

Anglistentag 1993 Eichstätt

Proceedings

edited by
Günther Blaicher
and Brigitte Glaser



MAX NIEMEYER VERLAG
TÜBINGEN 1994

Die Deutsche Bibliothek – CIP-Einheitsaufnahme

Anglistentag <1993, Eichstätt>: Proceedings / Anglistentag 1993 Eichstätt / ed. by Günther Blaicher and Brigitte Glaser. – Tübingen : Niemeyer, 1994

(Proceedings of the conference of the German Association of University Teachers of English ; Vol. 15)

NE: Blaicher, Günther [Hrsg.]; Anglistentag: Proceedings of the ...

ISBN 3-484-40128-1

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Printed in Germany.

Gedruckt auf alterungsbeständigem Papier.

Druck und Einband: Weihert-Druck GmbH, Darmstadt

Proceedings of the Conference
of the German Association
of University Teachers
of English

Volume XV

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RULES AND EXERCISES: GERMAN TEXTBOOKS FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING ENGLISH AROUND 1800

There is no doubt that – in international terms – English is the most important language today. Since the mid-sixties English has been taught to all pupils at all types of secondary school in Germany and at some primary schools as well. Everybody under 40 years of age can be expected to have at least a smattering of English. And even those who never learnt English at school are able to handle a lot of those English words we find all around us, in the cities' shopping centres, on TV and at work. Teaching English has become big business.

Two hundred years ago the role of English in Germany was very different. Research into the history of English studies has thrown some light on the place of English at universities (cf. Schröder 1969) or at elementary schools (cf. Sauer 1968). The majority of historical studies, however, focuses on the 19th and early 20th centuries and on the teaching of English at schools after it had become an established subject. Therefore there are still a great many unanswered questions about the learning and teaching of English around 1800, when English was not generally taught at schools. In this paper I shall try and answer a few of these questions. First of all I would like to characterize the learners of English at that time and their purpose in learning this language. In the second and third sections I shall look at the books which were used as teaching or learning materials for English grammar. These textbooks can tell us *what* was taught as well as *how* the language was presented and practised.

1. Learning English in the 18th century

English was *the* new foreign language in 18th-century Germany. Admittedly it did not then replace French as the most important living language, as the language of the nobility and of diplomacy, nor did it endanger Latin as the language of scholarship and erudition. And yet, as Bernhard Fabian (1985) has argued convincingly, the 'discovery' of England and the English language shaped the intellectual atmosphere in 18th-century Germany quite distinctly. For the scholar and the educated citizen a knowledge of English had been of no importance at the beginning of the century; towards the end it became indispensable (cf. Fabian 1985: 178).

The second half of the 18th century saw the first stage of the steady rise of English towards its present-day status. At that time English was not so much acquired as a means of direct communication but as a means of access. A reading knowledge of English was the key to a store of information in a wide range of subjects, to philosophical and political thought as well as to the different branches of literature.

A number of developments support the claim that English became more and more important to educated Germans. To begin with, a growing number of English publications became available in Germany. English-language books on a variety of subjects were offered at the annual Leipzig book fair (cf. Fabian 1982). It even seems that this supply could not satisfy the ever-growing demand (cf. Inbar 1980). One might think that English books were sought after because of the general shift in interest from French literature to English literature. However, literary works were not the only English books in demand; they were possibly not even the most important category (cf. Fabian 1982). More and more people liked to read English books either in translation or in the original. The desire to learn about English society, thought, manners, and politics prompted the foundation of several German journals featuring excerpts from British periodicals and papers.

The expanding English book market supplied a growing number of people able to read English. But how had these people learnt English? Some were self-taught, others had learnt English through private tuition, and a few had been taught in schools. It was possible that people started their own language-learning by attempting to read the English book they were interested in with the help of a dictionary and a grammar book. The number of grammars of English published in Germany rose sharply in the last two decades of the 18th century and continued to rise in the 19th. A further indication for the growing popularity of learning English is the spreading of English language classes in the grammar schools, the academies for the nobility (*Ritterakademien*) and the universities towards the end of the 18th century (cf. Klippel 1994). More and more educational institutions began to offer English classes, though these were not part of the core syllabus.

In general, the time around 1800 can be seen as an important junction in the various strands of English studies in Germany. On the one hand more educated adults were engaged in learning English and in compiling grammars than ever before; on the other hand, the seeds for the future of English as a school subject – which needed to be considered in the light of pedagogy – were planted then. Thus one can distinguish several target groups for learning English: educated adults who were aiming for reading competence in English; individuals who needed some preparation in oral skills for a stay in England; students at universities, academies or grammar schools who received a general introduction to the English language which typi-

cally led to their reading and translating English texts; and finally pupils at commercial schools who were also instructed in correspondence and related skills in the foreign language. Thinking of these different groups of learners one might ask how their language-learning and teaching was conducted and what textbooks and teaching materials were used. Because we do not have many first-hand accounts of learning and teaching situations we have to try and reconstruct ways of learning and teaching mainly from the textbooks of the time.

But what can be called a textbook? The term textbook is used here for all publications intended for language study. This includes so-called grammars, collections of texts or exercises, or books containing all three, which were either used in class, or with a private tutor, or as a manual of self-instruction. With the help of Konrad Schröder's bibliography (1975), which lists over 2000 textbooks for English published in the German-speaking countries between 1665 and 1900, about thirty textbooks published between 1780 and 1820 could be obtained in German libraries.

Here I would like to concentrate on those textbooks which were aptly called *Sprachlehre* by the German textbook authors of the time. The term *Sprachlehre* refers to the educational purpose of the textbooks, and indeed, most of the authors were actively engaged in teaching English, either as private language teachers or at a university or school. Many authors justify the publication of their book with their teaching requirements, saying that they had to write their own textbook, because they had not been able to find a suitable one either for their way of teaching or for their group of learners or for their ideas about what a language textbook ought to contain (cf. Sammer 1783: III f. and Langstedt 1796: IX among others). Thus, the presentation and explication of English grammar found in those *Sprachlehren* were not just influenced by their authors' linguistic competence but also by their intended use as teaching materials.

How may the term *Sprachlehre* be rendered in English? Frank Turner (1978) speaks of "German Pedagogic Grammars of English" in his study of textbooks of the 17th and early 18th century. Anthony Howatt uses the term "pedagogical grammar" for the grammars of Robert Lowth and Lindley Murray (Howatt 1984: 122), which served as models for some of the German English-language textbooks.

2. German pedagogic grammars of English

Today a grammar is not automatically a textbook. Therefore it is important to stress once more that the English grammars published in the late 18th and the first half of the 19th century were pedagogic grammars. The first grammars written exclusively for linguists and scholars and not for language

learners were Eduard Fiedler's *Wissenschaftliche Grammatik der englischen Sprache* (1849-1850) and Eduard Adolf Maetzner's *Englische Grammatik* (1860-1865) respectively. This is not to say that the earlier authors did not bring a theoretical or linguistic interest to bear upon their work. Some of them conducted their own painstaking research into the English language; others were well aware of the writings on English published in Britain in the 18th century. The main purpose of the German grammars of the English language published before 1850, however, remained a didactic one.

In my view the German pedagogic grammars of English at that time were written within a framework shaped by three major influences. As the analyses show, these influences can be ranked as follows: The first and most important one is the Latin model of grammar with its established parts. This is not surprising, since Latin grammar was traditionally considered to be the foundation of grammar. The second influence, which is less well-known, are the standard English grammars, especially those of Robert Lowth (1762) and Lindley Murray (1795) which were available in Germany; the third one are the successful contemporary German grammars of English, some of which grew out of an individual author's study of the English language. I would like to look at each of these aspects in turn.

2.1 Latin grammar

In his history of teaching English as mother tongue Ian Michael states that "the influence of Latin pervades every aspect of the English grammars" (Michael 1987: 318). Generally, this is also true for the German grammars of English. Notably the different sections, such as pronunciation, morphology and syntax, the parts of speech to be discussed and the terminology were often, though not always, taken from Latin grammar. Ian Michael refers to the declension of nouns and even the article as the most glaring examples for an inappropriate transfer from Latin (*ibid.*). Not all English grammarians, however, adopted the Latin case system. Robert Lowth, probably the most popular author in the late 18th century, describes English as having only two cases, the nominative and the possessive (1762: 28). And, in a footnote, he deplores another writer's use of the 'ablative' for English: "This comes of forcing the English under the rules of a foreign language, with which it has little concern" (1762: 107). Similar thoughts are to be found in Germany. Here Karl Philipp Moritz criticizes Johann König, the author of the most successful English language textbook (1706; 12th ed. 1802) published in 18th-century-Germany. In the preface to his grammar, Moritz concedes that König's "The True English Guide" was a most comprehensive textbook which nevertheless contained a lot of unnecessary and misleading information because it was completely modelled on Latin ("weil [sie] einen

völlig lateinischen Zuschnitt hat", Moritz 1801: IV). It is needless to say that König describes English nouns as having five cases (König 1755: 50).

Lowth's ideas on the declension of nouns were not universally known or accepted in Germany. Several textbook authors retained the Latin declension for English. Some authors decided on how to present the case system according to which of the two functions of their textbook they favoured. Either they were more concerned with giving a correct description of the English language or with providing teaching and learning aids. Thus Johann Christian Fick writes:

Bei der Declination der Nennwörter ist blos Folgendes zu bemerken: es werden dazu die Wörtchen *of: ov, von, to: too, zu, from: from, von, by: bi, von* gebraucht. Diese werden vor den Artikel gesetzt, und sowohl dieser als das Wort selbst nicht im geringsten verändert; [...] Man sieht hieraus, daß die Engländer eigentlich keine Declination haben, und daß man sie füglich ganz aus den Grammatiken weglassen könnte, wenn man nicht wegen der Vergleichung mit andern Sprachen, durch Aufführung einer gemodelten Declination, die Erlernung der Sprache erleichtern wollte. (Fick 1835: 70f.)

One can deduce from this that according to Fick there is no true declension in English so that this part of grammar could well be left out, were it not useful to have a paradigm of the Latin declension for English for a comparison with other languages and for rendering language learning easier.

When we ask why Latin grammar was used so extensively in the English textbooks, we must not forget this didactic angle. Those who learned English around 1800 knew Latin and consequently Latin grammar. Thus references to Latin, even if they were recognized as not quite appropriate for English, were introduced as a means of helping the learner. Incidentally, this also applied to vocabulary. Karl Philipp Moritz, who criticized König's textbook for its Latin structure, includes a trilingual word list to demonstrate the relation between English, Latin and German. And Johann Friedrich Meermann includes a table showing how English words are derived from Latin ones (1794: 88).

The basis for the role of Latin grammar lay in the common belief that English or German grammar were simply different representations of grammar as such. Therefore grammars had to be built on the same principles. These principles were taught through Latin and could then be used as points of reference for the presentation of and the instruction in further languages.

2.2 English models

It is very difficult to prove that a textbook author knew other publications. As it was not considered necessary to mention the books one had used, only

some authors gave the names of scholars as proof for the quality of their own book on the title page or in the preface. Robert Lowth and Lindley Murray, authors of the most popular English grammars of the time, and John Walker, famous for his *Pronouncing Dictionary* (1791), were considered authorities. Theirs were the names mentioned most often in the German pedagogic grammars around 1800. The works of Lowth and Murray were translated and edited for the German market as well as treated as authoritative reference grammars by German authors. Sometimes, the fact that an author may have been familiar with the work of Lowth or Murray can only be guessed at from the presence of certain rules or examples. As regards the influence of Lowth and Murray and other English authors on the German pedagogic grammars, a great deal still needs to be discovered by detailed comparison, that is, by 'linguistic archaeology'. A quick survey of the German textbooks reveals certain similarities with Lowth's grammar, such as his organisational device of discussing the finer points or contradictory examples in footnotes. This kind of presentation, however, seems to be much older; in fact, it dates back to the grammar of Port Royal, where exceptions were given in small print (cf. Kelly 1969: 225). Differentiating between the basic rules and the exceptions creates a two-level text. Rudolph Sammer adopted Lowth's way of presenting his material in his pedagogic grammar of 1783, because – as he said – it rendered his textbook useful for beginners and advanced learners (1783: IV). Quite a number of German textbooks follow Lowth in the division into nine parts of speech and the definitions given for each type. Some of Lowth's examples as well as some of his explanations have found their way into the German textbooks. But it seems an impossible task to unravel the intricate knots of borrowings and adaptations.

2.3 Contemporary German grammars of English

At a time when the concept of copyright did not exist in its present form, borrowing from other authors was not regarded in the same light as today. And, of course, someone writing a grammar of English in Germany, when English books were scarce and difficult to get, had to make use of all the available sources. Although there are a number of pedagogic grammars which were successful insofar as they reached several editions and new printings, i.e. the works of Theodor Arnold (1736, 16 editions up to 1838), Johann König (1706, 12 editions up to 1802), Johann Christian Fick (1793, 23 editions up to 1852) or Johannes Ebers (1802, 4 editions up to 1812), there is just one German author who was generally accepted as the greatest authority on English at the time: Karl Franz Christian Wagner. H. M. Melford wrote about his grammar: "Die englische Sprachlehre des Herrn

Geheimen Hofrates Wagner ist allgemein als die beste anerkannt. Es dürfte in der That unmöglich sein, eine bessere zu verfassen" (1841: IX). Wagner's first English grammar was published in 1802, his second one incorporating a volume of translation exercises in 1819. A 'school grammar' followed in 1843; and Ludwig Herrig, one of the leading English scholars of the 19th century, published a revised version of Wagner's grammar in 1857, more than half a century later.

It was Wagner's aim to write a detailed and comprehensive grammar, which he intended not only for Germans learning English but for native speakers of English as well. In the preface to his grammar of 1802 Wagner admitted that he had used Lowth's grammar as a basis, but claimed that he had tried to progress beyond it by building on his own research (1802: III). Thus Wagner's grammar is more than twice as long as Lowth's; it contains not only a far greater number of rules and discussions of rules but also many more examples taken from English literature, which illustrate the various points of grammar. Further, Wagner, writing mainly for German learners of English, introduced a contrastive point of view, comparing German and English grammar wherever they differ. As with the works of Lowth and Murray, it is difficult to assess the exact influence Wagner's grammar might have had on his contemporaries. Judging by an occasional remark in a preface, other textbook authors largely used Wagner's grammar as a store to be plundered for their own purposes.

Not many authors were as ambitious as Wagner, though they, too, tried to improve on their predecessors' rendering of rules and examples. In many cases the motivation for a new element or a different structure in the pedagogic grammars did not spring from the authors' linguistic interests but rather from their didactic one. Starting with the differences and similarities of English and German they especially paid attention to those areas of grammar which they expected to be difficult for German learners, such as the use of prepositions (cf. Haußner 1805). Others, like Karl Philipp Moritz (1801) and Johann Jakob Meno Valett (1803) used the contrastive approach throughout, stating for each rule how it differed from or resembled the German equivalent. Moritz explained the fact that one could say 'cabbages' in English but not form the plural of 'Kohl' in German with a different world view: "Solche kleine Verschiedenheiten sind wegen unsrer verschiednen Vorstellungsart der Dinge sehr natürlich" (1801: 24). Valett considered the whole language learning process, quite rightly as we know today, to be influenced by the learners' first language. He therefore organized his English grammar along the lines of German syntax. He argued:

Der Deutsche Lehrling stellt sich, wie natürlich, eine fremde Sprache erst Deutsch vor; er spricht demnach erst ein Deutsches Englisch, ehe er Englisch

sprechen lernt. Ihm hierzu nun behülflich zu seyn, lehrt man ihn, alles, was in der Deutschen Sprache *Regel* ist, auf Englisch auszudrucken. (1803: Preface)

3. Rules and exercises

After considering who learnt English at the end of the 18th century and after discussing some of the forces that shaped the pedagogic grammars, it is time to look a bit more closely inside these books. What did these textbooks of English contain? As far as grammar is concerned, the answer is simple: rules and examples and sometimes exercises. Rules were given for pronunciation, for the parts of speech (morphology) and – in most cases – for syntax. These rules were given in German and illustrated by English examples. Some grammar books also provided exercises for the individual grammar points.

Rules were at the heart of language study at that time. The function of rules was twofold: First of all, they were the means of presenting the system of the foreign language and, secondly, they were the way of acquiring that language. How did the grammarians of the time arrive at the formulation of particular rules? Robert Lowth had seen the rules of the language as fixed. He felt that fault lay with the language users, who often violated these rules. “It is not the Language, but the practice, that is in fault”, he said (1762: VI). His aim was to lay down rules so that people might be able to express themselves “with propriety in that Language, and to be able to judge every phrase and form of construction, whether it be right or not” (1762: X).

Whereas Lowth did not specify the origin of the rules, his German successors at the end of the century had definite ideas about the origin of grammar rules. They clearly saw them as descriptive in origin and as prescriptive for the language use of the German learner of English. Karl Franz Christian Wagner wrote: “Die Englische Grammatik oder Sprachlehre ist eine Anweisung, die Englische Sprache zu verstehen und nach bestimmten, theils auf die Philosophie der Sprache gegründeten, theils auf dem Sprachgebrauch beruhenden Regeln richtig zu sprechen und zu schreiben” (1827: I). And Heinrich Joachim Jäck stated in an even more pronounced way: “Was dem Sprachgebrauche und den auf ihn gegründeten Regeln gemäß ist, heißt *sprachrichtig*, was sie aber verletzt [sic], *sprachwidrig*” (1804: 7). And because the rules are founded on language use, the grammarian needed a lot of time and patience to collect them when he was reading English authors. Then he had to arrange his examples systematically, so that the learners might find them instructive. In this way Friedrich Wilhelm Haufner (1805) described the laborious process of compiling a pedagogic grammar.

A number of authors justified the publication of their textbook by stating that they had improved the rules, either by putting them more concisely or clearly or by presenting them in a new way, for example in the form of tables (cf. Meermann 1794, also Moritz 1801), or by adapting them to the needs of the learners, for instance by using German grammatical terms for women learners who were unlikely to be competent in Latin (Fick 1793).

The adaptation of rules for teaching or learning leads us to their role in foreign language instruction around 1800. It was often said that acquiring the rules of a language was the best way of learning that language (so Fick 1835: V among others). But there were also a number of dissenting voices. The educationists of the Enlightenment, the Philanthropists, developed a different concept of language learning based on imitation, games and practical exercises, as well as on reading, a method where grammar, if at all, was taught inductively. But the philanthropist concept did not reach the status of mainstream thinking and remained on the fringe of the teaching of living languages. Still, other authors not connected to the movement pointed out that learning the rules was not synonymous with learning the language. Contrary to the common idea that learning progressed from one rule to the next, they advocated an extended period of becoming familiar with the language in examples and short texts, in acquiring basic skills before dealing with grammatical analysis (cf. Grüning 1810: X). This idea became a widely-accepted principle in 19th-century language teaching methodology.

Even the advocates of the rule method had to admit that memorising a great number of rules was not sufficient. Though it provided the theoretical foundation of language study, it did not lead to practical skills. Because of this general discontent with language study solely based on theory, that is, rules, it is not surprising that Johann Valentin Meidinger's innovation was adopted quickly and widely in the pedagogical grammars. Meidinger, a teacher of French, had added sentences to each grammar rule, which had to be translated into the foreign language. The learner was thus led to apply what he had just learnt. Meidinger and many of his successors used the adjective 'practical' in the title of their textbook to indicate the inclusion of such exercises. From a pedagogical perspective Meidinger's translation exercises were a first big step towards teaching materials created just for this purpose, including exercises and texts specially written for teaching.

Grammar exercises around 1800 tended to be translations consisting of isolated sentences. Because these sentences were not graded so that they only contained structures and words which had been dealt with in the preceding pages, they needed copious notes to be translatable at all. Some authors did not restrict these translation exercises to the application of a particular grammar rule; they used them to build up their learners' vocabulary by creating sentences for a certain theme: "Er hat eine Englische

Dogge, du hast einen Spitz, sie haben einen Pudel, wir haben einen Mops, [...]” (Valett 1803: 8).

Usually, however, the isolated sentences for translation were of negligible educational or informational value. A big exception were Karl Franz Christian Wagner’s translation exercises. For these he chose sentences from works of English literature, which he translated into German. When the learners successfully re-translated these sentences into English, Wagner hoped they would then provide further meaningful and edifying, and particularly, authentic English examples for the respective grammar rules. Since this method of creating exercises needed a lot of preparation and a wide knowledge of English literature, it is not surprising that it was not adopted by other textbook authors. Their creative impulse rather worked towards developing new types of grammar exercises. Consequently, in the course of the 19th century exercises ceased to be just translations. A wide variety of language learning activities began to appear in the textbooks in the second half of the 19th century.

As I tried to show, around 1800 a typical pedagogic grammar of English contained rules and translation exercises and suggested a deductive approach in teaching. For this the rule was given first, its realisation illustrated by examples and its application practised in an exercise. Although this can be called the mainstream procedure, not all textbook authors accepted it willingly. As teachers who were usually paid by their pupils, they were interested in providing effective lessons which were suited to their learners; asking people to do nothing but memorize grammar rules was not in their interest. Thus Friedrich Theodor Kühne, language professor at Marburg university, says that he taught English inductively with examples till his students urged him to compile an English grammar for their use in class (cf. Kühne 1815: III). Many authors seem aware that working through a grammar book was not a natural way of learning a living language. They also realized that this method did not take into account the different degrees of difficulty which individual grammar rules and their accompanying exercises presented. The idea that teaching materials should be graded began to gain acceptance in the prefaces of the English pedagogic grammars towards the end of the 18th century. However, the established pattern of Latin grammar with the familiar sequence of pronunciation, morphology and syntax proved too stable then to be broken by the concept of gradation. Texts or exercises which could be graded by length or complexity were easier to forge into a didactic sequence.

In the first half of the 19th century textbook authors found an alternative solution to the grading of individual grammar rules by creating a two-level course. In the first and elementary part of this course the learners were given an inductive introduction to the main points of English grammar by means

of examples, short texts and exercises. Formal grammar rules followed in the second part and their practice was supplemented by reading authentic texts.

All the evidence suggests that the few decades around 1800 were a very important phase for the development of English language learning and teaching in Germany. The pedagogic impetus of the textbook authors laid the foundations for many ideas which grew into didactic axioms in the 19th and the 20th century. The pedagogic grammars show that our concept of the pre-Reform time as the dark age of English language learning needs to be revised.

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