

# The Study of English-Speaking Methodology by Harold Edward Palmer and Other British Scholars

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**Abstract:** This article describes the Harold Edward Palmer's work on the process of teaching students to speak in a English language.

**Keywords:** English language, Harold E. Palmer, Oral Method, Vocabulary Control, Applied Linguistics, Language Teaching, Phonetics, IRET (Institute for Research in English Teaching), Pattern Practice, Communicative Approach, Foreign Language Pedagogy.

**Introduction:** The methodology of teaching spoken English has been extensively studied by Harold Edward Palmer and other prominent British linguists. Palmer holds a significant place in the field of spoken language instruction and is considered one of the pioneers of the communicative approach in language teaching. When viewed from a modern perspective, the contributions of these scholars to English language education remain substantial and influential. As evidence of this, it is essential to highlight the work and effective teaching methods developed by the renowned British linguist Harold Edward Palmer. Born on March 6, 1877, and passing on November 16, 1949, Palmer was a specialist in phonetics and a pioneer in the field of teaching English as a second language. His extensive work made a lasting impact on the development of applied linguistics in the 20th century. Palmer received his education in France during 1892–1893.

After completing his studies, he moved to Belgium in 1902, where he began teaching English at the Berlitz School. In 1903, he established his own language school. His accumulated experience and success in language instruction led him to begin teaching at University College London in 1915. Throughout his career, Palmer developed innovative teaching methods focused on oral proficiency and active communication. His approach emphasized the importance of repetition, memorization, and contextual use of language. Among his most influential works are *The Scientific Study and Teaching of Languages* (1917) and *English Through*

*Actions* (1925), which remain relevant in the field of English language teaching today. Palmer also spent several years in Japan (1922–1936), where he worked closely with the Ministry of Education to develop national English language teaching programs. His contributions during this period significantly shaped English language education in Japan and further demonstrated the effectiveness of his methodologies on a global scale.

In a short period, Harold Edward Palmer became a prominent figure in the field of English language teaching. In 1922, he was invited by the Prime Minister of Japan to help implement English language education in Japanese schools and moved to Japan. There, he was appointed as a “Linguistic Adviser” to the Japanese Ministry of Education, and from that point onward, he conducted numerous scientific and educational research projects.

In 1923, he founded the Institute for Research in English Teaching (IRET), which is now known as the Institute for Research in Language Teaching (IRLT), and served as its first director. While working at the institute, Palmer provided several practical contributions, including the establishment of the institute's official “Bulletin.” Through his numerous influential scientific works, collections of articles, and practical research in English language teaching methodology, Palmer achieved remarkable success. In recognition of his contributions, in 1935 he was awarded the D.Litt (Doctor of Literature) by the Tokyo

Imperial University. This honorary degree is typically conferred upon individuals who have made a significant contribution to the field of literature, without necessarily following a specific curriculum. In 1936, Palmer returned to England and continued his professional work as an adviser for Longmans, Green & Co., a British publishing company founded in 1724 by Thomas Longman (1699–1755). In 1937, he collaborated with A.S. Hornby, the creator of the first Advanced Learner's Dictionary, to publish the "Thousand-Word English" book.

During World War II, Palmer remained in England and contributed to the war effort by publishing three booklets on the French language to assist soldiers preparing for the Normandy invasion. In 1917, Palmer, together with Heffer and his son, developed the first course in English phonetics, which included the scope of phonetics as a science, a theory of sounds, a catalog of English sounds, and several exercises in articulation, pronunciation, and transcription. That same year, he authored the book "The Scientific Study and Teaching of Languages," in which he presented various theoretical approaches and practical methods for both language learners and teachers. He analyzed different methodologies that could lead to positive results and addressed issues related to the learning and teaching of modern languages. During this time, Palmer also returned to London to conduct a series of scientific seminars. His extensive engagement in English as a foreign language instruction, coupled with his theoretical works, textbooks, and teaching manuals, have left an indelible mark on the global methodology of foreign language teaching.

A number of textbooks authored by Harold E. Palmer were published with the aim of improving English phonetics, grammar, and spoken language skills. His notable works on English phonetics include: *Everyday Sentences in Spoken English, with Phonetic Transcription and Intonation Marks (for the Use of Foreign Students)* (3rd Edition), Cambridge: Heffer and Sons, *A Grammar of Spoken English on a Strictly Phonetic Basis* (1924), Tokyo: Institute for Research in English Teaching, *The Principles of English Phonetic Notation, Progressive Exercises in the English Phones* (1925), Tokyo: Institute for Research in English Teaching, *English Intonation, With Systematic Exercises* (1922), Tokyo, *A First Course of English Phonetics, including an Explanation of the Scope of the Science of Phonetics, the Theory of Sounds, a Catalogue of English Sounds, and a Number of Articulation, Pronunciation and Transcription Exercises* (1928, 2nd Edition), Cambridge: Heffer and Sons, *A Grammar of Spoken English on a Strictly Phonetic Basis* (1939, 2nd Edition), co-authored with F. G. Blandford, Cambridge: Heffer

and Sons, *A Dictionary of English Pronunciation with American Variants, in Phonetic Transcription* (1929, 2nd Edition), co-authored with J. V. Martin and others, Cambridge.

One of Palmer's key innovations was the "Aural-Oral Method," which later became fundamental to modern language learning methodologies. Popular in the first half of the 20th century, this method focused on developing auditory (aural) and speaking (oral) skills. Palmer believed that learners should primarily acquire the language through listening and speaking, just as children learn their native language. This method emphasized oral and auditory experience as the main foundation of language acquisition, making it one of the cornerstones of modern communicative approaches.

#### Harold Palmer's Key Ideas on Developing Oral and Written Skills

1. Superiority of the Oral Method: Palmer emphasized oral communication as the first step in language acquisition. According to him, people first develop listening and speaking skills in their native language, and only then acquire reading and writing skills. Therefore, in English language teaching programs, students must first be prepared for oral communication. To develop oral skills, Palmer used the following methods:

- **Listening and Repetition:** Students listen to the speech of the teacher or native speakers and repeat it, thereby developing pronunciation and communication skills.
- **Short Dialogues and Conversations:** Students use simple, clear, and short dialogues to engage in communication. This increases learners' confidence and encourages spontaneous speaking.
- **Attention to Pronunciation and Intonation:** In oral practice, emphasis is placed on correct pronunciation and intonation, as they enhance naturalness and understanding in communication. This method was introduced as an alternative to traditional grammar-translation methods in the early 20th century and became a key component of spoken language teaching techniques.

practically.

Harold Edward Palmer was a pioneering figure in the development of English language teaching methodologies in the early 20th century. His practical contributions, including the establishment of the Institute for Research in English Teaching in Japan and the implementation of the "oral method," laid the foundation for modern communicative approaches. Palmer emphasized the significance of listening and

speaking skills in the initial stages of language acquisition, which was a revolutionary departure from the traditional grammar-translation method. His nine principles of language learning, systematic phonetic training, and focus on learner interest and habit formation continue to influence second language instruction worldwide. Furthermore, Palmer's belief in aural-oral methods and progressive teaching techniques has shaped the pedagogical practices of today's language educators. His legacy not only advanced English language teaching during his lifetime but also provided theoretical and methodological frameworks that remain relevant and effective in contemporary language education.

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