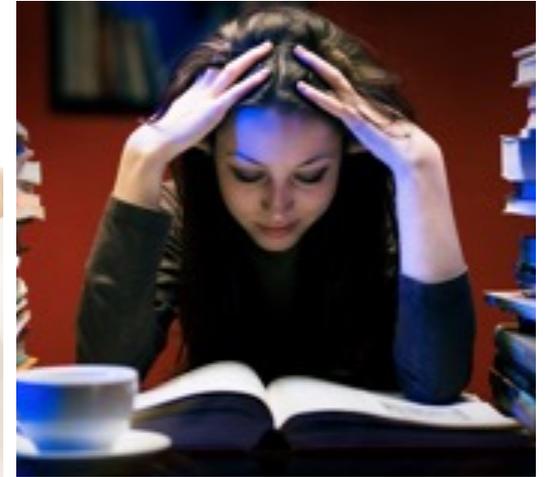
1. Development and current state of research into (English) language teaching
2. The late 19<sup>th</sup>-century Reform Movement and Harold E. Palmer (1877–1949) as precursors
3. Harold Palmer's practical research approach within IRET (the Institute for Research in English Teaching, Tokyo)
4. Palmer's legacy – claimed and un(der)claimed

# 1. Development and current state of research into (English) language teaching

<https://bit.ly/palmerlegacy>



A question: How relevant is research to English teachers?



## Applied Linguistics as a source of insight – or otherwise

- Bloomfield's (1942) *Outline Guide*; the ASTP (Army Method); Fries's (e.g. 1945) Oral Approach
- *Language Learning: A Quarterly Journal of Applied Linguistics* (1946+)
- post-WWII, top-down 'Linguistics applied' (supporting Oral Approach, Audiolingual Method)
- ELEC in Japan (see Henrichsen 1989; Smith with Imura 2004)
- attacks on audiolingualism / attacks on linguistics applied to language teaching (1970s)
- rise of communicative language teaching (1980s onwards)
- a critical turn (e.g. Pennycook 1989, Phillipson 1992, Holliday 1994)
- There's more and more research but also a general questioning of the value of current academic research to teachers, especially those in school systems worldwide (e.g. Smith 2012, 2015)



## 2. The late 19<sup>th</sup>-century Reform Movement and Harold E. Palmer (1877–1949) as precursors

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# Synoptic Overview

## Stage I: Modern Language Teaching in Europe (1750–1920)

### 1. The Classical Period 1750–1880

Core Concern: Emulating the teaching of classical languages

Associated Teaching Methods: [The Grammar-Translation Method]  
[The Classical Method]

### 2. The Reform Period 1880–1920

Core Concern: Teaching the spoken language

Associated Teaching Methods: [various Reform Methods]  
(see *Jespersen, 1904: 2–3*)  
  
The Natural Method (*Henness, Sauveur*)  
The Berlitz Method  
  
The Direct Method

DER  
SPRACHUNTERRICHT  
MUSS UMKEHREN!

EIN BEITRAG  
ZUR  
ÜBERBÜRDUNGSFRAGE  
VON  
**QUOUSQUE TANDEM**  
(WILHELM VIETOR).

DRITTE, DURCH ANMERKUNGEN ERWEITERTE  
AUFLAGE.



LEIPZIG.  
O. R. REISLAND.  
1905.

# The Reform Movement (1880s +)



Henry Sweet (1845–1912)

Phonetics as the 'indispensable  
foundation' of language teaching

*The Practical Study of Languages*  
(1899)





Hermann Klinghardt (1847–1926) – a German secondary school teacher experimented with Sweet's *Primer of Spoken English*

*Ein Jahr Erfahrungen mit der neuen Methode* [A Year's Experiences with the New Method].  
Marburg: Elwert (1888)

A dogmatic/'linguistics applied' view vs. an anti-dogmatic/experimental view

Cf. Widdowson's (2000) 'Linguistics applied' vs. applied linguistics distinction



## Stage II: English Language Teaching beyond and within Europe (1920–2000+)

### 3. The Scientific Period (1920–70)

Core Concern: Scientific basis for teaching

Associated Teaching Methods: The Oral Method (*Palmer*)  
The Multiple Line of Approach (*Palmer*)  
The Situational Approach (*Hornby*)  
The Oral Approach (*Fries*)  
The Audiolingual Method

### 4. The Communicative Period (1970–2000+)

Core Concern: Aiming for ‘real-life communication’

Associated Teaching Methods: Communicative Language Teaching  
Task-based Language Teaching

Harold E. Palmer  
(1877–1949)

At his own language school, the 'Institut Palmer' in Verviers, Belgium (1903–1914), he “explored the possibilities of one method after another, both as teacher and student. **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.”  
(Anderson 1969)



# THE SCIENTIFIC STUDY & TEACHING OF LANGUAGES

A REVIEW OF THE FACTORS AND PROBLEMS  
CONNECTED WITH THE LEARNING AND  
TEACHING OF MODERN LANGUAGES WITH  
AN ANALYSIS OF THE VARIOUS METHODS  
WHICH MAY BE ADOPTED IN ORDER TO  
ATTAIN SATISFACTORY RESULTS

By

HAROLD E. PALMER

ASSISTANT IN THE PHONETICS DEPARTMENT  
UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LONDON

---

‘Post-method pedagogy’:

*‘ce n’est pas la méthode qui nous manque;  
ce qui nous manque c’est la base même de  
la méthode’*

[‘it is not ‘method’ that we lack; what we  
lack is a basis for method’] (my translation))  
(Palmer 1917)

# THE SCIENTIFIC STUDY & TEACHING OF LANGUAGES

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---

‘Principled eclecticism’:

“no one programme can possibly be ideally suitable for all classes of students; hence, in addition to the Standard Programme that we have ... described, we must be prepared to draw up Special Programmes’ (Palmer 1917: 16)

# THE SCIENTIFIC STUDY & TEACHING OF LANGUAGES

A REVIEW OF THE FACTORS AND PROBLEMS  
CONNECTED WITH THE LEARNING AND  
TEACHING OF MODERN LANGUAGES WITH  
AN ANALYSIS OF THE VARIOUS METHODS  
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*By*

HAROLD E. PALMER

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UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LONDON

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And an 'action research' approach:

'Scientific method', according to Palmer (1917: 20):

- (a) To collect isolated facts and factors in such numbers as to cover the whole field of inquiry.
- (b) To classify, examine, and correlate them.
- (c) To draw from them certain conclusions upon which the fundamental principles may be established and stated in categoric terms.
- (d) To confirm and justify these principles by putting them to the test of actual and continual practice.

### 3. Harold Palmer's practical research approach within IRET (the Institute for Research in English Teaching, Tokyo)

<https://bit.ly/palmerlegacy>





1922 – goes to Japan and takes up post as  
'Linguistic Adviser' to the Department of  
Education

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# THE BULLETIN

OF  
THE INSTITUTE FOR RESEARCH IN  
ENGLISH TEACHING  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, TOKYO, JAPAN

大正十三年五月十日印刷  
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東京

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第一號  
發行所  
東京

Vol. I, No. 1. 定價 一部 二十錢 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. Rinshiro Ishikawa of the Higher Normal School, Tokyo; Prof. Tsutomu Chiba of the School of Foreign Languages, Tokyo; Prof. Shigeru Araki of the Peeress'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 the same committee to adopt "Scotch English" as that type of pronunciation is the only one that has been scientifically recorded on a phonetic basis.

Again, in the same way Mrs. Anne M. Rae, a teacher of phonics at the Girls High School, New York City, in an article called "Cultured Speech", (to be reproduced subsequently) intimates that there is no 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 have seen these statements considered them very significant as well as interesting, and they have expressed a hope that here in Japan the standard may be discovered. It is neither too English to be comprehensible to Americans, nor 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 Sarugaku-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 Institute.

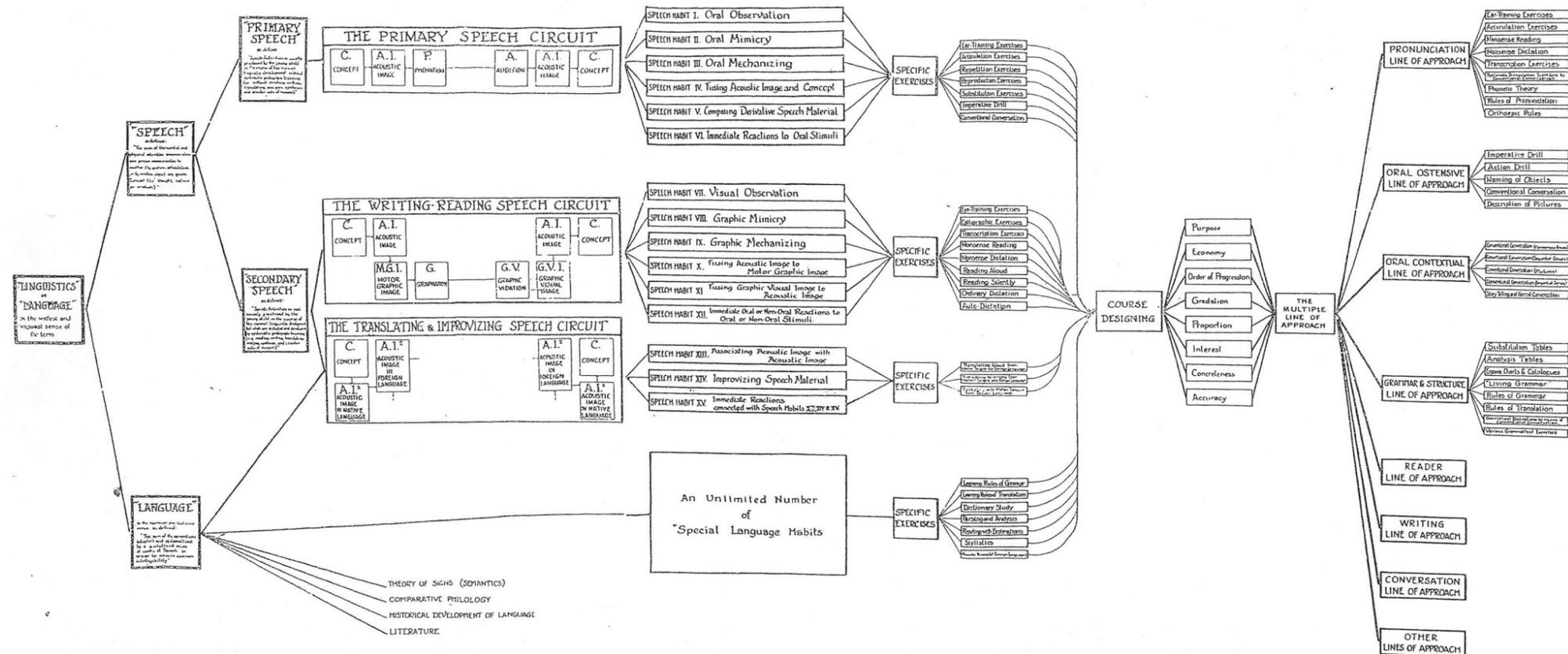
This relieves the other secretaries for the technical work of research which is so important for the Institute to concentrate efforts on.

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

1923 – Establishment of the Institute for Research in English Teaching (IRET) and foundation of the Institute's *Bulletin*

# 1924 – Memorandum on Problems of English Teaching in the Light of a New Theory

SYNOPTIC CHART ILLUSTRATING THE THEORY.



# Centre for Applied Linguistics

## Harold E. Palmer (1877-1949)



Life

Works

Archive

# ENGLISH THROUGH ACTIONS

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

BY

HAROLD E. PALMER

Linguistic Adviser to the Department of Education, Director of the Institute for Research in English Teaching

AND

DOROTHÉE PALMER

Editorial Secretary of the Institute for Research in English Teaching.

TOKYO

THE INSTITUTE FOR RESEARCH IN ENGLISH TEACHING

1925

## 1924 – Begins development of the IRET 'Standard Course'

- a course which would be assembled by teachers themselves, in the light of local needs and with the aid of whichever IRET resources seemed most appropriate to them
- consistent with the Memorandum's 'multiple lines of approach' and with IRET's originally formulated aim of encouraging existing reform efforts by individual teachers and providing an impetus to situated teacher-research

October 1924 – first IRET Convention (300 teachers)

1925  
publications

Grammar and Structure Line of Approach – *Systematic Exercises in Sentence-building*

Oral Ostensive Line of Approach – *English through Actions*

Pronunciation Line of Approach – *Progressive Exercises*

Reader Line of Approach – *Standard English Reader*

Writing Line of Approach – *Graded Exercises in Composition*



## 1926 – Begins development of the IRET 'Reader System'

A Reader for each grade within controlled vocabulary, with ...

- teachers' book of questions and answers for oral work
- gramophone record
- workbook for (non-translational) writing practice
- [Later] side readers

- Cf. The 'Fukushima Plan' (Isoo & Shimizu, 1934)

SECOND INTERIM REPORT ON  
ENGLISH COLLOCATIONS

(A preliminary to a dictionary of fixed or quasi-fixed words that  
is based on an empirical study and not based  
on a priori theory or on a priori principles.)

submitted to the

Tenth Annual Conference of English  
Teachers

under the auspices of the Institute for Research  
in English Teaching

The Institute for Research in English Teaching  
Department of Education, Tokyo

1927

# 1927 – Makes a start on intensive lexicological research

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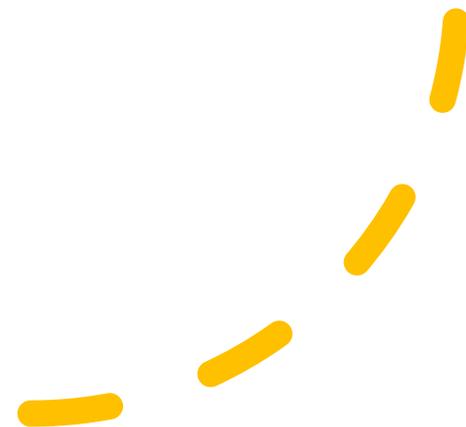
... motivated by and feeding back into writing of Readers and  
Side Readers

... and ultimately a new dictionary for learners of English

# 4. Palmer's legacy – claimed and un(der)claimed



1) Palmer's  
legacy to  
post-war ELT  
(UK)





A.S. Hornby

(1898-1978)

# Hornby in Japan (1923–1943)







What a piece of work is man! How noble  
in reason, how infinite in faculty! In form, in  
moving, how near his Creator's work!  
In action, how like an angel!  
In passion, how like a god! In the  
beauty of his end, how like the  
eternity of his Creator!

# THE BULLETIN

OF

THE INSTITUTE FOR RESEARCH IN  
ENGLISH TEACHING

Department of Education, Tokyo, Japan

No. 126

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Volume I

No. 1

October, 1946

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1946-50

**Founder and editor:  
A.S. Hornby**

Hamby, (Purin)  
Hill, Bullows

# English Language Teaching

VOLUME XIII · NUMBER 1

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- Warner: African Students
  - Enright: Literature Teaching
  - Wingard: 'What's This?'
  - Perren: Bilingualism
  - Filipović: English in a University
- 
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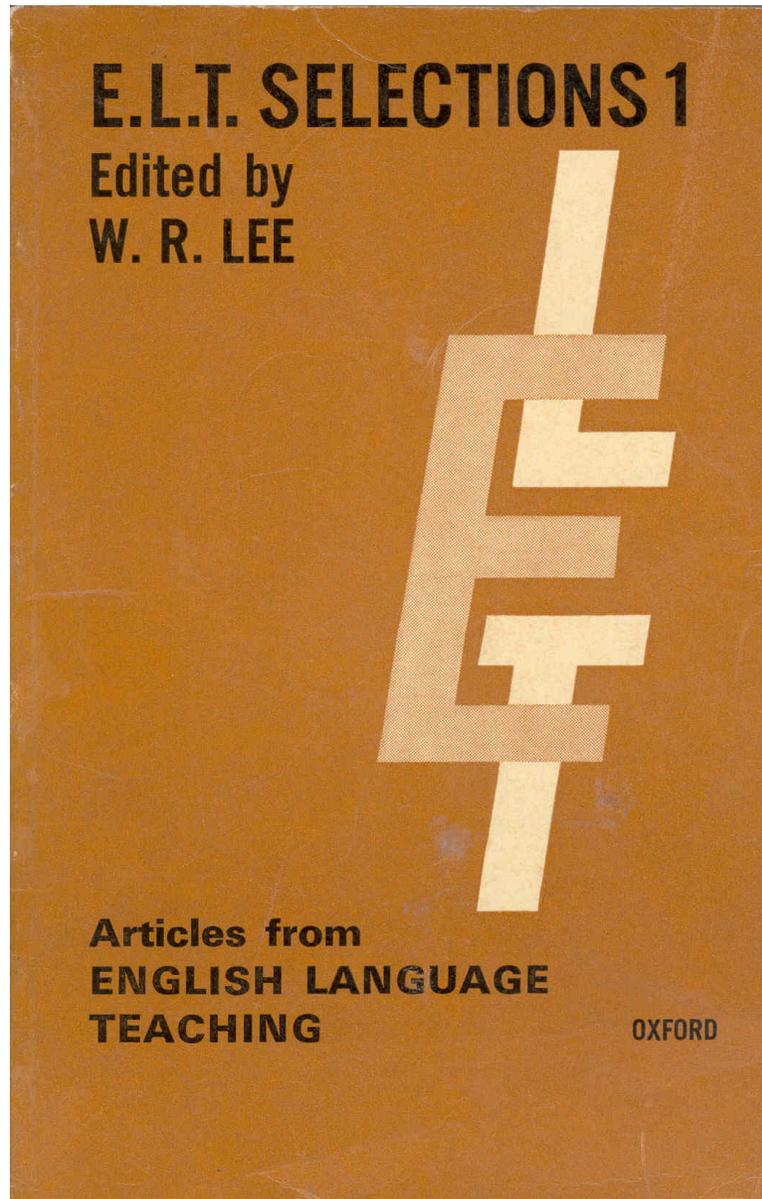
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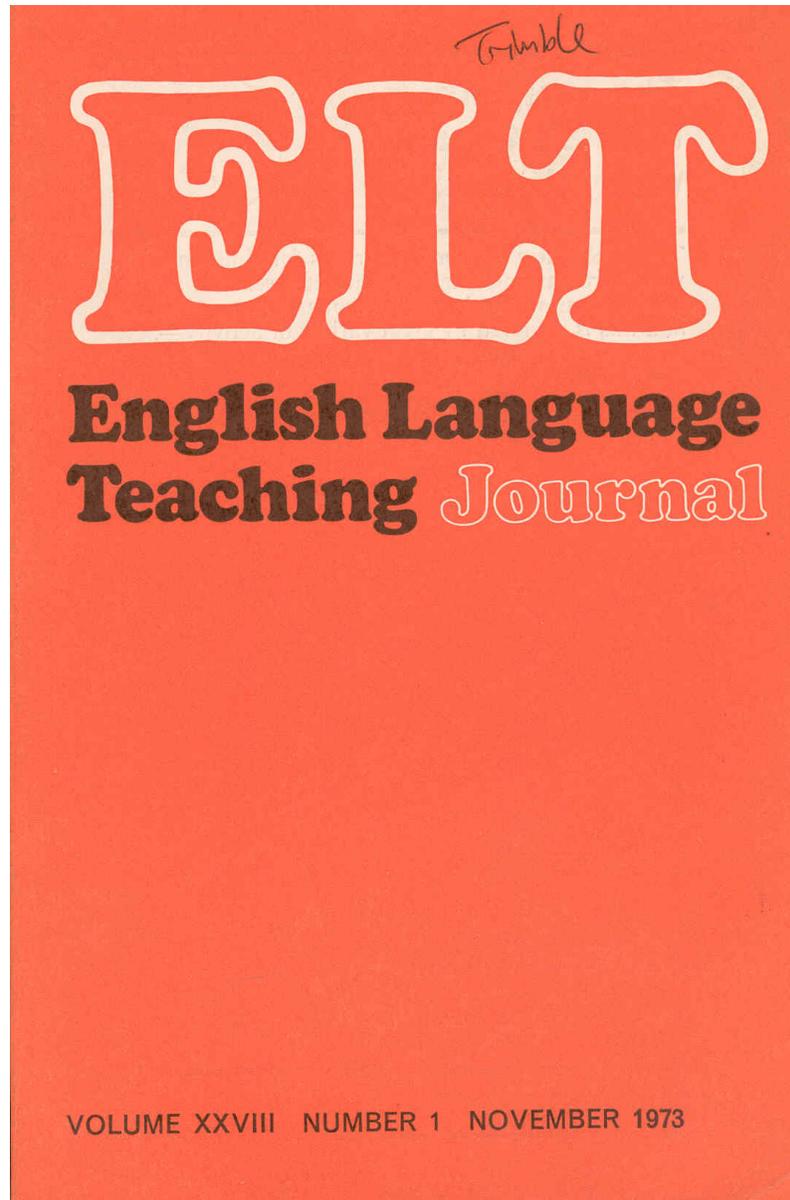
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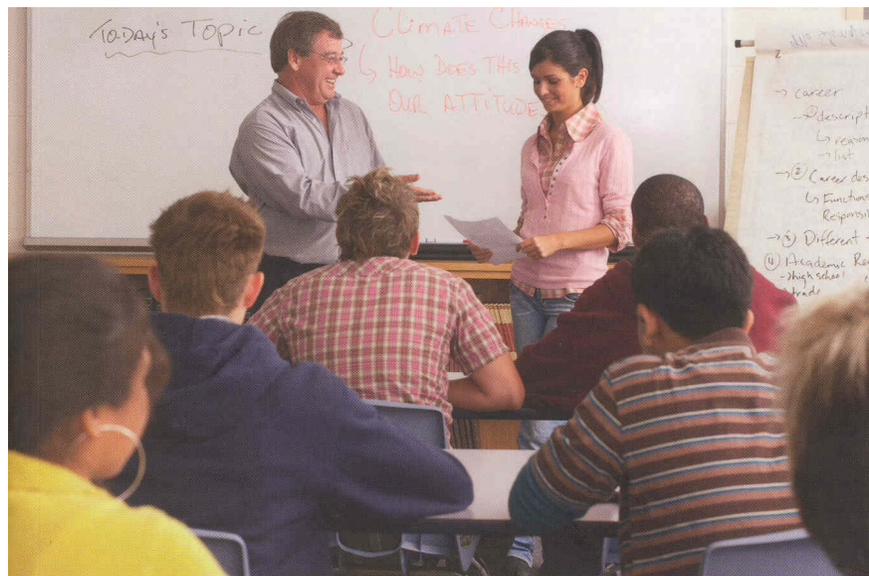
1967



1973+



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

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The myth of the natural-born linguist  
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The Language and Intercultural Communication Reader  
Developing Courses in English for Specific Purposes

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UNIVERSITY PRESS 

# THE ADVANCED LEARNER'S DICTIONARY OF CURRENT ENGLISH

BY

A. S. HORNBY

E. V. GATENBY

H. WAKEFIELD

SECOND EDITION

LONDON  
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

**aqualung** ['ækwɔːlɪŋ] *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'kwɔːrɪəm] *n.* (pl. -ia) (usu. -ia) (building with an) artificial pond or tank for keeping and showing living fish and water plants.

**aquatic** [æ'kwɔːtɪk] *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** ['ækwɔːtɪnt] *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** ['ækwɛdʒkt] *n.* artificial



An aqueduct

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

**aquous** ['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'reɪ'beɪk] *n.* [C] elaborate design of leaves, branches, scrolls, etc.

**Arabian** [æ'reɪʒɪən] *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** ['ærəbl] *adj.* (of land) suitable for ploughing; usually ploughed.

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

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

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

**arbitrate** ['ɑːbɪ'treɪt] *v.t.* & *v.i.* (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 between the employers and their workers*. *If countries would always ~ their quarrels, wars could be avoided*.

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

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

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

**arbour** (U.S.A. =bor) ['ɑːbə] *n.* shady place among trees, esp. one made in a garden, with climbing plants growing over a framework.

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



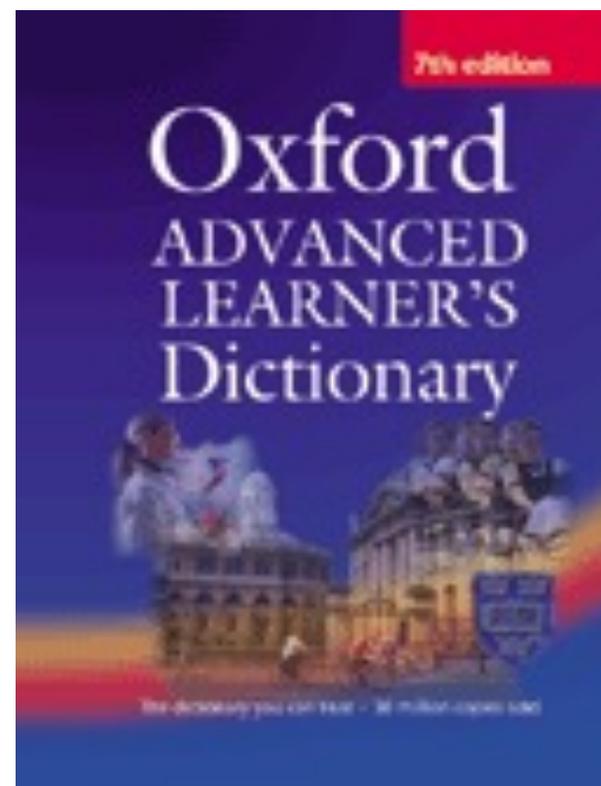
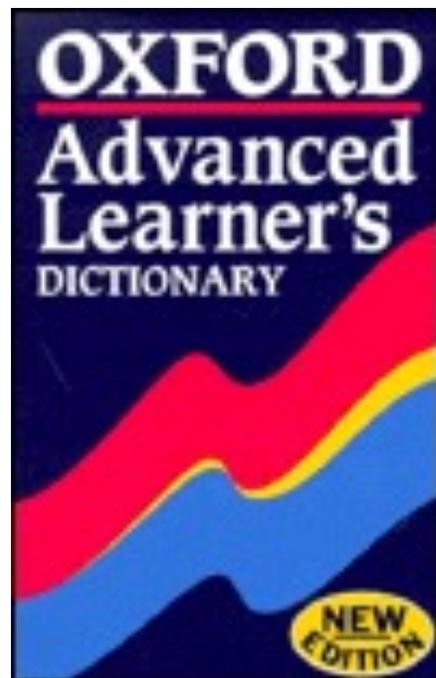
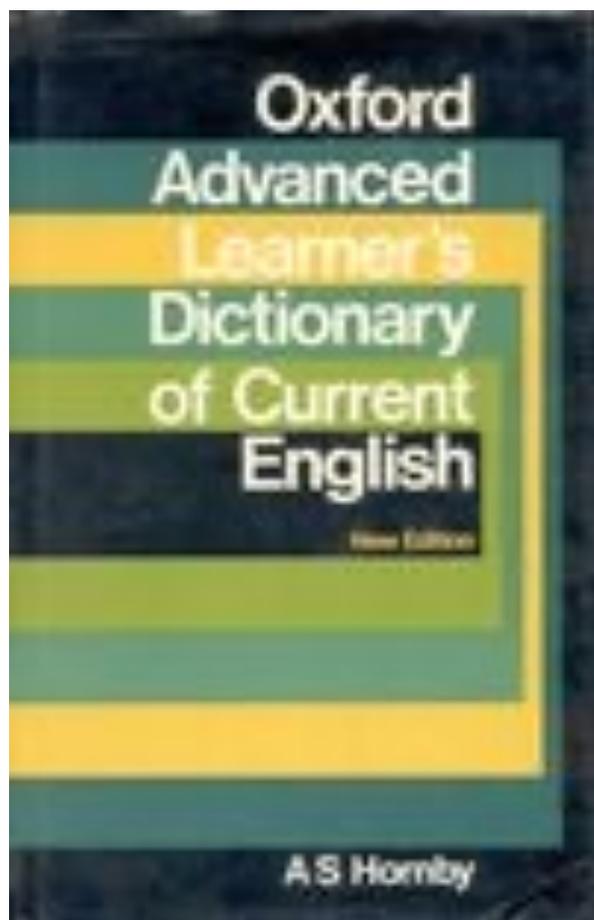
An arcade

**Arcadian** [ɑː'keɪdɪən] *adj.* of an ideal rustic simplicity; simple and innocent. *n.* person with ~ tastes.

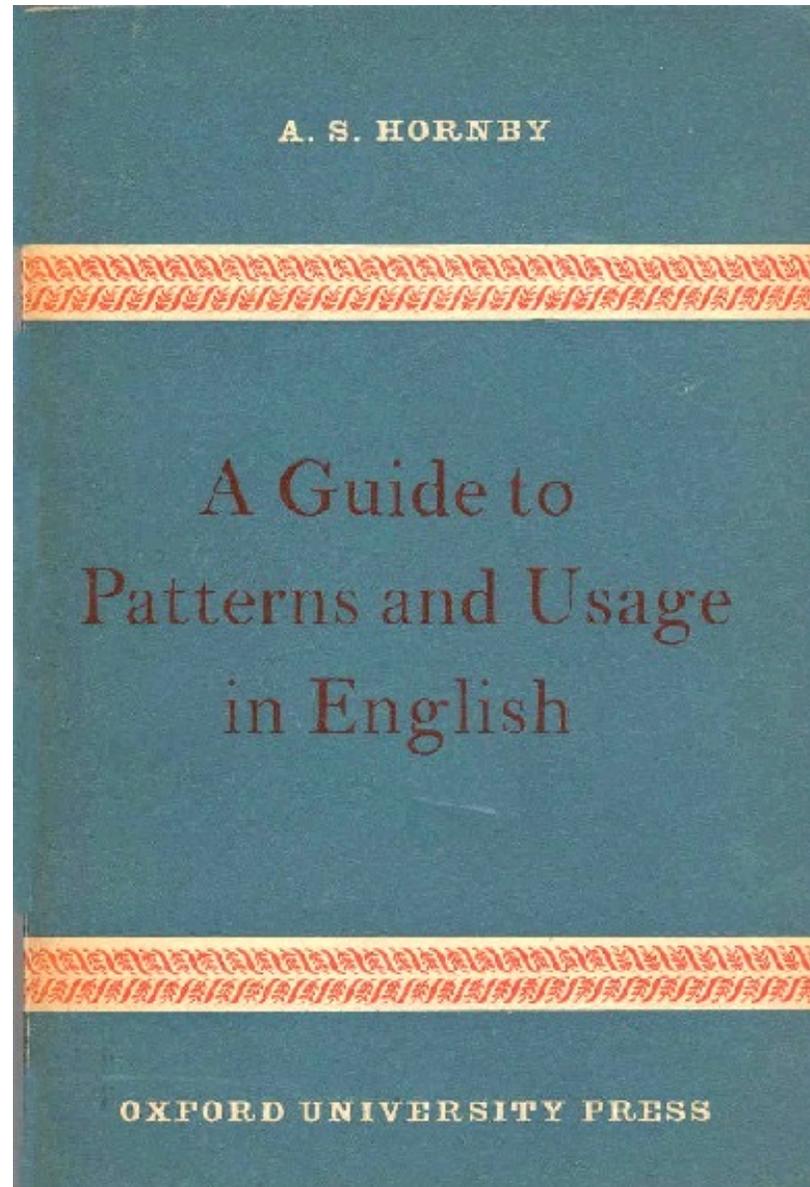
**arch** [ɑːtʃ] *n.* 1. curved structure supporting the weight of what is above it, as in bridges, aqueducts, windows, etc. (See the Illustr. at aqueduct.) 2. (also ~way) curved structure built as an ornament or gateway; a triumphal ~. 3. any curve in the shape of an ~, e.g. the curved under-part of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

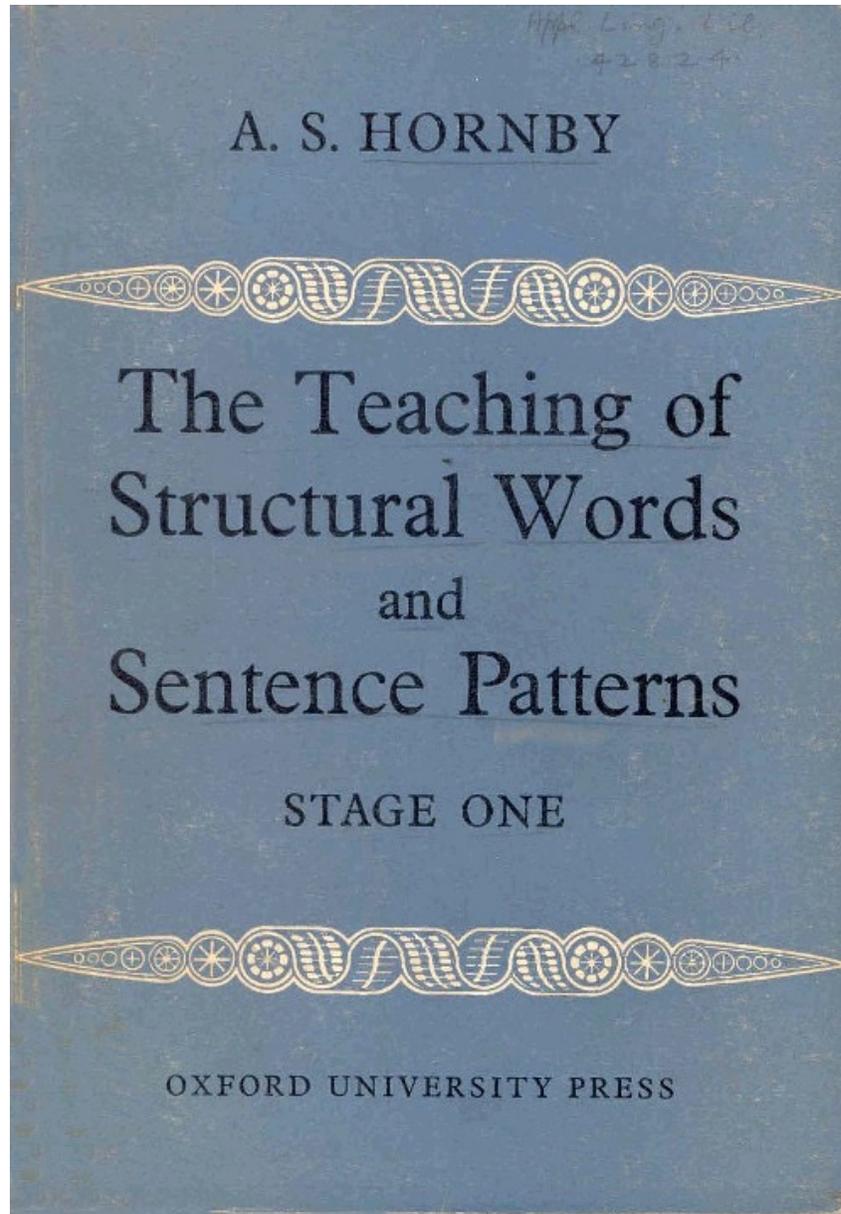


An archway



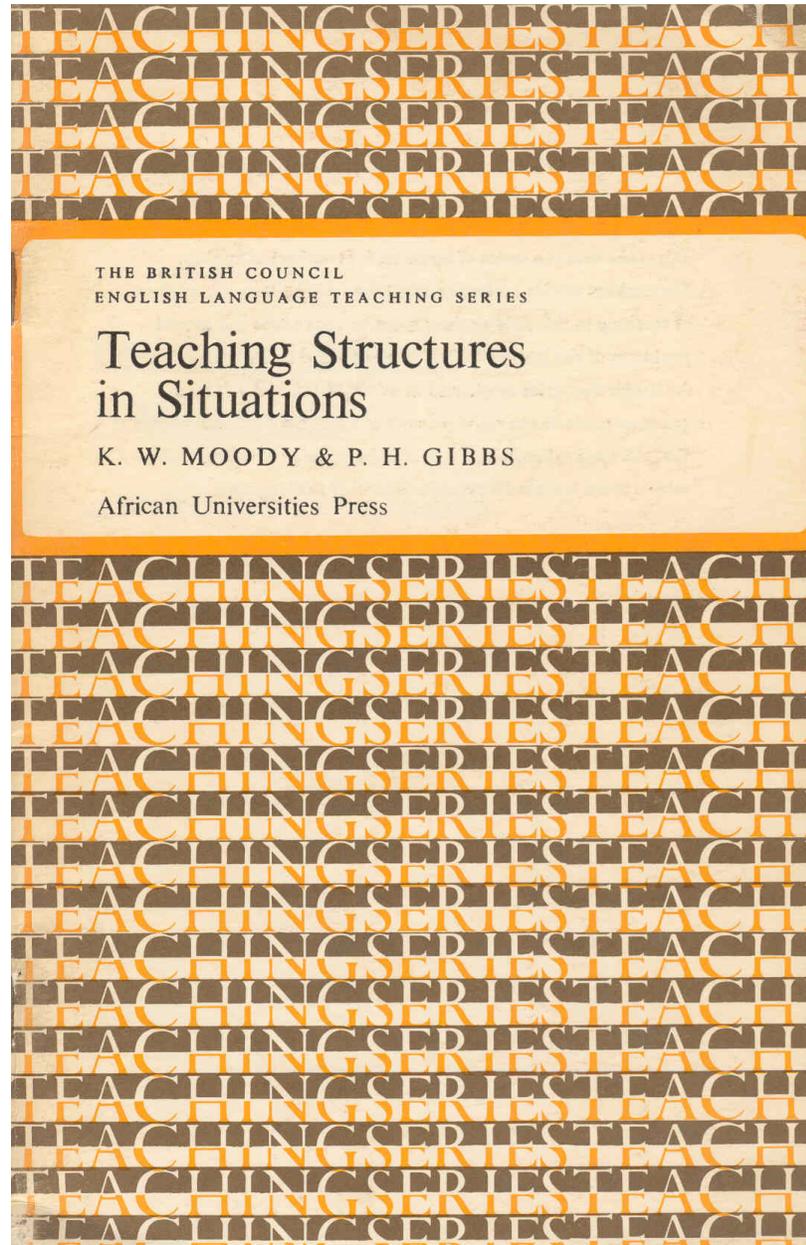
1954





1959-66

1967



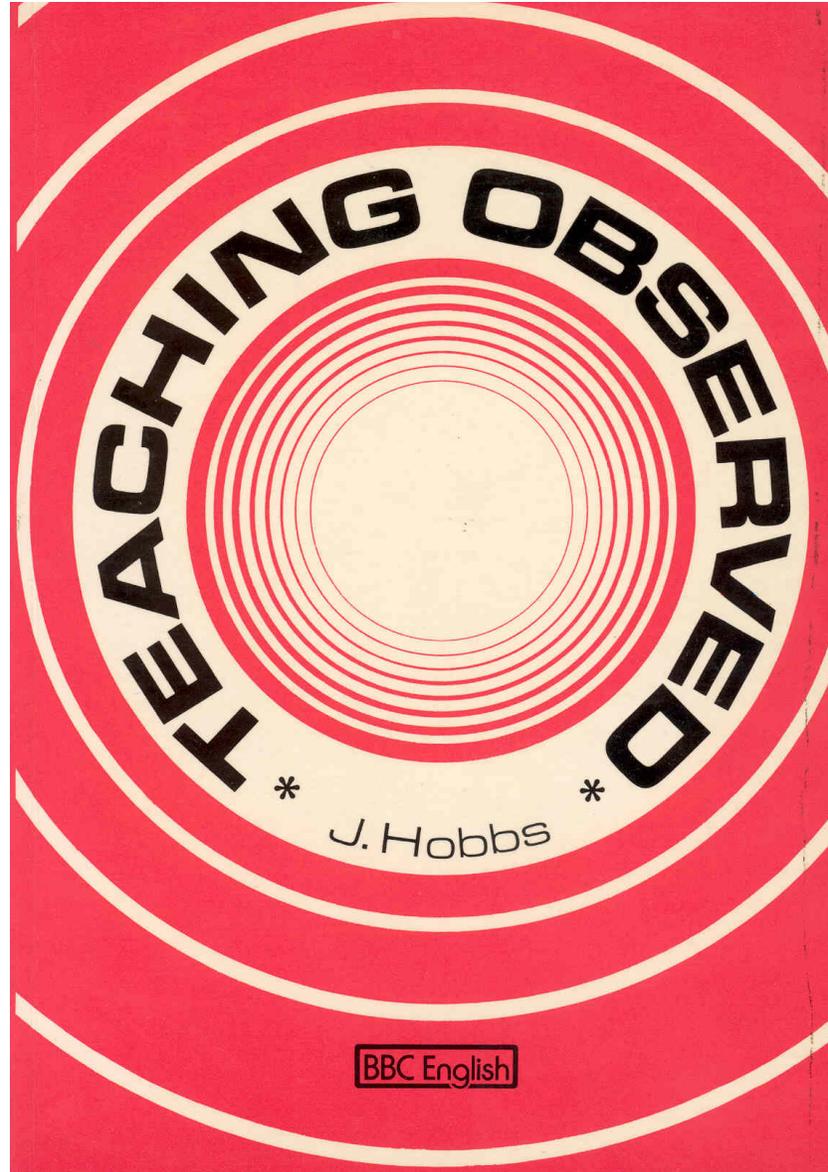
# The 'situational approach'

**Structural**

**Oral**

**Situational**

1977



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.



## 2) Palmer's unclaimed / underclaimed legacy

1) Anti-dogmatism (principled eclecticism – a 'multiple line of approach')

2) Encouraging practical experimentation (action research) in context

# Anti-dogmatism – e.g. via ‘historical sense’?

‘an appreciation of the past which enables new ideas to be evaluated in the light of former experience, past ideas to be made available as a continuing resource, and the limitations and strengths of present-day paradigms of language teaching to be evaluated more wisely, to the benefit of teacher autonomy.’ (Smith 2013)

*So, how and why did I personally first get interested in looking into the history of ELT? It's not a kind of research that many people are engaging in, still. My interest was first stimulated around 1993, after I'd been teaching English in Japan for around seven years, and at a particular university in Tokyo for the previous two years. I could see that – with the retirement of the only professor in this area – there might be an opportunity for getting involved in teaching the main English teaching methodology module for prospective teachers. I was interested, at this point in my career, in getting involved in teacher education not just English teaching, so I went to see the professor who was retiring (his name was Wakabayashi Shunsuke) to express*



*my interest. He asked me, quite combatively (he was well-known for having strong opinions), ‘well, you native speaker teachers don’t necessarily know much about your own history of ELT – what do you know about Harold E. Palmer, for example?’ I had to confess that I didn’t know much about Palmer or ELT history at all – and I started to*



Smith 2016a, b

The Warwick ELT Archive:  
[www.warwick.ac.uk/elt\\_archive](http://www.warwick.ac.uk/elt_archive)





## The History of Language Learning and Teaching

VOLUME I  
16th–18th Century Europe

Edited by Nicola McLelland and Richard Smith



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## The History of Language Learning and Teaching

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# HoLLT.net -- AILA Research Network for History of Language Learning and Teaching

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Practical experimentation: e.g. via 'teacher-research'

# A Handbook for Exploratory Action Research

Richard Smith and Paula Rebolledo





Richard Smith

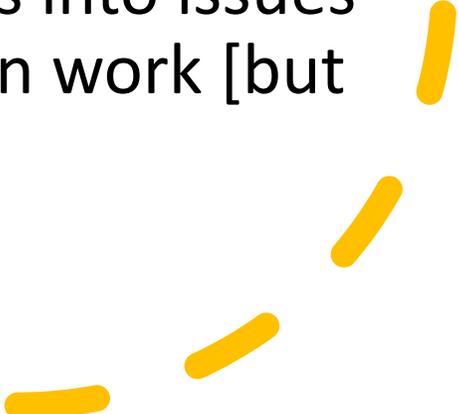
# Mentoring teachers to research their classrooms: a practical handbook



‘Research’: The organised, systematic search for answers to questions we ask [but *whose* questions?]

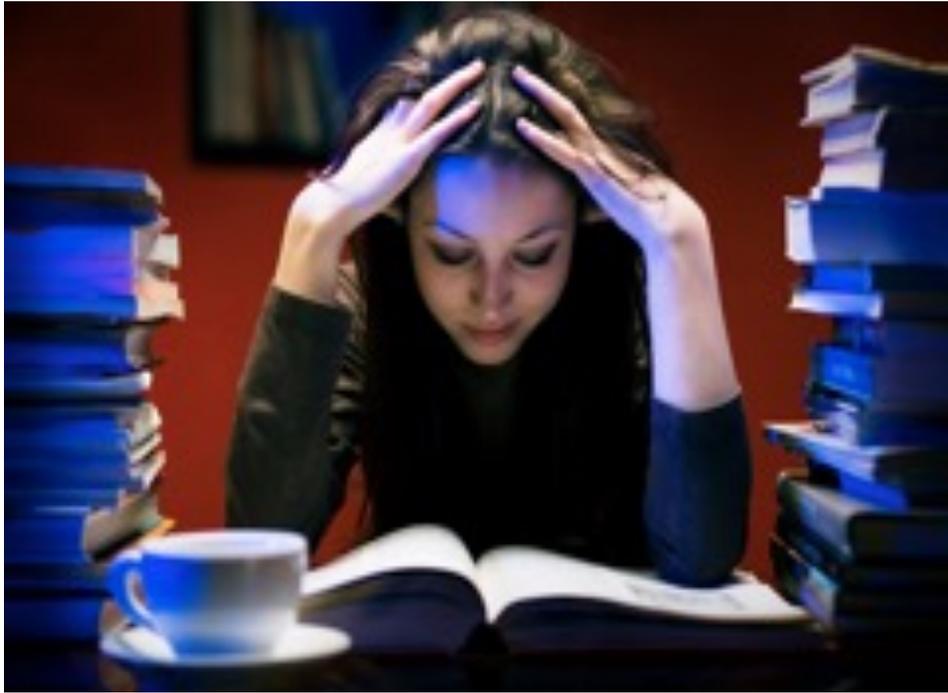
‘Practical research’: Research which arises from and feeds back into issues of concern to practitioners [but who *does* the research?]

‘Teacher-research’ = research initiated and carried out by teachers themselves into issues of importance to them in their own work [but is it of wider value?]



From ...





To ...





# Conclusion

Palmer's overall anti-dogmatic, practical research approach led to multiple achievements

- globally (e.g. substitution drills, TPR, lexical approach, coursebook packages, graded readers, wordlists, learner dictionaries)
- vis-à-vis UK ELT (*ELTJ*, situational language teaching)
- In relation to English teaching in Japan (IRET/IRLT achievements)

However, the products rather than the research approach itself were taken forward after World War II. It may be time to return to his anti-dogmatic, practical overall kind of research approach.

# Questions / Comments / Further contact

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