

ELT in changing worlds

The social context of our profession

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Slides available for download

Two questions

How does ELT adapt to a changing world?

and

How does a changing world adapt ELT?

- Social / temporal location
- ELT as a social and cultural activity
- The 'Zeitgeist' (inspiration)
v.
Imperative (determinant)

A UK/European/USA Cultural History (of sorts) ...

The 1950s / 1960s: rational, technical solutions, 'all mod cons'



...and language teaching?

Grammar-Translation

Direct Method

Berlitz

and then....

**SOMETHING
HAPPENED IN
OUTER SPACE!!**



Meanwhile, back in the USA...



...and language teaching?

- 'Emergency measures' to upgrade language teaching: National Defense Foreign Language Act
- Massive grants to 'strengthen' research, materials and methods

Zeitgeist: A technical, rational solution for a perceived technical problem

- Most funds went into audio lingual approaches (The 'Army Method'): **cementing behaviourism in language teaching**
- Drills, dialogue repetition, mim-mem, pattern practice

- Language laboratories became commonplace



A zeitgeist social reaction: late 60s – late 70s

- hippies, beatniks, flower-power, woodstock
- 'Do your own thing' 'alternative lifestyles' 'dropout'
- self-improvement



- DIY



1969 to present

...and language teaching?

- Whole person approaches: Caring and sharing..., 'Fringe' methods: silent way, suggestopaedia, community language learning ...
- Self Access Centres, Autonomous learning, Individualisation
- Krashen – 'natural acquisition'

Zeitgeist: hot issues in the late 70s – mid 80s +

- status of minority and ethnic groups, women's rights
- 'cultures'
- environmental concern
- democratisation

...and language teaching?

- Focus on the learner
- ESP
- Needs analysis
- Negotiated curricula / process syllabuses

From Zeitgeist to Imperative:

The shaping of ELT practices, 1980s onwards

Two concepts

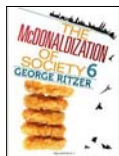
- McDonaldisation
- The Market

McDonaldisation (Ritzer 2000, 2010)



McDonaldisation (Ritzer 1993, 2000, 2010)

- logic, priorities and organisation of McDonalds
- efficiency and total predictability
standardised product
routines and scripts
a packaged *experience*
- McDonaldisation is *colonising* other areas of life:
'McTV', 'McNews', 'McCinema', 'McUniversity'
- a dehumanising process, deskilling, a 'caged' society, homogenization



Ritzer's strategies for resistance

- Do as many things as you can for yourself.
- At least once a week, cook a meal from scratch.
- Never buy artificial food products
- Develop personal ties with the workers in restaurants.
- Watch as little television as possible. Turn off the sound and look away during commercials.

Ritzer's strategies for resistance

- Don't go to movies with numerals in the name or 'X and the ...'
- Don't take your children to fast food restaurants. If there's no choice, blindfold your child until the ordeal is over.
- Avoid classes with computer-graded tests. If this is unavoidable, make extraneous marks and curl the edges so the computer cannot deal with it.

...and language teaching?

• McCoursebook?

- 'Complete' packages
- Standardised unit lengths
- Standardised unit structure
- Reproductive tasks
- Teacher scripts
- Naturalises consumption lifestyle
- Bland: carrier content and learning content

An example

- 1 You're going to read about an inventor. Which of these facts do you think are about the inventor of:
 - karaoke? • the iPod?
- 2 Work in A/B pairs. A, read the article below and B, read the article on p119 to check your ideas.
- 3 a A, complete the summary of this article; B, complete the summary on p119.
 - b Tell each other about your articles. How are the two men similar or different?
- 4 Look at the sentences from the articles. Match 1-3 with topics a-c.
- 5 Complete the questions with verbs from the highlighted expressions in 4 in the correct form.

...and language teaching?

• McCoursebook?

• McLesson?

• McTeacher Training?

From Zeitgeist to Imperative:

The shaping of ELT practices, 1980s onwards

- McDonaldisation
- The Market

The Market

- A market for everything
- Countable units, reductionism
- Specifiable objectives
- VFM (Value for Money)
- Commodification

...and language teaching?

- The explosion in language testing and certification

Cambridge Exams in English

In the old days....

- Cambridge First Certificate in English (FCE)
- Certificate of Proficiency in English (CPE)

Cambridge Exams in English - Today

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Young Learners Starters Young Learners Movers Young Learners Flyers Key English Test (KET) Preliminary English Test (PET) First Certificate in English (FCE) Key English Test for Schools Preliminary English Test for Schools First Certificate in English for Schools Certificate in Advanced English (CAE) Certificate of Proficiency in English (CPE) Business English Certificate (BEC), Preliminary Business English Certificate (BEC), Vantage level Business English Certificate (BEC), Higher level International Legal English Certificate ESOL for Work IELTS Academic IELTS General | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teaching Knowledge Test: Language Computer Based Key English Test (KET) Computer Based Preliminary English Test (PET) Computer Based First Certificate in English (FCE) Computer Based Certificate in Advanced English (CAE) Computer Based Business English Certificate (BEC), Preliminary level Computer Based Business English Certificate (BEC), Vantage level Computer Based Business English Certificate (BEC), Higher level Computer Based Teaching Knowledge Test Computer Based Skills for Life Entry 1 Computer Based Skills for Life Entry 2 Computer Based Skills for Life Entry 3 Computer Based Skills for Life Level 1 Computer Based Skills for Life Level 2 .. |
|--|--|

...and language teaching?

- The explosion in language testing and certification
- The specification of 'levels'

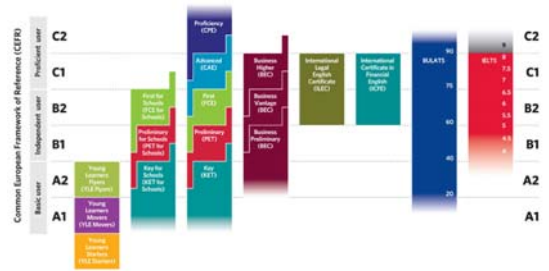
Common European Framework

From a loose, intuitive, cottage industry of syllabus planning to ...
...a 'scientifically' specified framework of (mythical?) multiple levels...

Level	Description
A1	The learner can understand and use basic phrases and sentences in order to describe personal details such as where they live, what they do, and in what language.
A2	The learner can understand and use basic phrases and sentences in order to describe personal details such as where they live, what they do, and in what language.
B1	The learner can understand and use basic phrases and sentences in order to describe personal details such as where they live, what they do, and in what language.
B2	The learner can understand and use basic phrases and sentences in order to describe personal details such as where they live, what they do, and in what language.
C1	The learner can understand and use basic phrases and sentences in order to describe personal details such as where they live, what they do, and in what language.
C2	The learner can understand and use basic phrases and sentences in order to describe personal details such as where they live, what they do, and in what language.

...and the business opportunities that this provides

A range of exams to meet different needs



and...

Coursebook packages
Exam preparation courses
Dictionaries
Language courses
Syllabus designs
Tailor-made courses
Teacher training courses
...and more

From Zeitgeist to Imperative:

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- McDonaldisation
- The Market

So what?

Emerging features of Global ELT?

Is Ritzer's 'caged society' emerging in ELT?
Is ELT being globally *standardised*?
Are we witnessing global prescriptions of *what* needs to be learned?
Are we witnessing global prescriptions of *how* learning will take place?
Changing roles of teacher/learners – scripts?
Curtailment of innovation and experimentation?

Challenges for Language Teaching

- To maintain and develop our personal roles as curriculum designers
- To maintain innovation in ways of teaching/learning – *risk taking*
- To resist dominance of one view of teaching/learning
- To maintain underlying principles in the face of new technology – make technology do what we want it to do, not the reverse.
- Maintain a *local* understanding and view of teaching /learning

Ritzer inspired 'Strategies for resistance'?

- Prepare as many teaching activities as you can yourself
- At least once a week, prepare a lesson from scratch
- Develop personal ties with your students
- Avoid McDonaldised 'complete package' courses. Pick and mix
- Reject 'carrier' content. Make all content 'learning content'
- Emphasise tasks that require students to *think* not simply reproduce supplied content
- Be your own researcher. Research *your* classroom.
- Experiment, innovate, take risks
- Discourage certificate accumulation ...

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Thank you for listening

