

FRENCH GRAMMARS IN ENGLAND 1660-1820

CHANGES IN CONTENT AND CONTEXTS PAVING THE WAY TO THE “PRACTICAL” GRAMMAR-TRANSLATION MANUAL

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Abstract

This paper presents an analysis of a corpus of grammars written for learning French in England from 1660 to 1820, a period sometimes referred to euphemistically as the “long century” which saw language teaching evolve in response to broader social and epistemological developments, namely the increased codification of vernacular grammar against a backdrop of scientific rationalism and, in England, the greater institutionalisation of school-based pedagogies. The aim of the analysis is twofold: firstly, to identify some key shifts in the formulation of content, specifically changes in overall structure and distribution of sections, including differences in grammatical nomenclature, and, secondly, to contextualise these developments by considering the changing role of the grammarian-teachers as demonstrated in the way they position themselves as authors to different publics.

Keywords

Corpus, vernacular grammar, French language, England, eighteenth century, long century, prescriptivism, “practical”, grammar, pedagogy

Résumé

Cet article présente une analyse d'un corpus de grammaires écrites pour l'apprentissage du français en Angleterre de 1660 à 1820, une période parfois qualifiée par euphémisme de «long siècle» où l'enseignement des langues évolua en fonction de mutations plus larges, y compris la codification de la grammaire vernaculaire contre un fond de rationalisme scientifique et l'instauration des pédagogies scolaires. Mon analyse comporte deux axes complémentaires: il s'agit, premièrement, d'identifier quelques changements-clés dans la formulation du contenu, en particulier des changements dans la structure générale et la répartition des sections, y compris des différences dans la nomenclature grammaticale, et deuxièmement, de contextualiser ces évolutions en considérant la mutation du rôle des enseignants grammairiens et la manière dont ils se positionnent en tant qu'auteurs auprès de publics différents.

Mots-clés

Corpus, grammaire vernaculaire, langue française, Angleterre, XVIII^e siècle, long siècle, prescriptivisme, grammaire «pratique», pédagogie

INTRODUCTION

Grammar books, called here simply “grammars”, have been recognised as important ideological artefacts that can help us to understand evolving ideas of language and pedagogy, providing insights into how codification of language has been shaped by material and social conditions. The current study takes the

period 1660-1820 as a unit of analysis: this period saw an increasing momentum in the production of pedagogical grammars, and marks the passage from the dawning of the so-called scientific age of the Restoration and early Enlightenment period through to the recognisable format of “grammar-translation” in modern language teaching that would come to characterise the nineteenth century and beyond.

The vernacular grammars that emerged from the Renaissance, and proliferated throughout the long century, have often been characterised as a struggle to shake off the “yoke” of Latin¹, yet Raby and Andrieu have reformulated this interpretation in favour of viewing the Latin system and nomenclature as a productive frame facilitating the grammatisation of vernaculars and thereby “the conditions for a cumulative growth in linguistic knowledge” (Raby and Andrieu 2018, p. 68).

Following Palsgrave’s (1530) *Lesclarcissement de la langue françoise*², usually considered the first grammar of the French vernacular (Chevalier 1994; Lambley 1920; Padley 1985), the production of books for learning French increased steadily throughout the sixteenth and early part of the seventeenth centuries³. In England, French enjoyed increasing prestige and popularity from the Elizabethan period, and especially following the Restoration of Charles II and his court from exile in France and the more general “*expansion du français et des manières françaises en Europe*” (Besse 2017), leading Miège (1678) to observe in his preface that “England is so much addicted to this Language, as are most Countries in Europe, that I need not urge anything for the learning of it”. If, by 1660, the distinction still held generally between the formal study of grammar for the classical languages⁴ and learning French and other vernaculars through wordlists and dialogues, the expansion of schooling and the emergence of scientific reasoning over the ensuing long century would combine to create a more formal, grammatically structured, approach to learning French. The number of grammars increased enormously throughout this period: “Between 1694 and 1800 no fewer than 88 different grammars, dictionaries and methods, etc. of the French language were published in England [...]” and “Twenty-nine of these manuals were published in the last decade of the century” (Spink 1946, p. 155).

1 E.g. Padley (1985); Simone (1998) [1992].

2 See Colombat (1999, 2013 and 2016) for further discussion of differences between early grammars including those written in Latin, French and English. See Palsgrave (2003) [1530] for a fully annotated and translated edition by Susan Baddeley.

3 See the *bibliographie générale* compiled by Colombat (2003).

4 Of course, only boys and only the elite minority were schooled in this way.

My focus on French pedagogical grammars of the eighteenth century complements an extensive field of research drawing on grammars as historical artefacts which can offer insights into developing linguistic epistemologies⁵. While no bibliography has yet been compiled of French grammars produced and circulated in England in the eighteenth century, there are several important publications⁶ relating to other periods that serve as secondary sources in having some listings of grammars as well as the major references charting the historical systematisation of French⁷. The corpus analysed in the current study comprises eighteen grammars, including the most widely read and reprinted of French grammarians publishing in English, these being Miège, Mauger and Boyer for the first half of the period considered ([Grandcolas 1971](#)), and Chambaud, Wanostrocht and Lévizac for the latter half ([Tomalin 2016](#)). Besides editions of these 6 grammarians, I wished to include for comparison a range of other grammarians publishing in London during the period. As well as accessing texts available online, either through open-access (Archive or Google) or through institutional login, mostly digitised documents available through Early English Books Online or Gale Eighteenth Century Collections, I consulted several manuscripts on-site at the BNF⁸ and at the British Library.

I restricted my search to “grammar” books, that is, books with grammar in the title, as my objective was to understand the evolving conceptual presentation of grammar throughout the period. While recognising that many other publications, including dictionaries and other textbooks, do also treat grammar, and so the criterion of “grammar” in the title may appear somewhat arbitrary, I believe that the corpus provides enough breadth for my analytical purposes. My main intention was to trace patterned developments in a sample of grammars, including the most

5 For vernacular languages from the eighteenth century, there are now some extensive bibliographies for grammar and schoolbooks: for L1 English notably [Alston \(1965\)](#), [Görlach \(1998\)](#), [Michael \(1970, 1987 and 1997\)](#) and [Mitchell \(2018\)](#)² [2001], also now a digital database of Eighteenth-Century English Grammars (ECEG). Bibliographies for L1 French grammars in French include [Chervel’s \(2000\)](#)² [1982] 1800-1914 detailed year-by-year inventory and, for the earlier period (16th–18th century), [Colombat’s \(2003\)](#) alphabetical inventory, the latter forming the basis of the *Classiques Garnier* digital corpus of 33 French-language grammars of French from 14th to 17th centuries compiled in 2011 and currently being extended —see [Ayes-Bennett and Colombat \(2016\)](#) for discussion of this extension.

6 E.g. [Caravolas \(2000\)](#); [Kibbee’s \(1991\)](#) monograph on language teaching in England 1000-1600, followed by his (2000) analysis of French grammars in England from “Holyband to Mauger”, i.e. in the seventeenth century. [Lambley’s \(1920\)](#) history for French in the Tudor and Stuart periods remains a valuable reference. [Alamercery’s \(2003\)](#) “Bibliographie d’histoire de l’éducation française” provides further titles on studies of French teaching more generally in different countries.

7 E.g. [Aurous \(1992\)](#); [Brunot \(1966\)](#) [1905-1953]; [Chevalier \(1994\)](#); [Lodge \(1997\)](#).

8 I was able to visit the collection at the Bibliothèque nationale de France during research leave in Paris, January–April 2018, consulting all English language titles for “French” “grammar” for the years 1660-1820.

popular, and to achieve this, I focused on two main elements: overall structure and ordering of sections, including changes in grammatical nomenclature (meta-terminology), and indices of authorship such as self-presentational positioning, to understand the authors' professional status and their claims to authority. For each grammar, therefore, I listed the distribution of different sections (pronunciation, morphology and syntax) and itemised the personal presentational elements of the author (frontispiece, preface, introduction).

1 DEVELOPMENTS IN OVERALL STRUCTURE AND CONTENT

The usual structure of the grammars followed the classical convention of moving from pronunciation (of letters) to grammar (as parts of speech: morphology and syntax) although the emphasis placed on different sections varied, and later grammars either omitted pronunciation or treated it more briefly. In the current corpus there is a chronological shift of focus from speaking to writing, traced not least in the way grammar is defined in the earlier grammars as the “art of speaking” then later as the art of both “speaking and writing”: of those who give a definition, only Boyer and Miège⁹ include “writing” in their definition prior to Porny (1768²) after which date all refer to both speaking and writing. The shift of emphasis in this ancient formulation¹⁰ is revealing of the deeper transition from the classical emphasis on rhetoric (as the art of speaking) toward mastery of the written form. This change can be explained by both the fixing of the written form through print production and generalised literacy and, concurrently, the nature of classroom learning as school-based education expanded and diversified, increasingly including French.

It is also worthy of note that from Chambaud (1750) the form of the definition moves from “speaking well” to terms denoting correctness (“rightly”, “correctly”, “with propriety”). This emphasis reflects the recasting from the rhetorical potential of elegant language towards a more scientific view of language as an underlying system of mental operations which is more or less congruent with reality. The latter conceptualisation, in attributing to language the function of denoting an empirically verifiable universe, prioritises the quest for linguistic precision.

In terms of format, most early grammars conserved the two-column, split page format (e.g. Palaret 1733²) and sometimes used this to provide parallel French and English text (e.g. Rogissard 1738² [1734]). In a contemporary review (Barbier 1809² [1802], p. 18) we learn that this juxtalinear method was appreciated as it

9 Malard (1716) also refers to writing but this comes in the latter section of his book, the first part being the “rudiment” for “they that haven’t learn’d Latin”.

10 Padley (1985) describes as “a Renaissance commonplace” the definition of grammar as an “*ars bene loquendi*”.

affords equal benefit to those learning English and those learning French¹¹. By the time of **Chambaud's (1750)** grammar, it was the norm to present rules in a linear, decontextualised format across the page rather than in columns or in the form of questions and responses.

In line with Kibbee's analysis of pre-1700 grammars, the basic elements presented to teach pronunciation in the present corpus are letters in alphabetical order, rather than sounds¹², and these are explained by giving mostly English equivalents. As Kibbee found, "there is no attempt at a systematic articulatory description of the sounds of French in any of these works"¹³, and sound combinations are only included in lists of rules determining liaison and elision, including unpronounced letters (including "s" in words such as *escrire* in Festeau and Mauger, while slightly later contemporaries Miège and Boyer include the newly reformed orthography). The letter-by-letter approach leads to endlessly over-complicated rules to explain pronunciation, including Festeau's three pronunciations of "e" as masculine, feminine or neuter. **Tandon (1736**³ [1733]) is unusual in offering a system of representing pronunciation "in a new and distinct manner" which goes beyond single words (though remains segmental), e.g. "*L'art de bien parler françois*, The art to speak good French, *L'Ar de bien parlè Frangçè*", complaining in his preface that, although pronunciation is "the most difficult part to be obtained of this language [...] few of our French grammarians have any regard to teach it".

The French alphabet itself is introduced variably: early grammars (Festeau, Miège and Mauger) list 22 letters, Boyer (reiterated by Tandon) cites 23, and from **Malard (1716)** most cite 25 (discounting "w") or 26. Vowel and consonants are treated separately, with most (though not Boyer) earlier grammars also using the terms "liquids". Mauger, defining a liquid as "a letter which hath a smooth sound", counts four (l, m, n, r), and this definition is repeated in **Malard (1716)** and **Rogissard (1734)**¹⁴. Festeau does not treat liquids separately but uses the term to describe how "l" has "two sounds, one liquid and one dry". Miège only uses the term to describe the quality of the French semi-vocalic "l", an explanation taken up by **Palaret (1733**²) who describes how "l" can have a "liquid sound" "after, *ai, ei, eui, oei, uei, oui*" (p. 16.). **Chambaud (1750)** explains that "(the ancients) call'd L, M, N, R, liquid, or

11 "David Durand affectionnoit la grammaire de Rogissart. Il lui trouvoit cet avantage particulier, qu'étant en deux colonnes, c'est-à-dire en François et en Anglais, elle étoit également propre et à ceux qui n'ont aucune connoissance du François, et qui veulent l'apprendre et à ceux qui n'ont que peu ou point de connoissance de l'Anglais, et qui sont bien aises de trouver à côté l'interprétation qui peut leur en faciliter l'intelligence".

12 "Letters, not sounds, are the basic elements of the language" (**Kibbee 2000**, p. 186).

13 *Art. cit.*

14 See **Raby (2014)**, fn. p.98-99 for a summary of the origins and evolving identification of liquids; **Mauger (1688)**¹² [1653] for reference.

flowing, as consonants of a very agreeable and easy sound, which nimbly glide away in pronunciation, tho', strictly speaking, L alone deserves that appellation" (p. 313), and Porny (1768²) says "none but 'l' and 'r' deserves that name". From [Wanostrocht \(1780\)](#), the term "liquid" is not used in the current corpus¹⁵.

This shift in the detail of pronunciation guidelines shows a move from the classical model and the simplification or even absence of rules governing the pronunciation of letters, is emblematic of the tendency already underway to prioritise the written form. [Wanostrocht \(1780\)](#) states in his preface "Rules for pronunciation are totally omitted. From all the attempts that have hitherto been made it does not appear, that any adequate idea of it can be conveyed in writing. The ear cannot be properly formed without the assistance of a good speaker". In his slim (78-page) volume, [Mitand \(1783\)](#) makes no mention of the alphabet or of pronunciation, and begins immediately with grammar in terms of parts of speech, which he introduces in a "manner of declining every article", that is, according to a model of five cases. After describing "declensions" in great detail, the remainder of the book provides verb table endings. Where pronunciation is still included in some later grammars, it receives briefer treatment, for instance [Laisné \(1812\)](#) devotes 6 pages to it, compared to [Palairret \(1733²\)](#) 22¹⁶.

The classical emphasis on word-sentence level persists¹⁷ in the grammars, and individual words remain the basic building structure, following the vernacular tradition of wordlists, followed by dialogues (combining elements of the medieval *manières de langage*). The extent of the wordlists could be used as a selling point, with re-editions often distinguished by the addition of more vocabulary and more dialogues as well as a wider range of miscellanea such as songs, jokes, idiomatic expressions, or, later in the eighteenth century, extracts from literary or learned texts (such as the Comte de Buffon's *Histoire naturelle*, which is cited extensively in Laisné). [Deletanville \(1771³ \[1758\]\)](#) promotes his dictionary with appended grammar for the length of his definitions, making explicit comparison with rival bestsellers:

One of the advantages of this dictionary, over those hitherto published, is that it contains all the various significations of the French words; whereas several are omitted in the others. This will appear in many thousand articles; but not to bore the reader's patience, I shall only quote one at random and compare it with the same article out of Boyer's and Chambaud's Dictionaries:

15 [Blondin \(1788\)](#) lists semi-vocalic "l" clusters (as in *soleil*, *bailleur*) under nasal diphthongs.

16 [Chambaud \(1750\)](#) devotes a lengthy chapter of 73 pages to pronunciation but his entire volume is much longer than most at 396 pages and he also includes many lists in his pronunciation chapter and explanations of written forms.

17 A feature of the Port-Royal grammar, as noted by [Pariente \(1984\)](#).

Deletanville's	Boyer's	Chambaud's
<p><i>Revêtir</i>, v. a. (conj. like <i>vêtir</i>) 1. to cloath, to give cloaths to. 2. to cloath, to dress. 3 to invest, to install with any dignity or honour. 4. to invest with lands &c., to put into possession of. 5. to line, to cover. 6. to give, to bestow. <i>Il est revêtu tout de neuf</i>, he has new cloths on...</p>	<p><i>Revêtir</i>, v. a. (<i>habiller</i>) to clothe. <i>Revêtir</i> (investor) to vest, invest, or give possession.</p>	<p><i>Revêtir</i>, v. a. (<i>donner des habits à quelqu'un qui en a besoin</i>) to give clothes, to clothe. <i>Revêtir</i> (<i>se dit des habits, ou des autres marques de dignité</i>) to dress, to put on <i>Revêtir un bastion, &c.</i> (<i>le remparer de pierre</i>)...</p>

Deletanville's claim to exhaustivity here, rather than being "reader-friendly", conforms to the popular notion of wholeness that is concurrent with the Enlightenment will to document universal systems of knowledge, as demonstrated by the aims of the dictionaries and encyclopaedias. The momentum of chronicling linguistic change, from the mid-seventeenth century, contributed to the processes of standardisation¹⁸.

After pronunciation, the parts of speech are presented, and this is where we see a clear difference in the intended readership between scholars who were presumed to know Latin and those who did not, which implied younger boys or girls/ladies (an aspect I return to later). The early grammars in the current corpus follow the canonical 8 parts of speech¹⁹, sometimes referred to as "parts of words" or "sorts of words" (noun, pronoun, verb, participle, adverb, conjunction, preposition, interjection), with the article dealt with as a sub-category. Boyer (1694) is the first to treat the article as a primary category, constituting a ninth part of speech, a pattern reproduced periodically (Malard and Palairet) and then more or less definitively from Chambaud (1750), notwithstanding persistent variation in other parts, in particular with regard to the categorisation of pronouns, participles and adjectives.

Most of the grammars in the corpus treat nouns as either substantive or adjective²⁰. Only 5 grammars list adjectives as a full category: Chambaud (1750),

18 See Ayres-Bennett and Caron (2016) for a review and analysis of periodisation in French.

19 Croce (1922² [1909], p. 465) comments that in "the Middle Ages grammar was cultivated to the point of superstition" and that the 8 parts of speech were seen as representing a divine number in the same way that the 3 persons of verbal conjugation reflected the holy trinity.

20 I am grateful to an anonymous reviewer for pointing out that the separation of substantive and adjective within the category of noun can be traced to the twelfth century and is examined by Rosier (1992). In his *Les vrais principes de la langue française*, Girard (1747) is believed to be the first to fully separate the categories.

who calls them “adnouns”, [Porny \(1768²\)](#), [Deletanville \(1771³ \[1758\]\)](#), [Lévizac \(1814⁶ \[1806\]\)](#) and [Whitaker \(1817\)²¹](#). Porny, whose grammar is the only one here to categorise 6 parts of speech (article, substantive, adjective, pronoun, verb, particle), reproaches grammarians who “improperly” define adjectives as nouns, saying that they only “declare an accidental difference of it”, and this accords with the de-Latinising tendency to attribute the adjective its own status.

Most notably, the greater prominence of the verb during the eighteenth century, already noted in analyses of French L1 grammars²² as a development emanating from Port-Royal, is a tendency confirmed in my corpus, with [Perrin \(1768\)](#) even stating that the “verb is the principal part of speech”. While detail in explanation of verb tenses does not increase—in fact the contrary can be seen (for instance, Boyer’s nuanced explanation of auxiliaries compared with later grammars)—the number of conjugation tables multiplies. This is another indicator of the conventionalising of presentation and practice through exercises which would characterise late eighteenth century and nineteenth century school grammars.

Later grammars are less committed to detailing each of the parts of speech, and some parts are given more emphasis than others. There is, understandably, increased focus on those parts of speech that are “declinable” ([Wanostrocht 1780](#)), some even restricting their treatment to these, for instance [Deletanville \(1771³ \[1758\]\)](#) and [Mitand \(1783\)](#), who states in his preface that “The invariable Parts of Speech, such as Adverbs, Prepositions, Conjunctions, and Interjections are foreign to my subject, as being attended with no difficulties”. This morphological distinction between two orders of word categories appears therefore to be purely pedagogically motivated and is quite different from the logico-semantic distinction that had been made by the Port-Royal authors who distinguished between words which “*signifient la manière des pensées*” (verbs, conjunctions and interjections) from words that expressed “*les objets des pensées*” (nouns, articles, pronouns, participles, prepositions and adverbs) ([Arnaud and Lancelot 1664 \[1660\]](#), p. 91).

There is structural variation in what counts as grammar, as some include pronunciation under the grammar rubric. Most divide the “grammar” into morphology and syntax where punctuation and word categories with cases and declensions are presented in the former and agreements and contextual changes in the latter²³ typically beginning with a description of the article. This can lead to repetition where categories such as pronouns are presented in both morphological

21 [Michael \(1970, p. 219\)](#) suggests that Mark Lewis was the first to do this in his 1670? English grammar.

22 J.-M. [Fournier \(2013\)](#).

23 E.g. [Palairret \(1733², p. 157\)](#): “The Third Part of the Syntaxis: The Syntaxis, or Construction, is that Part of Grammar which treats of the right placing, or joining Words together in a sentence.”

and syntactical sections, first as markers dependent on a noun and later as personal or relative pronouns and so forth. This points to a typical problem with following the classical format in vernacular grammars.

While the presentation of individual grammatical categories may not have changed dramatically throughout the period, the level of detail and the position in the volume is telling of shifting emphases. For instance [Mauger's \(1688¹² \[1653\]\)](#) section on demonstrative pronouns compared with [Laisné's \(1812\)](#) does not seem very different, but Mauger gives phrasal examples and also has his table at the back of the volume as a reference, whereas Laisné gives no examples, and has his table in the core of the book without explanation then to be practised by follow-up exercises. These differences indicate a stronger presumption in the later period that Latin grammar nomenclature will be understood, that is, it is not explained earlier, and there is a more immediate leap to presenting the model then putting the grammatical feature into practice through written translation, whereas the focus in earlier works such as Mauger's is still on dialogue practice.

Throughout the eighteenth century there is a shift from universalism, premised on Latin nomenclature, towards a vernacular-sensitive differentiation, and we see that claims for "a tongue" or "a language" (e.g. "a language is composed of eight parts", [Rogissard 1738² \[1734\]](#)) give way to specific claims referring to French e.g. "nine sorts of words compose the French language" ([Wanostrocht 1780](#)). At the same time, the differences between French and English are accentuated. The example of "liquid" has already been cited, and one can further note that the use of the term "accidence" to refer to morphological inflection (e.g. "mood is an accident of verbs", [Tandon 1736³ \[1733\]](#)) is progressively less used throughout the period while "agreement" is used more frequently. Chambaud uses the term "accidence" on only 8 occasions in his extensive volume whereas "agreement" appears 77 times. [Porny \(1768\)](#) only refers to the "two accidents" of substantives in French, gender and number. Neither Wanostrocht, Mitand nor Laisné use the terms "accident" or "accidence", and [Lévizac \(1814⁶ \[1806\]\)](#) uses the term only in relation to adjectives and not with other parts of speech. While reference to accidence would persist periodically well into the nineteenth century²⁴, this shift in emphasis from "accidence" to "agreement" points to an underlying change from the nominal emphasis characteristic of medieval classical grammars where the noun was the dominant *substance* modified by other parts of speech (as subject + predicate) toward a greater recognition of "the way the relationship between individual linguistic units to the whole sentence is expressed in vernacular language" ([Padley 1985](#), p. 211).

24 E.g. [Pellissier's \(1888\)](#) remark in his *French Grammar: Accidence* that "Though there are no cases in modern French, the terms nominative, genitive, etc., have been preserved in the Accidence for the sake of convenience" (p. x, fn. 2).

McLelland (2017) distinguishes between the advent of the first foreign language grammars and textbooks in the period 1600-1750 and then the “practical grammar” and exercises that appeared in the latter half of the eighteenth century. Certainly, this later period saw a shift away from presenting examples, wordlists and dialogues toward encouraging active processing through exercises. However, while the term “practical” was explicitly used in later grammars²⁵, the earlier ones did, nonetheless, present themselves as practical—even without the word in the title—by emphasising the usefulness of French for practical purposes for travellers or by distinguishing theoretical explanations from practice. Chambaud, as McLelland suggests, was “perhaps the very first to have the idea of producing exercises to accompany specific points of grammar”, producing an accompanying book of exercises. Others would follow suit in publishing separate books of exercises²⁶, with Wanostrocht (1780) being the first, according to McLelland, to combine both grammar and exercises in the same volume. Seventeenth century grammars had already combined treatises on grammar with the familiar, practical content of the earlier *manières de langage*²⁷; the difference is that “practical” in the latter part of the eighteenth century became understood as practising grammar through written exercises, sometimes tedious translations of lists of verb conjugations (e.g. Laisné), rather than simply practising through reading and speaking aloud dialogues. This style of pedagogical grammar would constitute the paradigmatic grammar-translation method where exercises involved the translation of phrases focusing on a particular grammar feature with a gapped interlinear frame provided.

The transition to so-called “practical exercises” both reflects and consolidates epistemological changes across the long century: in particular, the greater emphasis on the written form at the expense of speaking and a greater focus on grammar for linguistic training at the expense of rhetoric and logic.

2 AUTHORSHIP AND AUDIENCE

To understand this evolution in pedagogical grammar it is helpful to consider the contextual nature of the tutor-pupil relation in terms of who the grammarians were and how they wrote for specific audiences. The prevailing pedagogy in Europe from the Roman period to the Renaissance had been “that of the master instructing *ex cathedra*; and one pervasive support system, involving progression from

25 Wanostrocht 1780; Lévizac (1814⁶ [1806]) in this corpus but several others of the period also adopted the label “practical”.

26 E.g. Porny’s (1784) *Grammatical exercises English and French*.

27 McLelland (2017, p. 94) cites Mauger’s 1653 *True Advancement of the French Tongue* as an “early text that combined grammar and dialogues” and he promoted his subsequent editions for their inclusion of both (“French grammar, enriched with severall choise dialogues”).

elementary through grammar school, to university, all under the aegis of the Holy Church” (Bowen 1981, vol. 2, p. xxi), and the texts used to teach Latin grammar changed little over the millennium, the role of the master being that of one versed in doctrine. The content of vernacular grammars was, on the other hand, much more contested, and pedagogical grammars for French reflect the tension between adapting to new learning contexts whilst adhering to canonical descriptions of language.

Mauger is one of the most studied of the early grammarians, not least because of the success of his many publications, his grammar being “one of the most widely diffused French grammars of the seventeenth century”²⁸ which he “constantly revised” (Lambley 1920, p. 304), each revision being the result of his striving to meet the needs of his particular students. He changed his grammar significantly from (in his 1653 first edition) parallel columns of Latin and English with whole sections in Latin to (from 1667) questions and answers in juxtalinear columns in the form of a dialogue in French and English, a fictive dialogue between “A Lady and a Master of Languages”, aimed therefore both at the scholar who has not studied Latin, and, more precisely at a female clientele²⁹. Equally, Boyer states that his is “A Short and Plain French-Grammar for Ladies and Young Gentlemen that do not yet understand Latin”.

In Chambaud’s comprehensive volume, which includes lengthy instructions to teachers, he emphasised the need to be age-appropriate, encouraging young learners of 6 or 7 to simply learn a few words and then some sentences each day, with grammar reserved for “Youth of ten or twelve, and above”. He also states that his book is “chiefly calculated for young Ladies schools” and so does not assume that they will have “Latin Grammar”, even though throughout the rest of the book he refers exclusively to young scholars as boys or lads, e.g. “When a Boy has been thoroughly taught that part of the Grammar which treats the construction, he must be made to construe a French book”.

While the lives of the relatively few French grammarians living in England (principally London) in the late seventeenth century have been quite well documented, it proves more difficult to assemble biographical data for many of those of the later eighteenth century, particularly those who do not appear in the *Dictionary of national biography*, and for some I did not uncover anything more than how they described themselves on the frontispiece of their publications (e.g. Laisné, who describes himself as a “Teacher of Languages, formerly private tutor in the

28 Raby 2014 (see Mauger 1688¹² [1653]).

29 This is reflected throughout his question and response dialogue with questions from “the lady” such as “Sir, I have not learnt the Latin Tongue; I do not know what is Grammar, a Noun or a Verb &c. I would fain (nevertheless) learn by the Rules. And not by rote [...] What do you mean by a Syllable?”.

University of Paris”). We do know that all of the authors under consideration were migrant native speakers of French³⁰. This in itself marks a contrast with the preceding period for, although French native-speakers had still outnumbered late Tudor and early seventeenth century English grammarians of French (Bouton 1972), the most renowned authors had been English (most notably Cotgrave and Sherwood). In the period following the Restoration, French grammars were exclusively written by native French-speakers. While Mauger had already settled in London in 1650, the Restoration gave greater impetus to the flow of Protestant émigrés to London, and others followed as French and the fashion for French style flourished and the influx of Protestant migration sharpened further after the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes. Many migrants turned to teaching French in private language schools (called academies), some opening their own, or were employed as private tutors to teach the bourgeoisie or the nobility in their homes (Caravolas 2000)³¹, especially children or young gentlemen preparing to depart on the “grand tour”³². Many tutors (including Mauger) did both. The early grammars were therefore written by these tutors for their pupils and to provide some income. By the time of the next wave of refugee migrants, this time fleeing revolutionary France, there was a more established market for school grammars such that Lévizac was able to claim in his preface that his grammar “has been adopted by the most celebrated schools in England”.

The provenance of the grammarians has implications for claims to authorial legitimacy. As native-speakers, authors were able to claim linguistic credibility, but this was not enough in itself. Given the large numbers of French migrants in England, authors were at pains to advertise their pedagogical expertise, and this was done by vaunting the success of their treatise, usually at the expense of their peers, for it was an especially common feature of the earlier grammars to discredit other authors in their preface, often in explicitly adversarial language; e.g. in Mauger’s preface addressed to readers, the author mentions his “malevolent detractors” and “adversaries, whom the sole envy to see me so well settled in your good Opinion, has raised against me”. The rivalry in evidence between the authors of grammars throughout the period has received some attention in the literature. Lambley (1920) tells us, for instance, that although Mauger and Festeau were friends when they arrived from Blois, Mauger’s

30 With the exception of Charles Whitaker (1787-1867), who was born in London to a German mother and English father but was educated in Paris and the Netherlands. Whitaker (1817) uses his English-native status to his advantage, arguing in his preface that the “authors of most of the grammars already published were Frenchmen. They were qualified to explain the idiom of their own language, but they had not acquired (that which it is so difficult for a foreigner to acquire) a competent knowledge of the English tongue, and a quick and accurate feeling of impropriety of expression and inelegance of style. It necessarily followed that their illustrations of French phrases and idioms were frequently given in the most uncouth, barbarous and vulgar phraseology”: p. vi-vii.

31 Children of the aristocracy, including boys, were still mostly educated at home.

32 See Kibbee (2000).

criticism (in the address to the Learned Reader in his 1656 second edition) of “a Friend, who betrayed my expectation, and corrected it [i.e. his first edition] not exactly, although my copy was perfect” was likely to be aimed at Festeau. Howatt (1984, p. 53) suggests that Festeau’s (1667) “A new and easie French grammar” was written “in direct competition with” Mauger’s grammar.

The importance of patronage is key to understanding the social and professional position of these early grammarians and all of the early grammars included a lengthy dedication. Most of the later ones also included a dedication but these became much briefer. Rogissard (1738² [1734]), Chambaud (1750), Laisné (1812) and Lévizac (1814⁶ [1806]) were unusual in having no dedication, but this may also reflect the chronology of their migration when noble patronage was less critical, and certainly these were successful authors whose works were positively reviewed by contemporaries. The dedications, most often to a noble employer whose patronage would confer status on the author and suggest a seal of approval, are powerfully performative and demonstrate the ambivalence of grammarians’ status as, on the one hand, purveyors of knowledge and, on the other hand, tutors in a servile relation to their employer.

Authorial legitimacy was also claimed through the emphasis on the best form of French, and we see that processes of standardisation were swept up with an appeal to the snob value of the elite variety of French, as authors proclaimed the quality of their French, e.g. “as it is now spoken in the court of France” (Boyer 1694). Specifically, it was the French of the Loire Valley and the Île-de-France region that was considered superior, a notion already mentioned by Palsgrave (for whom the “moost parfyte” French was spoken in the “herte of fraunce”, i.e. the regions of the Seine and the Loire) and propagated in England by the best-selling French grammarians of the Restoration period who were from Blois, and collectively constituted what has been called the “Little Blois” group in London³³.

The emphasis on a prestige variety, however, is more than a self-publicising strategy and is connected to a moral characterisation about the “right” form of the language, an important debate in the codification of vernaculars. If the purity of Latin had been imagined as divinely ordained—and had withstood the reimagining of the liberal arts as *studia humanitatis* through Renaissance humanism—the rationalist movement of the long century posited language as more than a code describing a pre-existing world; rather, language constituted human experience. Both the Cartesian-inspired logic of Port-Royal in France and

33 “Because the accent of Blois was the accent of choice, language teachers from that area were particularly favoured (e.g. Maupas, Oudin, Mauger, Festeau). This was certainly not an absolute rule: Boyer was from Castres” (Kibbee 2000, p. 181). Miège also, though himself Swiss, cautions against the “common sort of teachers, who speak for the most part but corrupt and Provincial French”.

the Baconian legacy of empiricism in England³⁴ conceived language as constitutive of human subjectivity and this re-framing encouraged a “vast discussion in Europe [...] in which more or less sound linguistic arguments are linked with arguments drawn from [...] linguistic chauvinism” (Simone 1998 [1992], p. 202), as languages, most especially French, vied for superiority as the language of reason.

The Preface is the section in which authors vaunt their credentials to readers, and these are of a particularly personal nature in the earlier grammars, where authors often leave their address in London to be contacted and would present autobiographical information³⁵. The authors became less personally present in the later grammars. We no longer see obsequious prefaces to individual patrons, or such aggressively combative denouncing of rivals. That this characteristic lessened over time may be explained by the increasing professionalisation and normativity of grammars as their use as school books became more generalised and also as presentation of grammatical rules and nomenclature became increasingly standardised. This harmonising process resulted not least of all because the best sellers were regurgitated by subsequent authors, but also because of increasing normativity imposed by centralising agencies, such as the *Académie française*, whose first complete dictionary was published in 1694, and the increasing number of dictionaries, the best known in English being Johnson’s (1755).

In terms of dialogic positioning between author and reader, the use of pronouns “we” and “you” was characteristic only of the early grammars and gave way to other, depersonalised forms such as the passive voice. This shift from personal to neutral reflects a different order of relation between the author and the language being presented, “we” signifying both a general representation of “we as French speakers” but also the native-speaker grammarian as custodian of this form imparting knowledge to “you as English speakers”. Perrin (1768) is representative of this shift, using the third person to tell the reader how “The French speak” (e.g. “The French have four ways of speaking”) rather than “we”.

The eighteenth century saw the expansion of boarding school education for sons of the aristocratic and gentle classes and, while the classics continued to be the mainstay of learning, debates around the importance of French as more than simply an accomplishment flourished. In his “practical treatise” on liberal education, the Master of Tonbridge School, Vicesimus Knox (1781), included a whole chapter on

34 The philosophical traditions which, in Padley’s (1985) terms, posited language respectively as the “mirror of thought” and the “mirror of things”.

35 Mauger 1698¹⁸ [1653]: “I assure you that there are no Words or Phrases in my Grammar but are very Modish; for I was every day with some of the Ablest Gentlemen of the Port-Royal, who assured me that my Grammar was in their Library”.

“learning French at school” which he advocated both for its “utility to the man of business and the ornaments it adds to the accomplished gentleman” (p. 148) while also cautioning “let not the scholar be introduced to French till he has made progress in the knowledge of the Latin grammar” (p. 148-149) for it is Latin grammar that is “the most important object [...] and avenue to future improvements”. While, therefore, French and other modern subjects would not yet be integrated into the mainstream curriculum timetable³⁶, it was increasingly taught along the lines of the classics and the grammarian-tutors of the later period, some who were employed as schoolmasters (e.g. Porny at Eton), explicitly advocated learning through grammatical exercises.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

This analysis offers a modest contribution to the body of scholarship tracing the transition from the classical model of presenting Latin grammar towards adapted models, more suited to teaching vernacular languages. The pedagogical grammars in the current corpus reflect some of the changes in the process of standardising languages, in this case French. Key, intertwined factors shaping these changes are: 1) the gradual meta-linguistic shifts from the Latin model to vernacular-sensitive taxonomies; 2) the increasing prescriptivism of a totalising Enlightenment epistemology; 3) the norming of language rules under the momentum of increased publications and the market forces of a growing print readership; 4) the expanded school system in the late eighteenth century, where the study of French was increasingly legitimised for its intellectual rigour within the emerging range of modern subjects.

Already in the seventeenth century there was a greater confidence in the merit of French as a taught language (Lambley 1920; Kibbee 2000), largely due to the methods proposed by Comenius and Locke, but also the influence of the Port-Royal grammarians, who ushered in a “rational” conception of language that would resonate with the epistemological spirit of the Enlightenment. Despite Kibbee’s statement that Port-Royal grammar was not so much imitated as “name-dropped” (Kibbee 2000, p.179), there are clear comparisons found between some key tenets of the *Grammaire* and the grammars in the current corpus, e.g. the prominence of the verb as a part of speech, the recognition of “*un/e*” as an indefinite article. The conception of language as a rational system joined seamlessly with the modernist ideological yoking of language and nation that consolidated during the Enlightenment and would underpin later national education systems, markedly

36 Thomas Arnold, the Master of Rugby School, being the first to do so in the 1830s.

more centralised both in terms of programmatic content and infrastructure in France than in England³⁷.

While all the grammars used the frame of the classical model, some did so more than others, and the emphasis given to different parts of speech and to different skills (oral or written) shifted. Early grammars, including Mauger's classical model of question and response in parallel columns, emphasised oral French through extensive sections on pronunciation and the inclusion of dialogues for practice. Later grammars emphasised the written form and adopted a case model of exposition earlier and more prominently in the text in keeping with the expectation that students would be familiar with (Latinate) cases.

The tendency identified in the analysis of these grammars coincides loosely, both in terms of the character of the authorial voice and also in the greater consistency and neutrality in the presentation of language, with the two historical phases of codification identified by Lodge. In his first phase (1500-1660) Lodge identifies as “« *le bon français* »” the one “*parlé par les gens du « meilleur monde »*” (Lodge 1997 [1993], p. 221) that reflected the social hierarchy with the court and king at its apex as representative of “good”, “correct” language users. In Lodge's second phase of codification (1660-1789), “*le « bon usage » est la langue de la raison et de la clarté*”. While the prestige of the noble varieties of the Loire Valley and Île-de-France regions still determined the ideal of standard, this period also saw a rationalisation of language as a logical system, an epistemological perspective which stemmed largely from the Port-Royal grammar and was later reinforced by other treatises such as Restaut's (1730) *Principes généraux et raisonnés de la grammaire française*³⁸. The proliferation of grammars, dictionaries, and treatises on language that were published in French during the eighteenth century consolidated the prescriptive model of “correct” language use, based on an idealised written model that was to convey clarity and logic³⁹.

By the turn of the nineteenth century increased codification and its attendant prescription (Lodge 1997 [1993]) led to wider consensus on teaching approaches that culminated in “what was later disparagingly called the grammar-translation method” (McLelland 2017, p. 99) as the dominant model in English schools, although, as Tomalin (2011) argues, teaching practices were unlikely to

37 Lodge (1997 [1993], p. 211) cites Brunot's (1966 [1905-1953]) famous exclamation that “*le règne de la grammaire [...] a été, en France, plus tyrannique et plus long qu'en aucun pays*”.

38 Lodge (1997 [1993]) distinguishes the Port-Royal grammar and Restaut's *Principes* from Condillac's (1746) *Essai sur l'origine des connaissances humaines*, the latter presenting language systems not as a result of logic but as emanating from nature. Whereas the Port-Royal authors posited language as a system able to articulate thought, the latter characterised the mutual development of thought and language.

39 A similar process of codification and consequent prescriptivism occurred with English towards the end of the late eighteenth century (see Mitchell 2018² [2001]).

have been as homogeneous as some scholars claim, and further research is still needed to understand classroom practices in the period across different learning contexts. Further research is also needed on the background of teachers and grammarians, both in terms of personal autobiographies and the forms of training that were available prior to the educational reforms that would later shape language teaching as a centralised profession. In particular, it would be interesting to understand the differing perspectives between native and non-native speakers concerning preferences for knowledge-based rather than usage-based language learning.

One consequence of the developments listed here would eventually be the re-positioning of the teacher-grammarian from the role of the “*bon maître*” (Fernández Fraile 2005, p. 6), whose authority and prestige were conferred by his personal linguistic and pedagogical capabilities, to that of a “teacher” conveying an institutionalised system of knowledge (more along the lines of the ecumenical teaching of the classics). In the latter case, language is presented more neutrally as a body of knowledge and the visibility of the author-expert is rendered less prominent. This shift in positioning of the expert knower (native speaker) to teacher within a system augurs the later professionalisation of teaching.

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