

## *Chapter 8. The Eighteenth Century to the Present*

Anyone who glances at a text written after 1800 will find the language remarkably familiar. Its idioms may seem a bit odd, and the occasional archaic spelling, such as <shew> for <show> may be found, but the language is essentially the same as the language we use today. Grammatically, English did not substantially reach its present-day form until around 1800, making the 1700s a crucial period in the history of the English language. Many of our contemporary attitudes towards the English language (such as the socially constructed idea of ‘proper grammar’) which began their development in the early modern period also reached their current form by the end of the eighteenth century. Developments have taken place since this time both within the language and within attitudes towards language, but we still live with the legacy of the eighteenth century both in the way we use English and in how we view the language.

The increasing awareness of the importance of English in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century society which were explored in chapter 6 soon began to spawn ambitious plans for deliberate interference in the form of the language. As we shall see, such schemes were increasingly often devised with the intent of affecting society through the medium of language. There was by no means a consistent movement, and the aims and purposes of linguistic ‘meddlers’ evolved over time. We will look at three developments which began as early as the sixteenth century but became exceptionally important in the eighteenth century. Many people desired the establishment of an organised academy, charged with the task of establishing a standard form of English. Such bodies existed (and still exist) in France, Italy, and Spain, but one was never established in England. However, their purpose has been partially achieved by the development of prescriptive ‘grammars’ – works which attempt to guide us in how to use English – and by dictionaries, which sometimes have a similar effect. Neither grammars nor dictionaries developed out of the blue; in particular, we should concentrate on how their purposes and intended audiences changed over time.

To study the history of attitudes towards English in the eighteenth century and beyond, it is necessary to look first at earlier attitudes and how eighteenth-century attitudes developed from them. Proposals for an English Academy came relatively late in the seventeenth century and more or less subsided less than a hundred years later. Dictionaries and grammars have roots as far back as the Middle Ages, but they began to resemble forms we recognise in the 1500s.

### *Proposals for an English Academy*

#### 1. Purpose of the *Académie Française*, according to the royal charter of 1635

To labour with all possible care and diligence to give definite rules to [the] language, and to render it pure, eloquent, and capable of treating the arts and sciences.

2. John Dryden, Dedication to *Troilus and Cressida* (1679)

I am desirous, if it were possible, that we might all write with the same certainty of words, and purity of phrase, to which the Italians first arrived, and after them the French; at least that we might advance as far as our tongue is capable of such a standard.

3. Daniel Defoe, 'Of Academies', from *An essay upon Projects* (1697)

The Work of this Society shou'd be to encourage Polite Learning, to polish and refine the *English* Tongue, and advance the so much neglected Faculty of Correct Language, to establish Purity and Propriety of Stile, and to purge it from all the Irregular Additions that Ignorance and Affectation have introduc'd; and all those Innovations in Speech, if I may call them such, which some Dogmatic Writers have the Confidence to foster upon their Native Language, as if their Authority were sufficient to make their own Fancy legitimate.

By such a Society I dare say the true Glory of our *English* Stile wou'd appear; and among all the Learned Part of the World, be esteem'd, as it really is, the Noblest and most Comprehensive of all the Vulgar Languages in the World.

4. Joseph Addison, *Spectator* 135 (Saturday, 4 August 1711)

There is another Particular in our Language which is a great Instance of our Frugality of Words, and that is the suppressing of several Particles, which must be produced in other Tongues to make a Sentence intelligible: This often perplexes the best Writers, when they find the Relatives, *Who, which* or *that*, at their Mercy whether it may have Admission or not, and will never be decided till we have something like an Academy, that by the best Authorities and Rules drawn from Analogy of Languages shall settle all Controversies between Grammar and Idiom.

5. Jonathan Swift, *A Proposal for Correcting, Improving and Ascertaining the English Tongue* (1712)

The persons who are to undertake this work, will have the example of the French before them, to imitate where these have proceeded right, and to avoid their mistakes. Beside the grammar-part, wherein we are allowed to be very defective, they will observe many gross improprieties, which however authorised by practice, and grown familiar, ought to be discarded. They will find many words that deserve to be utterly thrown out of our language, many more to be corrected; and perhaps not a few, long since antiquated, which ought to be restored, on account of their energy and sound....

But what I have most at heart is, that some method should be thought on for *ascertaining* and *fixing* our language for ever, after such alterations are made in it as shall be thought requisite. For I am of opinion, that it is better a language should not be wholly perfect, than that it should be perpetually changing; and we must give over at one time, or at length infallibly change for the worse.

But where I say, that I would have our language, after it is dully correct, always to last; I do not mean that it should never be enlarged: provided that no word which a society shall give a sanction to, be afterwards antiquated and exploded, they may have liberty to receive whatever new ones they shall find occasion for.

6. Philip Dormer Stanhope, Lord Chesterfield, Letter to *The World* (28 November 1754)

I had long lamented that we had no lawful standard of our language set up, for those to repair to, who might chuse to speak and write it grammatically and correctly: and I have as long wished that either some one person of distinguished abilities would undertake the work singly, or that a certain number of gentlemen would form themselves, or be formed by the government, into a society for that purpose. The late ingenious doctor Swift proposed a plan of this nature to his friend (as he thought him) the lord treasurer of Oxford, but without success; precision and perspicuity not being in general the favourite objects of ministers, and perhaps still less so that of a minister than of any other.

Many people have imagined that so extensive a work would have been best performed by a number of persons, who should have taken their several departments, of examining, sifting, winnowing (I borrow this image from the Italian *crusca*) purifying, and finally fixing our language, by incorporating their respective funds into one joint stock. But whether this opinion be true or false, I think the public in general, and the republic of letters in particular, greatly obliged to Mr Johnson, for having undertaken and executed so great and desirable a work.

7. Samuel Johnson, Preface to *A Dictionary of the English Language* (1755)

I have, notwithstanding this discouragement, attempted a dictionary of the *English* language, which, while it was employed in the cultivation of every species of literature, has itself been hitherto neglected; suffered to spread, under the direction of chance, into wild exuberance; resigned to the tyranny of time and fashion; and exposed to the corruptions of ignorance, and caprices of innovation.

When I took the first survey of my undertaking, I found our speech copious without order, and energetick without rules: wherever I turned my view, there was perplexity to be disentangled, and confusion to be regulated; choice was to be made out of boundless variety, without any established principle of selection; adulterations were to be detected, without a settled test of purity; and modes of expression to be rejected or received, without the suffrages of any writers of classical reputation or acknowledged authority....

So far have I been from any care to grace my pages with modern decorations, that I have studiously endeavoured to collect examples and authorities from the writers before the restoration, whose works I regard as *the wells of English undefiled*, as the pure sources of genuine diction. Our language, for almost a century, has, by the concurrence of many causes, been gradually departing from its original *Teutonical* character, and deviating towards a *Gallick* structure and phraseology, from which it ought to be our endeavour to recal it, by making our ancient volumes the groundwork of stile, admitting among the additions of later times, only such as may supply real deficiencies, such as are readily adopted by the genius of our tongue, and incorporate easily with out native idioms....

Of the event of this work, for which, having laboured it with so much application, I cannot but have some degree of parental fondness, it is natural to form conjectures. Those who have been persuaded to think well of my design, will require that it should fix our language, and put a stop to those alterations which time and chance have hitherto been suffered to make in it without opposition. With this consequence I will confess that I flattered myself for awhile; but now begin to fear that I have indulged expectation which neither reason nor experience can justify. When we see men grow old and die at a certain time one after another, from century to century, we laugh at the elixir that promises to prolong life to a thousand years; and with equal justice may the lexicographer be derided, who being able to produce no example of a nation that has preserved their words and phrases from mutability, shall imagine that his dictionary can embalm his language, and secure it from corruption and decay, that it is in his power to change sublunary nature, and clear the world at once from folly, vanity, and affectation.

## The Development of Prescriptive Grammar

### 1. William Lily, *A Shorte Introduction of Grammar* (1549)

[This is a grammar of Latin, not English, and it was originally written in Latin. Compiled in the early 16<sup>th</sup> century by Lily (1486?-1523), the work comprises an account of Latin inflexions by John Colet and a section on syntax by Lily. The work was subsequently revised and translated into English, and by a proclamation of Edward VI in 1548 its use was made mandatory in all grammar schools; a final revision of the work was made at that time, and it long remained the chief grammar of Latin used in schools.]

#### Of a Verbe.

A verbe is a parte of speche, declined with mode and tense, and betokeneth dooyng; as *Amo*, I loue: or sufferyng: as *Amor*, I am loued: or beeyng: as *Sum*, I am.

Of verbes such as haue persons, be called personalles: as *Ego amo*, *Tu amas*. And suche as haue no persons, be called impersonalles: as *Tædet*, it yrketh. *Oportet*, it behoueth.

Of verbes personalles there bee fiue kyndes, Actiue, Passiue, Neutre, Deponent, and Common.

A verbe actiue endeth in *o*, and betokeneth to doo: as *Amo*, I loue, and by putting to, *r*, it maie be a passiue: as *Amor*.

A verbe passiue endeth in *or*, & betokeneth to suffre: as *Amor*, I am loued, & by puttyng away, *r*, it may be an actiue: as, *Amo*.

A verbe neuter endeth in *o*, or *m*, and can not take *r*, to make hym a passiue: as, *Curro*, I renne, *Sum*, I am. And it is englyshed sometye actiue: as *Curro*, I runne: and sometye passively: as *Aegroto*, I am sycke.

A verbe deponent endeth in *r*, lyke a passiue, and yet in significacion is but eyther actiue: as, *Loquor uerbum*, I speake a woorde: or neutre, as *Glorior*, I boste.

A verbe common endeth in *r*, & in significacion is both actiue and passiue: as *Osculor te*, I kisse the. *Osculor a te*, I am kissed of the.

#### Modes

There be syxe modes, the Indicatiue, the Imperatiue, the Optatiue, the Potencial, the Subiunctiue, and the Infinitiu.

The Indicatiue mode sheweth a reason true or false: as *Ego amo*, I loue: or els asketh a question: as, *Amas tu?* Doest thou loue?

The Imperatiue byddeth or commandeth: as, *Ama*, Loue thou.

The Optatiue wyssheth or desyreth, with these signes, woulde god, I praie god, or god graunt: as *Vtinam amem*, I praie god I loue, and hath euermore an aduerbe of wishyng ioyned with hym.

The Potenciall mode is knowen by these signes, maie, can, might, would, shoulde, or ought: as *Amem*, I can or maie loue, without an aduerbe ioyned with hym.

The Subiunctiue mode that euermore some coniunction ioyned with hym: as *Cum amarem*, whan I loued. And it is called the Subiunctiue mode, because it dependeth of an other verbe in the same sentence, eyther goyng afore, or commyng after: as, *Cum amarem eram miser*, whan I loued, I was a wretche.

The Infinitiu signifieth to dooe, to suffre, or to bee, and hath neyther nombre nor person, nor nominatiue case before hym, and is knowen commonly by this signe to: as, *Amare*, to loue. Also whan two verbes come together

without any nominatyue case between them, then the latter shall be the infinitiue mode: as *Cupio dicere*, I desyre to learne.

## 2. William Bullokar, *Pamphlet for Grammar* (1586)

[Bullokar's *Pamphlet for Grammar* was printed in a reformed orthography devised by Bullokar, using a number of idiosyncratic symbols. In the extracts that follow the orthography and punctuation have been adapted to those of present-day English.]

(a) William Bullokar's *Pamphlet for Grammar*: Or rather to be said his abbreviation of his *Grammar for English*, extracted out of his *Grammar at Large*. This being sufficient for the speedy learning of how to parse English speech for the perfecter writing thereof, and using the best phrase therein; and the easier entrance into the secrets of grammar for other languages, and the speedier understanding of other languages, ruled or not ruled by grammar; very profitable for the English nation that desireth to learn any strange language, and very aidful to the stranger to learn English perfectly and speedily; for that English hath short rule (therefore soon learned) yet having sufficient rules therein to make the way much easier for the learning of any other language unknown before to the learner.

(b) A verb is a part of speech declined with mood, tense, number, and person.

It is called a verb active when it signifieth *to do*, as, *I love, I teach*; and hath a participle of the passive voice derived of it, as, *loved, taught*; which participle being joined with the verb substantive, *to be*, taketh his mood or manner of suffering, and his tense also, of the verb substantive, and his case, gender, number, and person, of his ruling substantive, as, *I am loved, be thou loved, O that he were loved, would God we had been loved, if they have been loved, when shall we be loved, &c.*; and having no participle passive is called a verb neuter, whose participial is joined with the verb substantive in *being* only, as, *I being run to the town, my father came home*. More is said of the participle in the title thereof.

To have may be called a verb possessive, and his compound, *to have liever*, a verb choicative. All other verbs are called verbs neuters unperfect, because they require the infinitive mood of another verb to express their signification or meaning perfectly; and be these *may, can, might* or *mought, could, would, should, must, ought*, and sometime *will, shall*, being a mere sign of the future tense.

There be five moods: the indicative, the imperative, the optative, the subjunctive, and the infinitive.

the indicative mood showeth a reason true or false, as, *I love*; or else asketh a question, as, *lovest thou?*

The imperative biddeth or commandeth, as, *love thou, love ye*.

The optative, or wishing mood, wisheth or desireth, and hath alway an adverb of wishing joined before his nominative case; as, *praying God I love, I pray God thou love, God grant he love*. Also these, *I would, would, would God, would to God, O that, and O if*, be adverbs of wishing showing the optative mood.

The subjunctive mood hath evermore a conjunction set before his nominative case, and dependeth upon another verb in the same sentence either going before or coming after it; as, *the master will be angry if we be idle, when we use diligence we learn*.

The infinitive hath neither number nor person, nor nominative case before it, and is known commonly by this sign or preosition, *to*; which *to* is not expressed many times when there cometh an accusative case between the infinitive mood and the verb before-going, as, *bid him come hither*. With some verbs we use a like phrase in the nominative case, as, *you say I am idle; that* being a resolver of the first and understood in the last, as, *bid that he come hither, you say that I am idle*. Neither do we use *to* after a verb neuter unperfect, except after *ought*, as, *we ought to go thither*.

There be three times, called tenses: the time that is now, called the present tense, as, *I love*; the time past, called the preter tense, as, *I loved*; the time to come, called the future tense, as, *I shall* or *will love*.

Time past hath three divisions: the first, called the preter tense, as, *I loved*, sometime having the sign or preposition *did* or *didst* joined with the simple, as, *I did love*, *thou didst love*; the second, being perfectly past, called the preter-perfect tense, having alway the sign or preposition *have*, *hast*, or *hath* set before it, as, *I have loved*, *thou hast loved*, *he hath loved*; the third, being more than perfectly past, having alway the sign or preposition *had* or *hadst* before it, and called the preter-pluperfect tense, as, *I loved*, *thou hadst loved*, *he had loved*.

### 3. Jeremiah Wharton, *The English Grammar* (1654)

(a) To the Courteous Reader. It is the judgement of many learned, that in the Education of Youth, it should be the care of every Teacher, as well to accustom them to the exercise of good English, as of good Latine. And not without great reason: for our mother-tongue is likely in the practice to bee most useful, and is as capable of any Scholar-like expressions, as any whatsoever. Besides the puritie and elegancie of our own Language is to bee esteemed a chief part of the honor of our Nation, which wee all ought to our utmost power, to advance. Lastly, because for one that is trained up in the Grammar-Schools, to any perfection, fit for the Universitie, or any learned Profession, a hundred are taken away before; of whom the most, very shortly after, wholly in a manner, forget their Latine; so that if they bee not bettered in the knowledg of their Native Language, their labor and cost is to little or no purpose. Upon this ground, and for these reasons, I have composed this ensuing Treatise, entituled, *The English Grammar*: By the use whereof, anyone may bee able 1. In the hardest English both to judg of other's Reading, whether ir bee true or fals, and also to justifie his own, 2. To do the same in Writing, 3. In any English Subject, to distinguish every Part of Speech asunder; the knowledg whereof is of great use to young Scholars, for the judicious Construing, Parsing, and making of Latine. 4. From any Primitive or simple word to form all the Derivatives and Compounds that flow from it; and likewise to reduce any Derivative word to his Primitive; which propertie, as it will discover the elegancie of the English-tongue, together with the proper sense and use of almost all pure English words, so will it bee a good model, so far as it extendeth, by which to learn any other exotick language. 5. Upon the sight of any englished-Latine-word, pertaining to the rules of Derivation set down herein, hee shall bee able presently to turn it into Latine; though before hee never saw or heard of it before. Which book therefore will bee very useful for all that desire to bee expert in the foresaid properties; more especially profitable for the youth of this Nation immediately before their Entrance into the Rudiments of the Latine tongue: becaus the knowledg of their mother-tongue is most necessaric, both for the understanding of what they hear or read therein, as also the expressing of their conceit, in what they understand: And it is as commendable to give a warrantable rule or reason of their own, as of a forrein tongue. Besides they will more easily comprehend the Rules and Terms of Art in that tongue, wherein they have accustomed from their infancie, then in the Latine, whereof they are altogether ignorant. Lastly, it will bee a notable Preparative to the learning of the Latine, or any other Grammatized language; becaus the Rules in *this*, for the most part may bee applied unto *that*. Moreover by them also, that are already entred into the Latine-tongue, it may profitably learned upn the By, without any hinderance to their other proceedings. Likewise to strangers that desire to learn our language, it will be a special help, which they shall finde not to bee barbarous, confused, and irregular, (as the common saying is) but familiar, orderly and easie, equal to the Greek, and beyond the Latine for Composition, year happie above them both in this, not that it cannot bee reduced to any; but that indeed it needeth little or no Grammar at all.

(b)

Of a Verb.

A Verb betokeneth the dooing, suffering, or beeing of a thing with difference of time.

There bee three kinds of Verbs, Active, Passive, and Neuter.

A Verb Active betokeneth dooing; as, *I love*.

A Verb Passive betokeneth suffering; as, *I am loved*.

A Verb Neuter betokeneth Beeing; as, *I am*.

Moods.

There are four Moods, or Manner of signifying in Verbs.

The Indicative, the Imperative, the Potential, and the Infinitive.

The Indicative declareth; as, *Thou lovest*: or else demandeth, or doubteth; as, *Doest thou love?*

The Imperative commandeth, intreateth, exhorteth, or permitteth; as, *Love thou*, or *let him love*.

The Potential mood signifieth a power, duty, or desire, and hath one of these signs, *may*, *can*, *might*, *would*, *should*; as, *I may love*.

The Infinitive mood followeth another Verb, or an Adjective, and commonly hath this sign *to*; as, *I desire to learn*.  
*Worthy to bee praised*.

Tenses.

There are five Tenses, or distinctions of time; the Present tens, the Preter-imperfect tens, the Preterperfect tens, the preterpluperfect tens, and the Future tens.

The Present tens speaketh of the time that now is; as, *I love* or *do love*.

The Preterimperfect tens speaketh of the time not perfectly past; as, *I loved*, or *did love*.

The Preterperfect tens speaketh of the time more than perfectly past; as *I had loved*.

The Future tens speaketh of the time to com with these signs *shall* or *will*; as, *I shall* or *will love*.

Signs of these five tenses in the Active voice bee, *Do*, *did*, *have*, *had*, *shall* or *will*.

Signs of the Passive voice bee, *Am*, *was*, *have been*, *had been*, *shall* or *will bee*.

These signs of the five tenses in both voices, as likewise the signs of the Potential mood, when they are alone, bee perfect verbs themselves; as are in Latine, *ago*, *habeo*, *volo*, *debeo*, *sum*, *possum*.

Persons.

In Verbs there are three persons singular, and three persons plural, answering to the persons of the Pronouns, *I*, *thou*, *hee*, Sing. *wee*, *yee*, *they*, Plur.

4. James Greenwood, *an Essay towards a Practical English Grammar* (1711)

(a)

The Preface.

I need not, I hope, make any Apology for publishing a *Grammar* of our *Mother Tongue*, since it is too plain and evident, how necessary a Performance of the Nature is, and especially for those Persons, who talk for the most part just as they have heard their *Parents*, *Nurses*, or *Teachers*, (*who likewise may happen to be none of the best Speakers*) talk; without ever taking the Matter into any farther Consideration: It is indeed possible that a young *Gentleman* or *Lady* may be enabled to speak pretty well upon some Subjects, and entertain a Visiter with Discourse that may be agreeable enough: Yet I do not well see how they should write any thing with a tolerable Correctness, unless they have some tast

of *Grammar*, or express themselves clearly, and deliver their Thoughts by Letter or otherwise, so as not to lay themselves open to the Censure of their Friends, for their blameable *Spelling* or false *Syntax*.

For which reason after several others, I have endeavour'd to explain the *Principles of Grammar* in such a perspicuous and familiar way, as may rather incite, than discourage the Curiosity of such who would have a clear Notion of what they speak or write. And herein I have had regard to three things: In the first place, I was desirous to do what in me lay, to excite Persons to the Study of their Mother Tongue. *Secondly*, to give such a plain and rational Account of *Grammar*, as might render it easy and delightful to our *English* Youth, who have for a long time esteemed the Study of this Useful Art very irksome, obscure and difficult: And this their wrong and hard Notion seems to have proceeded, partly from the unpleasing and disadvantageous Manner it has been deliver'd to them in, and partly through the want of having every Thing explain'd and clear'd up to their Understanding as they go along: Not to mention the Teaching them *Grammar* in *Latin*, before they have learn't any thing of it in *English*. And every Body must readily grant that the way to come to a true and clear Knowledge of any Art, is to explain Things *unknown*, by Things that are *known*. and I dare be bold to say, that if the *Grammar* of our own Tongue was first Taught in our Schools, our Youth would in a far less time, than they now commonly do, attain an Understanding of the *Latin* tongue, and also be better prepared for the Study of Things. My third Aim that I had in writing this Treatise was, to oblige the *Fair Sex* whose *Education* perhaps, is too much neglected in this Particular.

(b)

#### Of the Pronoun.

As the too frequent Repetition of the same Words is disagreeable and unpleasant; so this Inconvenience could hardly have been avoided, since Men have Occasion to make frequent Mention of the same Things, if certain Words had not been made Use of, to supply the Place of these *Nouns*, and prevent their being too often repeated; which Words are called *Pronouns*, that is, Words put for *Nouns*. For as *Nouns* are the Marks or Signs of Things, so *Pronouns* are of *Nouns*.

A *Pronoun* is a Word that may be used instead of any *Nouns Substantive*, as,

Instead of my Name, I say, *I*.

Instead of thy Name, I use, *Thou*.

Instead of his Name, I say, *He*.

Instead of her Name, I say, *She*.

So instead of saying *the Book of Peter*, we say, *his Book*; in speaking to *Peter*, we say, *it is your Book*, &c. so likewise when it is said, I teach *Thee* or *Him*; the *Pronoun I*, represents to our Thoughts the Person teaching, suppose *John*, and the Words *Thee*, *Him*, the Person spoken to, or of, suppose *William* or *Thomas*.

Now we are to consider, that all *Discourse* may be brought under, or confin'd to these three Heads:—That is, We either speak of our selves; to another; or of another. And these three heads are call'd by the Name of *Persons*.

There are in Discourse, *Three persons*.

1. For in speaking of my self, I use the Word *I*; and if more than one speak of themselves, they use the Word *We*: which Words *I* and *We*, are said to be, are said to be of the *First Person*
2. When we speak to another, we use the Word *Thou*; but when we speak to more than one, we use the Word *Ye*; which Words *Thou* and *Ye*, are said to be of the *Second Person*.
3. In speaking of another, if of the *Male-Sex*, we say *He*; if of the *Female-Sex*, we say *She*; but if we speak of a thing that is neither of the *Male* nor *Female Sex*, we use the Word *It*; and if we speak of more Things than one, let them be of the *Male* or *Female Sex*, or otherwise, we use the Word *They*: and these Words, *He*, *She*, *It* and *They*, are said to be of the *Third Person*.



Hence we may observe.

1. *I* is of the first *Person* Singular.  
*We* is of the first *Person* Plural.
2. *Thou* is of the second *Person* Singular.  
*You* and *Ye* are of the second *Person* Plural.
3. *He, She, It,* are of the third *Person* Singular.  
*They* is of the third *Person* Plural.

And so likewise, all other *Nouns* when spoken of, are of the third *Person*: Of the third *Person* Singular if only one be meant; of the third *Person* Plural if more than one be meant.

It is customary among us, (as likewise among the *French*, and others) tho' we speak but to one particular *Person*, to use the *Plural Number*: but then we say *You*, and not *Ye*. And if any one speaks to another in the *Singular Number*, as *Thou Thomas*, it is reckon'd a Sign of Contempt or Familiarity.

The *Pronouns* have a twofold *State*, both in the Singular and Plural Number. The *first State* we shall call the *Foregoing State*, as *I, We*; the *second State* we shall call the *Following State*, as *Me, Us*. The *Pronoun* is used in the *Foregoing State*, when it is set alone, as *Who did it? I*. Or, when it goes before a *Verb*, as, *I love*, not *Me love*; *We read*, not *Us read*. But it is used in the *Following State*, when it follows the *Verb* or *Preposition*, as the *Man loves Me*, not *The Man loves I*; *God bless Us*, not *God bless We*; So, *Peter gave to Me*, not *to I*; *John wrote to Us*, not *to We*.

5. James Buchanan, *The British Grammar* (1762)

(a) Of the Construction of Adverbs, Conjunctions, and Prepositions

- I. The Adverb (*yes*) is more genteel, as an Answer, than *yea*, which is seldom used but by the People called Quakers. We use *I* as an Answer, in a familiar, careless, or merry Way; as, *I, I Sir, I, I*; but to use *ay* is accounted rude, especially to our Betters.
- II. *No* stands alone in an Answer; as, *Will he go? No.* but (*not*) must always be joined to some other Word; as, *Will he go? He will not go.* We often find *no* used instead of *not*; as, *I will stay whether he will or no*: But though Custom from Inadvertency has enfranchised this Way of Writing, if we strictly advert to the Construction of the Sentence just mentioned, we shall find it repugnant to grammatical Propriety; for the Construction cannot be, *I will stay whether he will or will no...but I will stay whether he will or will not...*
- III. Two Negatives, or two Adverbs of denying, make an Affirmation in our Language; therefor. we cannot say, *I cannot eat none*, *I cannot dance none*, &c, for these make Affirmatives, and signify as much as, *I can eat some*, &c.

(b) General Rules for English Concord, with Exercises of false Syntax under each, as an Introduction to the Scholar's Writing English syntactically.

#### RULE IX

The comparative Adverbs *than* and *as*, have the foregoing State of a Pronoun after them; except a Preposition expressed or understood comes between them and the Pronoun.

### Examples of false Syntax

He has eaten more than *me*. I have written more than *thee*. John reads better than *him*. He dances better than *her*, but she sings better than *him*....

I have not so much Gold as *him*. I have as good a Right as *her*. You have not so good a right as *us*.

#### 6. Robert Lowth, *A Short Introduction to English Grammar* (1762)

##### (a) Preface

The English Language hath been much cultivated during the last two hundred years. It hath been considerably polished and refined; it hath been greatly enlarged in extent and compass; its force and energy, its variety, richness, and elegance, have been tried with good success, in verse and in prose, upon all subjects, and in every kind of stile: but whatever other improvements it may have received, it hath made no advances in Grammatical accuracy.

It is now perhaps fifty years since Doctor Swift made a public remonstrance, addressed to the Earl of Oxford, then Lord Treasurer, of the imperfect State of our Language; alledging in particular, 'that in many instances it offended against every part of Grammar.' Swift must be allowed to have been a good judge of this matter. He was himself very attentive to this part, both in his own writings, and in his remarks upon those of his friends: he is one of our most correct, and, perhaps our very best prose writer. Indeed the justness of this complaint, as far as I can find, hath never been questioned; and yet no effectual method hath hitherto been taken to redress the grievance of which he complains....

The English Language is perhaps of all the present European Languages by much the most simple in its form and construction. Of all the ancient Languages extant that is the most simple, which is undoubtedly the most ancient: but even that Language does not equal English in its simplicity....

It is not owing then to any peculiar irregularity or difficulty of our Language, that the general practice both of speaking and writing it is chargeable with inaccuracy. It is not the Language, but the practice, that is in fault. The truth is, Grammar is very much neglected among us: and it is not the difficulty of the Language, but on the contrary the simplicity and facility of it, that occasions this neglect. Were the Language less easy and simple, we should find ourselves under a necessitie of studying it with more care and attention. But as it is, we take it for granted, that we have a competent knowledge and skill, and are able to acquit ourselves properly, in our own native tongue: a faculty solely acquired by use, conducted by habit, and tried by the ear, carries us on without reflection; we meet with no rubs or difficulties in our way, or we do not perceive them; we find ourselves able to go on without rules, and we do not so much as suspect that we stand in need of them....

But perhaps the Notes subjoined to the following pages will furnish a more convincing argument, than any thing that can be said here, both of the truth of the charge of inaccuracy brought against our Language as it subsists in practice, and of the necessity of investigating the Principles of it, and studying it Grammatically, if we would attain to a due degree of skill in it. It is with reason expected of every person of a liberal education, and much more is it indispensably required of every one who express himself with propriety and accuracy. It will evidently appear from these Notes, that our best Authors for want of some rudiments of this kind have sometimes fallen into mistakes, and been guilty of palpable errors in point of Grammar. The examples there given are such as occurred in reading, without any very curious or methodical examination: and they might easily have been much increased in number by any one, who had leisure or phlegm enough to have gone through a regular course of reading with this particular view. However, I believe, they may be sufficient to answer the purpose intended; to evince the necessity of the Study of Grammar in our own Language, and to admonish those, who set up for Authors among us, that they would do well to consider this part of Learning as an object not altogether beneath their regard.

The principal design of a Grammar of any Language is to teach us to express ourselves with propriety in that language, and to be able to judge of every phrase and form of construction, whether it be right or not. The plain way

of doing this, is to lay down rules, and illustrate them by examples. But besides shewing what is right, the matter may be further explained by pointing out what is wrong. I will not take upon me to say, whether we have any Grammar that sufficiently performs the first part: but the latter method here called in, as subservient to the former, may perhaps be found in this case to be of the two the more useful and effectual manner of instruction.

(b) *Thou*, in the Polite, and even in the familiar Style, is disused, and the Plural *You* is employed instead of it: we say *You have*, not *Thou hast*. Tho' in this case we apply *You* to a single Person, yet the Verb too must agree with it in the Plural Number: it must necessarily be *You have*, not *You hast*. *You was*, the Second Person Plural of the Pronoun placed in agreement with the first or Third Person Singular of the Verb, is an enormous Solecism: and yet Authors of the first rank have fallen into it. 'Knowing that *you was* my old master's good friend.' Addison, Spect. No. 517. 'Would to God *you was* within her reach.' Lord Bolingbroke to Swift, Letter 46.

(c) *Who*, *which*, *that*, are called Relatives, because they more directly [than other pronominal forms] refer to some Substantive going before; which therefore is called the Antecedent. They also connect the following part of the sentence with the foregoing.... One of them only is varied to express the three Cases; *Who*, *whose*,<sup>1</sup> (that is, *who's*) *whom*: none of them have different endings for the Numbers.

(d) Adjectives are sometimes employed as Adverbs; improperly, and not agreeably to the Genius of the English Language. As, '*extreme elaborate*.' Dryden, Essay on Dram. Poet. '*marvellous gracefull*.' Clarendon, Life, p. 18. '*extreme unwilling*;' '*extreme subject*;' Swift, Tale of a tub, and Battle of Books. do ye think, *me to be*?

(e) The Verb *to Be* has always a Nominative Case after it; as, '*it was I*, and not *He*, that did it:' unless it be in the Infinitive Mode; 'though you took it *to be Him*.'<sup>2</sup>

(f) The Preposition is often separated from the Relative which it governs, and joined to the Verb at the end of the Sentence, or of some member of it: as, '*Horace is an author, whom I am much delighted with*.' 'The world is too well bred to shock authors with a truth, *which generally their booksellers are the first that inform them of*.' This is an Idiom which our language is strongly inclined to; it prevails in common conversation, and suits very well with the familiar style in writing; but the placing of the Preposition before the Relative is more graceful, as well as more perspicuous; and agrees much better with the solemn and elevated Style.

(g) The Adverbs *when*, *while*, *after*, &c. being left out, the Phrase is formed with the Participle independently of the rest of the Sentence: as, '*The doors being shut, Jesus stood in the midst*.' this is called the Case Absolute. And the

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· Whose is by some authors made the Possessive Case of which, and applied to things as well as persons; I think, improperly.

· 'The *question, whose* solution I require,  
Is, what sex of women most desire.' Dryden.

· 'Is there any *doctrine, whose* followers are punished?' Addison.  
· '*Whom* do men say, that *I am*?—But *whom* say ye, that *I am*?' Matt. xvi. 13, 15. So likewise Mark viii. 27, 29. Luke ix. 18, 20. '*Whom* think ye, that *I am*?' Acts xiii. 25. It ought in all these places to be *who*; which is not governed by the verb *say* or *think*, but by the Verb *am*: or agrees in Case with the Pronoun *I*. If the Verb were in the Infinitive Mode, it would require the Objective case of the relative, agreeing with the Pronoun *me*: '*Whom* think ye, or do ye think, *me to be*?'

Case is in English always the Nominative: as,  
 ‘God from the mount of Sinai, whose gray top  
 Shall tremble, He *descending*,<sup>3</sup> will himself,  
 In thunder, lightning, and loud trumpet’s sound,  
 Ordain them laws.’ Milton, P.L. xii. 227.

7. Joseph Priestly, *Rudiments of English Grammar* (1769)

It must be allowed, that the custom of speaking is the original, and only just standard of any language. We see, in all grammars, that this is sufficient to establish a rule, even contrary to the strongest analogies of the language with itself. Must not this custom, therefore, be allowed to have some weight, in favour of those forms of speech, to which our best writers and speakers seem evidently prone; forms which are contrary to no analogy of the language with itself, and which have been disapproved by grammarians, only from certain abstract and arbitrary considerations, and when their decisions were not prompted by the genius of the language; which discovers itself in nothing more than in the general propensity of those who use it to certain modes of construction? I think, however, that I have not, in any case, seemed to favour what our grammarians will call an irregularity, but where the genius of the language, and not only single examples, but the general practice of those who write it, and the almost universal custom of all who speak it, have obliged me to do so. I also think I have seemed to favour those irregularities, no more than the degree of the propensity I have first mentioned, when unchecked by a regard to arbitrary rules, in those who use the forms of speech I refer to, will authorize me.

8. Lindley Murray, *English Grammar* (1795)

English grammar is the art of speaking and writing the English language with propriety.

It is divided into four parts, viz. Orthography, Etymology, Syntax, and Prosody....

Orthography teaches the nature and powers of letters, and the just method of spelling words....

The second part of grammar is Etymology, which treats of the different sorts of words, their derivation, and the various modifications by which the sense of a primitive word is diversified....

The third part of grammar is syntax, which shews the agreement and right disposition of words in a sentence....

To produce the agreement and right disposition of words in a sentence, many rules are necessary....

RULE XIV.

Participles govern words in the same manner as the verbs do from which they are derived; as, ‘I am weary with hearing him;’ ‘She is instructing us;’ ‘He was admonishing them.’

Participles are sometimes govern by the article; for the present participle, with the definite article *the* before it, becomes a substantive, and must have the preposition *of* after it; as, ‘These are the rules of grammar, by observing of which, you may avoid mistakes.’ It would not be proper to say, ‘by the observing which;’ nor, ‘by observing of which;’ but the phrase, without either the article or preposition, would be right; as, ‘by observing which.’

This rule arises from the nature and idiom of our language, and from as plain a principle as any on which it is founded: namely, that a word which has an article before it, and the possessive preposition *of* after it, must be a noun;

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· On which says Dr. Bentley, ‘the context demands that it be,—*Him* descending, *Illo* descendente.’ But *him* is not the Ablative Case, for the English knows no such Case; nor does *him* without a Preposition on any occasion answer to the Latin Ablative *illo*.... this comes of forcing the English under the rules of a foreign Language, with which it has little concern.

and if a noun, it ought to follow the construction of a noun, and not to have the regimen of a verb. It is the participial termination of this sort of words that is apt to deceive us, and make us treat them as if they were of an amphibious species, partly nouns and partly verbs.

9. George Eliot, *Middlemarch*, ch. 24 (1872)

'Now let us go through that once more,' said Mrs Garth, pinching an apple-puff which seemed to distract Ben, an energetic young male with a heavy brow, from due attention to the lesson. "Not without regard to the import of the word as conveying unity or plurality of the idea"—tell me again what that means, Ben.'

(Mrs Garth, like more celebrated educators, had her favourite ancient paths, and in a general wreck of society would have tried to hold her 'Lindley Murray' above the waves.)

'Oh—it means—you must think what you mean,' said Ben, rather peevishly. 'I hate grammar. What's the use of it?'

'To teach you to speak and write correctly, so that you can be understood,' said Mrs Garth with severe precision. 'Should you like to speak as old Job does?'

'Yes,' said Ben, stoutly; 'it's funnier. He says, "You goo"—that's just as good as "You go".'

'But he says, "A ship's in the garden", instead of "a sheep",' said Letty, with an air of superiority. 'You might think he meant a ship off the sea.'

'No you mightn't, if you weren't silly,' said Ben. 'How could a ship off the sea come there?'

'These things belong only to pronunciation, which is the least part of grammar,' said Mrs Garth.... 'Job has only to speak about very plain things. How do you think you would write or speak about anything more difficult, if you knew no more of grammar than he does? You would use wrong words, and put words in the wrong places, and instead of making people understand you, they would turn away from you as a tiresome person. What would you do then?'

'I shouldn't care, I should leave off,' said Ben, with a sense that this was an agreeable issue where grammar was concerned.

## *The History of Dictionaries*

### 1. Robert Cawdrey, *A Table Alphabeticall* (1604)

#### Title-page

*A Table Alphabeticall*, conteyning and teaching the true writing, and vnderstanding of hard vsuall English wordes, borrowed from the Hebrew, Greeke, Latine, or French, &c. With the interpretation thereof by plaine English words, gathered for the benefit & helpe of Ladies, Gentlewomen, or any other vnskilfull persons. Whereby they may the more easilie and better vnderstand many hard English wordes, which they shall heare or read in Scriptures, Sermons, or elsewhere, and also be made able to vse the same aptly themselues.

#### Illustrative Entries

Ebullient, seething

effectuall, forcible

ebulliated, boyled

effect, a thing done, or to bring to passe

[e]clipse, (g) failing of the light of the sunne or moone

effeminate, womannish, delicate, wanton

eccho, a sound, resounding back again

efficacie, force, or strength

ecclesiasticall, (g) belonging to the church

efficient, working, or accomplishing

eden, pleasure, or delight

effusion, powring, or running foorth

eglogue, (g) a talking together