

other writers. For example, there were the *General Service List of English Words* (Longman 1953, edited by Michael West) and successive editions of the (*Advanced*) *Learner's Dictionary of Current English* (Oxford University Press, 1948 onwards, edited by A.S. Hornby et al.,) both foundation stones of modern ELT and both owing much to Palmer's pre-war research.

It is equally important to recognise Palmer's contributions to applied linguistics in Japan. While most of his energies were devoted to the improvement of English teaching there, he also found time to deal with topics of even more specific relevance such as *The Principles of Romanization* (1930). For this and other works he was awarded a D.Litt by Tokyo University before he finally returned to England in 1936.

The ten volumes of the *Selected Writings* comprise more than five and half thousand pages and contain no fewer than fifty-two separate works. Some, like the *Scientific Study* and the *Principles* are well-known but many of the shorter studies are unfamiliar to readers outside Japan. The collection also shows that Palmer could work comfortably in more than one register; his writing encompasses not only

scholarly books and articles but also pamphlets and books for a wider audience (for example, *This Language Learning Business* (1932)) which provide evidence of his considerable sense of humour. (He had been a journalist before becoming a teacher and his versatility may owe something to this experience). In spite of this breadth of coverage, the present set does not pretend to offer more than a selection of Palmer's writings - the *essential Palmer* readings in fact. (A comprehensive Palmer bibliography is provided in a companion volume to the set by Richard Smith, entitled *The Writings of Harold E. Palmer: An Overview*. This study succeeds admirably in placing the writings which are included in context and in indicating the full extent of Palmer's achievement.)

The present compilation of Palmer's most significant publications - all of which are currently out of print in the UK - is a detailed and timely reminder of the debt we owe both to the man himself and to his far-sighted Japanese sponsors.

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Harold E. Palmer, IRET and IRLT

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The ten volumes of *The Selected Writings of Harold E. Palmer*, first issued by the Tokyo publisher Hon-no-Tomosha in 1995, have now been reprinted for the international market in a limited edition. These volumes have been edited by a committee of Japanese scholars associated with the Institute for Research in English

Teaching (IRET), founded in Tokyo in 1923. IRET was originally established to support, provide focus for and diffuse the research and reform efforts led by Palmer, the Institute's first Director, during his fourteen years in Japan (from 1922 to 1936).

Palmer also had, throughout this period, the prestigious position of Linguistic Adviser to the Japanese Ministry of Education, but most of his considerable energies were to be channelled through the semi-official Institute. Notable achievements included the foundation and regular publication of the Institute's *Bulletin*, which was sent out world-wide at a time when no similar journals existed elsewhere. With only a small full-time staff but a larger number of dedicated supporters and voluntary research workers, IRET additionally issued (through its distributor, Kaitakusha) a vast quantity of memoranda, research reports, teacher's guides and textbooks, some of which were connected with international developments (in particular the vocabulary control movement of the 1930s in which Palmer played a leading role), but most of which related more specifically to the need to help teachers and learners of English in the Japanese context. Among these hitherto largely unknown publications (outside Japan) are a number of works by Palmer - all included in *The Selected Writings* - which provided the conceptual, applied linguistic framework for reform in this context, and which may therefore, nowadays, be seen to have a wider significance: in particular, *Memorandum on Problems of English Teaching* (1924) and *The Reformed English Teaching* (1927). Also included and awaiting discovery by an international readership are practical guides for teachers including *Classroom Procedures and Devices* (1927), suggested syllabuses (*The First Six Weeks of English* (1929)), and a number of

pioneering works on intonation, sentence patterns, lexicology and text simplification. Although IRET's efforts to bring about reform in the face of rising ultranationalism and increasingly strong calls to abolish the teaching of English in the pre-war years are generally seen to have been not entirely successful, IRET's publications - and among them those by Palmer in particular - represent an important legacy. The significance of Palmer's work in the Japanese context appears to be confirmed by the Institute's continuing presence as an influential forum for teacher-research and debate on issues relating to English teaching (even though the Institute's name was changed during the war to the Institute for Research in Language Teaching (IRLT), its main focus continues to be on the teaching of English).

In itself, the publication of Palmer's *Selected Writings* is evidence of the extent to which his work is still appreciated and seen to have contemporary relevance in Japan. The fondest hope of the committee of editors is that the writings which have so influenced them, whether directly or indirectly via their participation in the various research, study and teacher education activities still pursued with vigour by IRLT, may be found relevant, in turn, by future generations of teachers and researchers both inside and outside Japan.

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