

An Appraisal of Modern Currents in ELT: Ten Articles

‘Before enlightenment, carry water, chop wood.

After enlightenment, carry water, chop wood’

Gautama Siddartha (the Buddha), c500BC

Introduction

1. The prologue

I hope that, in these articles, there is something for everyone, from the most recent rookie to the most seasoned oak-tree. This first article outlines the starting-points for my thinking.

Philosophy

2. Do language teachers and applied linguists understand each other?

In this second one, on applied linguists and teachers, I attempt to enhance the increasingly fruitful relationship between those at the chalk-face and those in high towers.

3. Integration not eclecticism – a brief history of language teaching: 1853 – 2003

Here, my idea is to provide a context for all our discussions, to show how often what goes around comes around, and to champion the notion of integration of the past into all things current.

Methodology

4. Noticing: a re-appraisal of its implications for methodology.

Here, I explore ideas about ‘noticing’, which I think is fundamental to all our principled behaviour in the classroom, and question recent views of how it works.

5. ‘Authentic participation’ – integrating task-based and language-focus methodologies

This is a method for engaging students in real discursive communication while simultaneously focusing on accuracy.

6. ‘Good teaching’ – a re-appraisal

Here, a new approach to a familiar thing, in particular exploring the technique-materials-relationship triangle, and the Yin and Yang of lesson design.

Syllabus

7. Lexical approaches now: the role of syntax and grammar

Here, I challenge the domination of lexis in the lexical approach, and hope to show the indispensability of both grammar and syntax.

8. A ‘Standard International English’ – where next?

In this article, I explore the case for a Standard International English, with practical suggestions about its implementation.

Language

9. The ‘music of English’ – a new model of communicative intonation and rhythm

This is a complete re-working of communicative intonation and rhythm, showing how it can be both simple and learnable. A shorter version of this article was published in IHJ 14, May 2003.

10. The present perfect – chimera or pussy cat?

And finally, a complete re-working of the present perfect, showing its intrinsic simplicity and learnability.

The message throughout the articles is this: the more that new ideas shed light on what we do, the more we should remember our roots, keep our feet on the ground, and integrate the new with the old. We should not allow fads to get a foothold, and we should try not to be categorical about anything. We should remember that the relationship between the teacher and their students is as old as human history. And the humanity of that relationship will always continue unchanged.