

Legend*Old Saxon*Old English

Middle and Modern English

Anglo NormanOld French

Middle and Modern French

Latin

Middle Dutch

Germanic

*early Scandinavian**Old Norse*/invented by Spenser/

? unknown

X names, dates, and citation information

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Eighteenth Century English Grammars: The Creation of Culture

As a composition instructor I have discovered that most students can adequately communicate *their* ideas, but almost all require help writing proper English. Inevitably, during a grammar lesson, a brave student will ask, “Why do we write like this?” For many years, my unsatisfactory answer was “Because that’s how we’re taught to write,” which was followed by the student astutely saying that we do not talk that way.

The written word is slow to change compared to the spoken word which develops new categories and slangs? as needed It depends on successive generations of grammar instructors who are more comfortable with allowing certain changes (e.g., ending sentences with prepositions and allowing split infinitives) to create change in the written language. But where did these rules of English originate? That is the focus of this synthesis of English grammars of the eighteenth century, a time when grammarians codified and standardized the English language as the populace sought self-improvement by learning “properly” written and spoken English.

The clarifying article is “The Creation of a Classical Language in the Eighteenth Century: Standardizing English, Cultural Imperialism, and the Future of the Literary Canon.” Reforming Education for ‘the Mere English Scholar’” and “Grammar Writing and Provincial Grammar Printing in the Eighteenth-Century British Isles” also inform my research. I have excluded equally important research by and dissertation “Rethinking the Prescriptivist–Descriptivist Dyad: Motives and Methods in Two Eighteenth-Century Grammars” provides a new means of interpreting grammars while “The Usage Guide: Its Birth and Popularity” and Poet, Scholar, Linguist” further clarify

the need for approach to reassessing the grammatical dyad. in “Disciplining Women?: Grammar, Gender, and Leisure in the Works of and the Critics: Literary Contexts for the ‘Critical Notes’ in His Short Introduction to English Grammar in “Deconstructing Female Conventions: and in “Grammar Writing and Provincial Grammar Printing in the Eighteenth-Century British Isles” and “Senses of ‘Grammar’ in the Eighteenth-Century English Tradition” all make important contributions to the study of eighteenth century grammars by analyzing the contributions of female grammarians and, the printing press as encouraging the creation and distribution of grammars outside of and the definition of *grammar* in the eighteenth century.

is the English department chairperson at University and studies issues of nationalism, colonialism, and slavery in eighteenth century His essay provides important information on societal structures of the century. according to his article’s authorial information, was a doctoral candidate in the Department of English at the University of completed her doctoral dissertation

in January and was an active researcher on eighteenth century grammars until her death in and specifically research eighteenth century grammars and related texts. According to *their* articles' authorial information, is in the Department of English at the University of,; is a chair in English Sociohistorical Linguistics at the University of is at the University of in the and is in the Department of Linguistics and English Language at The University of and holds a Senior Research Fellowship at the University of and co-created the Eighteenth Century English Grammars database with

The Third Classical Language

theorizes that right at the time that British expansionism of the eighteenth century increased the populace grammarians decided that English should become the third classical language, behind that of the two previous great empires of and In had proposed his dictionary to systemize English, and among others, embarked on popular elocution projects to help rid the and of *their* own languages and accents in order to create national unity

Grammars were a tool of assimilation. *They* were “a foreign, and forced, tongue to many citizens of the nation” especially after the defeat of a rebellion in As the British Empire expanded, the assimilation of various cultures would require a standardized English so that all elements of the empire could communicate with the governmental structure. The creation of a third classical language is intimately tied to British imperialism, but it is that imperialism that inspired grammarians and elocutionists like who complained that English was not properly standardized to codify the English language to make teaching easier. It is within this context that grammarians such as and emerge.

The Meaning of Grammar

What does *grammar* actually mean for eighteenth century grammarians and *their* customers. uses the Eighteenth-Century English Grammar database to expand on work to determine what the term *grammar* meant for those in that century. She begins with a brief early history of grammars, first English grammar in and the first prescriptive grammar and the last written in by in then explains the difference between the first and second halves of the eighteenth century in terms of grammar production. Fewer than forty new grammars were printed between and but over grammars in printings were printed from Finally, she mentions that the saw new grammars with printings

The contains items, and of those, are grammar books Analysis of these items indicates ten primary divisions of grammar, unlike seven divisions The most popular divisions are ones originally applied to and identified processes (e.g., orthography, etymology, oration, prosody) instead of materials (e.g., letters, syllables, words, sentences) She discusses the standardized patterns of the primary divisions of the grammars and the varied and rich patterns of the secondary content It is important to note, though, that the standardization of the divisions of grammar follows grammatical rules.

Contrarily, published her *New Grammar* based solely on vernacular English and belonged to a small group of approximately twenty-five anti-Latinate grammarians These grammarians, and the schools that used *their* texts, were dissenters who created vernacular English grammars schools for *their* schools. In addition to her anti-Latinate grammars, notes English's lack of

inflectional endings and creates a grammar “based on the observation of her own language” Furthermore, introduces the teaching of English by correcting bad? examples which grammarians and later adopt. classifies English through vernacular terms such as *name* for *noun* wrote about the need for instructor to be more interested in teaching than in merely displaying *their* classical learning a pointed remark given that most of the English grammars were based on models. Her grammars incorporate examples from English, but she also includes and examples. She uses these examples to demonstrate her belief in a “universal grammar” Unfortunately, while many languages share properties, belief in a universal grammar fails to account for what she already knew: English grammar could not be mapped upon grammar and therefore, while languages may share characteristics, *their* grammars are not identical.

Education for Men and Women

believes that a knowledge of proper English grammar was necessary for a good reputation and social position and for earning a living Radically, stated that women’s lack of education and not *their* “inherent mental deficiency” kept *them* from choosing reading material more difficult than popular romances Education brings “economic power and social standing” and is necessary for women to *raise* themselves and *their* families honorably so added *evening* hours to her school and marketed? her services to both the affluent and less affluent families in as well as to males and female

was not the sole female grammarian. writes about an author of a “long list of numerous titles written” for the teaching of children Her pedagogical approach is one of “controlled incremental progress” in an easily acquired and rational system through which a mother teaches basic English grammar through toys (such as grammar boxes), the use of older children (particularly the daughters), and graded children’s texts to create an idealized vision of domestic order for a rising middle class that “expressed anxiety about discipline” was not the first to recommend mothers teach *their* children; and all did the same uniquely provided both the method and resources for mothers to actually accomplish the task

work, though, was the product of her unconventional lifestyle outside of domestic issues She married at the rather late age of thirty-two (and had nine daughters) and with her husband, *ran* a printing press and bookshop, printed a newspaper (the *Chronicle*) promoted and hosted a salon for “litterateurs, artists, actors, and politicians” taught a ladies school with extended hours for at least five years and created a series of books to aid both males and females in learning to speak and write English correctly

The Child’s Grammar and *The Mother’s Grammar* introduce the idea of using females to civilize males In contrast to unconventional lifestyle, promotes grammars as a means for women to remain within the domestic sphere while influencing the development of males before *they* are sent to school and exposed to potential vices. Her most repeated reasons for teaching mothers and girls grammar is to introduce *their* male offspring to grammar in preparation for the prescriptive, Latinate grammars (like and the study of itself and to give women a means of employment as teachers in case *their* own husbands squander? the family money or *they* themselves never marry

But this idea of females learning grammar, even couched within the domestic sphere is as radical as work. inverts the idea of “private” and “female” with “public” and “male” by

demonstrating the need for women's grammatical education not for the purposes of effeminizing or repressing men but as a new femininity that reprograms children's, especially boys', leisure time as self-disciplined and responsible in preparation for dealing with society.

The Spread of Printing

Despite the acceptance of series of grammars and its pedagogy of descriptive grammar the public *wanted* to know how to speak and write better English. examines printing records by country, county, and city and by geographical and chronological distributions in the Eighteenth Century English Grammars database to determine patterns of growth in the grammars market? that corresponded to an increase in potential customers, entwining the history of the book trade with the history of grammar writing to show the channels used publishing to disseminate English grammars during the codification of English She explains the importance of provincial cities in the publication of grammars and the tie between grammar writers and *their* lives as educators and the reduction of restrictions on publication that legalized printing outside of location for her printing press, bookshop, and teaching, is the second most prominent location for printing, behind only and is but one of several provincial centers where "consortia of printers (and booksellers)" created communities of thought regarding the codification, distribution, and teaching of standardized English.

A New Grammar had thirty-two editions Her grammar was pirated so much that she created a note with her signature at the end of the preface to warn readers against piracy and followed with thirty, twenty-seven, and twenty grammars, respectively *The Child's Grammar* and *The Mother's Grammar* were also popular with twenty-six and twenty-one editions, respectively but and grammars were more popular with at least forty-seven and fifty printings, respectively Despite being more popular grammarians such as admit that arguments for descriptive grammar are valid

Grammars as a Commodity to Attain Utopia

In a capitalist society all things are cultural products that can be commodified This embedding of cultural value occurred in the creation of grammars in the eighteenth century, when conditions coalesced so that the Industrial Revolution and British imperialism created not only an emerging middle class that desired social mobility but had the money and leisure to achieve that mobility. The grammar text was a commodity from its very inception and its use as a means of self-improvement was a regulative ideal of a utopia that the middle class strove for. The fully literate print culture that developed as a result of "a revolution in the book trade" gave rise to this commodification and was of great value to consumers who feared *impropriety* and had new funds to attain *correctness* of living. Politeness involved knowing how to speak and write according to a genteel norm for participation in society, acquiring new *skills*, or moving upward socially and economically.

Grammars became more complex in the second half of the century to cater to the expanding middle class Publisher "exploited and intensified the middle class obsession with education" for social advancement and defense against males' uncivilized ways which propelled women into teaching The literate and becoming literate public viewed grammar as "a way of ordering language" and "a symbolic instrument for ordering society"

philosophical vision in the twentieth century is that language is a “form...of symbolic action” In other terms, language could become a method of achieving agency, “a vehicle of resistance” For grammars in the eighteenth century, this agency is literally the case. shows how the production of grammars exponentially increased during that time. Through the symbolism of language, grammars then embed cultural value and the person who reads a grammar experiences success and becomes an agent in his (or her) own awareness

Unconventional Women, Conventional Culture

discusses the “leisured mother,” a product of this new, upwardly mobile middle class, and how writings represent “expensive things” *Thus*, audience has money to spend on leisure, but criticizes leisure as extravagant and unnecessary She uses her time to print for those “ladies who have less leisure than myself [sic]” indicating her disdain for unoccupied and unproductive time. A good mother “invest[s] both her leisure and her wealth in her children’s early education” to enhance the family’s social status ensure the sons become self-disciplined instead of profligate and the daughters learn grammar for home use

While promotes unconventional ideas for women to be positive influences as mother-teachers and sister-teachers in the domestic sphere, she commodifies her work by publishing This commodification caters to the middle class’s fears of being unproductive follows earlier commodification of her grammar series to aid in the attainment of an education, specifically a grammatical education that would increase one’s “economical power and social standing” and *call* for highly moral grammar instructors to positively influence students

The Self-Learned Man

also sets “Critical Notes” within this context of commodification and increased historical criticism Self-learned men like could apply a scholarly approach to both biblical and secular literature Indeed, the creation of the book review, a new commodity necessary with increased printing, gave prestige to grammar and helped integrate the public into conflicts “between reviewers and authors or other reviewers” readjustment of footnotes to demonstrate grammatical errors of nonliving writers builds on introduction of bad? grammar examples for correction that already existed in biblical criticism and the prior use of footnotes to criticize living authors, such as criticism of works By using dead authors for critical review, avoids footnote wars that parodied in The But critique of the age’s best writers shows that even “polite company” and “reading great authors” could not help the “culturally literate write correctly” and offered the sole solution of purchasing his grammar

This utopia of a “vibrant public sphere” gave men and women opportunity to participate in a culture industry of *happy* consciousness where all views of grammatical correctness helped codify the English language in order to realize a profit And what *happened* after the codification of the language? It was standardized into prescriptive grammars where authors condemn grammatical *mistakes* and the barbarism that ensues from grammatical (moral!) permissiveness

discusses how English is still in its final stage of standardization She often classifies as a prescriptivist, but she demonstrates that even was aware of a grammar different from what he prescribed when he informs his readers that prepositions should not be used at the end of a

sentence and that “This is an idiom which our language is strongly inclined to” recognized, then, that a variety of commodity forms of grammar existed; it just so *happened* that his was one of the most popular.

Discourse Communities

One of these other types of grammar is the prescriptivist usage guide of which *Reflections on the English Language, In the Nature of Reflections on the* is the first connects work to *Paradigms Lost* and *Eats, Shoots and Leaves* as a discourse community separate and ongoing from the grammarian tradition begun in the eighteenth century. and each confide to the reader that *they* are not experts in *their* fields but nonetheless condemn grammatical *mistakes* and the barbarism that ensues from grammatical permissiveness while being entertaining in the process as is when referencing the joke “So a panda walked into a bar...” The point, for is that prescriptivist grammarians (or normative linguists) saw (and still see) a market? for preserving a standard described by earlier grammarians

Often viewed negatively, prescriptivists are simply a different discourse community from descriptivists within linguistics, “each [community] with *their* [sic] respective interests, goals? [sic] and beliefs” purpose in is to show that was part of a prescriptivist community of thought. But in writing about in she persuades her audience that was not the prescriptivist scholars believe him to be

analyzes the eighteen extant letters between and to determine whether was a modern linguist, or descriptivist. She concludes that referring to *custom* (usage) instead of *propriety* (correctness), becomes more prescriptivist between his first and subsequent editions of his *Short Introduction to English Grammar* She posits this as a result of correspondence initiated by with through letters written between December and October. According to discusses grammatical matters more abstractly and with more weight on customary usage, making a more modern (and descriptivist) linguist and a prescriptivist who felt “Duty bound to abide by these Principles” of “repell[ing] the invasions of [the] enemy [permissiveness in grammatical form] to the utmost of [his] power” Despite his correspondence with and other grammarians, and the “Learned Gentlemen” who critiqued his grammar did not form a community of practice particularly given insistence on saving the English language from its enemy, usage, and on ensuring that correctness prevails

Complications within the Grammars Dyad

places within the broader context of literary criticism begun before own grammars career and which he participate in as a biblical poetry scholar and critic participation in the literary criticism of biblical translation places him at the center of eighteenth century scholastic work. His interest in grammar is a result of his attempts to clarify the biblical translation that were already archaic by the eighteenth century. This furthers the idea that language changes, an idea admits to while at the same time prescribing standards for the English language *Thus* while standardization is important, it is also important to understand that the English language changes and that both prescriptive and descriptive grammars are important.

inability to decide on situation in the prescriptivist - descriptivist dyad makes work especially important. He provides a spectrum on which to organize eighteenth century

grammarians and *their* grammars given the grammarians' stated intentions and the actual usage of *their* texts. This would prevent scholars like from flip-flopping? on the descriptions of grammarians like whose motivation and methodology create a "fuzzy"? area that the dyad is unable to accurately account for.

uses a qualitative method to distinguish and grammars in terms more refined than prescriptive and descriptive. Instead, divides grammarians' writing into methodology (normative / non-normative) and motivation (aspirational / observational) and compares and grammars for double negation, subjunctive-only use of *were*, and preposition stranding concludes that the combination of motivation and methodology in the terms prescriptive and descriptive creates problems for classifying grammars as many grammars are both prescriptive and descriptive and that the traditional dyad creates debate instead of better methodologies for determining the standards of "good" English. His solution is to evaluate individual grammars and *their* authors in relation to each other.

Students often complain about prescriptive grammar rules not making sense, and I often find myself explaining that in order to meet the "proper" grammatical (or in terms, aspirational) standard, we must follow certain rules. *Thus*, my own teaching involves prescriptions about correct grammar so that my students will speak and write as educated citizens. However, I follow descriptivism when I agree that some rules are ridiculous because *they* /blatantly/ disagree with what is commonly accepted in written and spoken English, such as preposition stranding. *Thus*, most grammarians' work is not either prescriptivist or descriptivist, but a combination of methodology and motivation. Understanding this will aid *me* as I teach my students what makes for "good" English through this spectrum of methodology and motivation, with my methodology as a college professor being aspirational and my motivation moving between normative ("This is how it's always been done, and I see no need for change) and non-normative ("This is how it was done when my parents were in school, but I have seen the language change, and this other way may be the norm when your children are in school"). The inability to decide on situation in the dyad supports work but also shows that it is both standardization (prescriptivism) and usage (descriptivism) that drive the grammatical educational process.

For the Future: More Research into the Past

The eighteenth century was a unique time, and was a unique location for the creation of a standardized language. British imperialism, the Industrial Revolution, the new middle class, and aspirational desires to move upward created a unique set of circumstances in which the public decided it needed to learn how to be proper. By the and people realized that a knowledge of vernacular grammar served a function similar to It distinguished some people as better than others. Language *happened* to be the means by which the public choose to become educated, and since learning and were necessary languages for boys? of rank to become educated, the application of rules in particular to the standardization of English makes sense; latinizing English would make learning itself easier for those boys? who were able to receive an education beyond the primary home education. The acceptance of and grammars maintained the masculinity of grammar while allowing women entrance into an educational system that could potentially keep *them* from penury and demonstrated that grammarians understood differences in grammatical methodology and motivation.

But there are many **gaps** in my knowledge. First, my knowledge of who was mainly a poet and scholar, is limited. Secondly, pronunciation and usage guides are part of the Eighteenth Century English Grammars database, among the items other than grammars which deserve attention to create a fuller picture of language development in the Xs. Thirdly, her fellow anti-Latinate grammarians, **their** dissenting grammars schools (indeed, the schools themselves) deserve my additional consideration as, it is my understanding, that these schools became the basis for public education. With a bachelors in English and a masters in education, studying the creation and distribution of these schools and **their** relationship to the creation of the public school system in the is of considerable importance to my further development as an educator. Finally, method of analyzing grammars deserves significantly increased attention as it creates a frame?work for ending disciplinary “language wars” and for creating additional scholarship regarding prescriptivism and descriptivism as entwined fields within linguistics.

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