

G A Padley

Grammatical Theory
in Western Europe

1500-1700

Trends in
Vernacular Grammar I

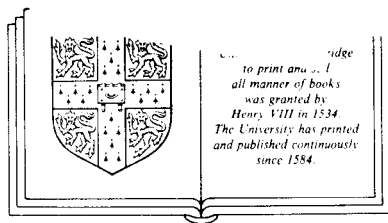
GRAMMATICAL⁹⁶¹⁷⁸⁷
THEORY IN
WESTERN
EUROPE

1500–1700

*Trends in Vernacular
Grammar I*

G. A. PADLEY

*Department of French
University College Dublin*



CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

CAMBRIDGE

LONDON NEW YORK NEW ROCHELLE

MELBOURNE SYDNEY

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am grateful to Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst for a generous grant which enabled me to spend several months in Germany collecting material for the German section of this work. My thanks also go to the staffs of the Bodleian and the British Library; the Bibliothèque Nationale, the Bibliothèque Mazarine and the Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal in Paris; the Göttingen and Heidelberg University Libraries, the Heidelberg Germanistisches Seminar, the Herzog August Bibliothek in Wolfenbüttel; and last but far from least Archbishop Marsh's Library in Dublin. I am also much indebted to Professor Hugh Ridley for expending time and energy on locating German grammars for me, and to Dr Vera Čapková for translating articles from Czech. Lastly, I am grateful to the Niedersächsische Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek, Göttingen, and to the Herzog August Bibliothek, Wolfenbüttel, for permission to reproduce the illustrations.

PREFACE

This study was originally intended to present a history of the whole field of grammatical theory in the five major West European languages. Such a project proved however to be impracticable, if only because the cost of a book that size would have been prohibitive. Instead I have brought together in a single volume those West European grammarians whose work follows some kind of overt theory, whether philosophical or pedagogical, leaving for a later study those authors, including the Vaugelas school in France, the early Latinizing grammarians and the rhetorically orientated Italian ones, who follow the dictates of usage. The treatment has also had to be limited to those vernaculars – English, French, German, Spanish and Italian – of which the present author has a sufficient reading knowledge. The overriding aim is to bring together grammarians from these five major language areas and relate their work to antecedent and contemporary trends in the underlying Latin tradition. Works on the grammar of a single vernacular have already appeared prefaced by an introductory survey of that tradition, but the grammars treated in those works have rarely if at all been subjected to detailed comparison with their Latin counterparts, even in the case where the same author produces both a Latin and a vernacular grammar. Further, in the present volume it is not simply a question of demonstrating that vernacular grammar has been influenced by the inherited framework of Latin grammar, but of indicating the extent and the success or otherwise of the transfer of a linguistic theory or metalanguage from Latin grammatical practice to vernacular work. A second, no less important aim has been to give some idea of the complex interaction of pedagogical and theoretical influences. Grammars cannot be considered *in vacuo*, divorced from the educational practice or the general cultural background of their times. Much work on vernacular grammars has consisted solely of a description, however painstaking and in however minute detail, of the external structure of the various works, without setting them in

Preface

their cultural background, relating them to existing grammars of Latin, or bringing out the underlying philosophical and pedagogical theories on which they depend. The author of even so excellent a study as I. Michael's *English Grammatical Categories and the Tradition to 1800* (1970) admits that, as a busy Vice-Chancellor, he had to resist the temptation to 'place the grammars in the intellectual history of the country, especially among the ideas about language by which they were (or, more often were not) influenced'. M. H. Jelinek, in his much earlier and minutely detailed *Geschichte der neuhochdeutschen Grammatik von den Anfängen bis auf Adelung* (1913-14), regrets the absence at his date of both a history of linguistic theory and a treatment of the development of general grammar. Since that time much effort has gone into work in both these areas, but in the case of specifically German grammatical theory, especially that of the seventeenth century, the complaint is still valid. In the present work the aim has been, however imperfectly, to link grammars to contemporary theory, both linguistic and pedagogical, and to ideas prevalent in the general culture of the times. Those who are familiar with research in these fields will recognize that I have inevitably had to depend to no small extent for this background material on the findings of other scholars. But if my treatment of these matters is necessarily in part a summary of existing scholarship, I hope I have left no debt unrecorded.

The Latin and the vernacular traditions in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century grammatical theory are an indivisible whole. This means that unavoidably some of the authors dealt with in my *Grammatical Theory in Western Europe 1500-1700: The Latin Tradition* must also be treated here, though I have tried to give a different emphasis. Also though some grammarians, particularly English ones, have already been covered by others, I hope my own discussion will shed additional light on the interaction both with the Latin tradition and with contemporary notions of language theory and pedagogy. Some authors are however presented here for the first time, at any rate in English. It must be stressed that this study is not intended to be a treatment of the separate history of each vernacular grammar. Rather it is an attempt to consider West European grammar as a cultural whole. In the English-speaking world in particular, writers on the history of grammar have tended to stay within the confines of one vernacular tradition. Just as European culture in general has

Preface

for centuries been a single whole, European *linguistic* culture too, and that in spite of language barriers, is a single entity. It is my hope that this book will underline afresh this obvious but sometimes neglected fact.

The writing of a history of this kind is a strenuous task, and E. F. K. Koerner's 'Four Types of History Writing in Linguistics'¹ sets daunting standards for whoever is intrepid enough to undertake it. They are indeed counsels of perfection, with considerable dissuasive power. One can only read them, bear them in mind, and launch out into the deep, trusting that one will not too blatantly fail to meet their requirements.

Dublin, December 1983

G. A. PADLEY

¹ In E. F. K. Koerner, *Towards a Historiography of Linguistics*, Amsterdam, 1978, pp. 55-62.

CONTENTS

| | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|
| <i>Acknowledgments</i> | xi |
| <i>Preface</i> | xiii |
| Introduction | 1 |
| PART I GRAMMAR AND PEDAGOGY | 7 |
| 1 The impact of Ramism: history of a withdrawal | 9 |
| <i>i The Ramist revolution</i> | 9 |
| <i>ii The application of Ramus' theories to the French vernacular</i> | 27 |
| <i>iii Ramism in Germany and Britain</i> | 46 |
| 2 The pedagogical motive: vernacular grammar as instrument | 84 |
| <i>i German mysticism and patriotism</i> | 84 |
| <i>ii English pragmatism</i> | 146 |
| <i>iii Towards vernacular freedom: Wallis and Cooper</i> | 190 |
| PART II UNIVERSAL GRAMMAR | 217 |
| 3 The beginnings of the universalist approach | 219 |
| <i>i German strivings for universal harmony</i> | 219 |
| <i>ii The search for models: Linacre, Scaliger and the Aristotelians</i> | 232 |
| 4 Language the mirror of thought: from Sanctius to Port-Royal | 269 |
| <i>i Franciscus Sanctius 'el Brocense'</i> | 269 |
| <i>ii Port-Royal: the virtual identification of linguistic and mental processes</i> | 283 |

| | | |
|---|---------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| 5 | Language the mirror of things: from Campanella to Wilkins | 325 |
| | <i>i The cultural background: Bacon, Campanella, Comenius</i> | 325 |
| | <i>ii The new epistemology</i> | 349 |
| | Conclusion | 382 |
| | <i>Bibliography</i> | 385 |
| | <i>Index</i> | 409 |

INTRODUCTION

A first category of humanist vernacular grammarians consists of those who, to a large extent basing themselves on already existing Latin grammars, provide for each West European vernacular a Latin-based description ultimately, as are their immediate sources, indebted to Donatus (c. 350) and Priscian (c. 500), the standard authors who provided both the Middle Ages and the Renaissance with the foundations of their theory and description.¹ These Latinizing vernacular grammarians are in general not orientated towards theory, contenting themselves with repeating the word-class definitions of their Latin models,² but not otherwise presenting a theoretical interest apart from that of the often ingenious subterfuges by which they constrain vernacular structures into the Latin mould. They have already been treated by other writers on the history of grammar.³

¹ On the Latin grammatical framework inherited by the early humanist grammarians see H. Keil, *Grammatici Latini*, Leipzig, 1857-74, I-IV; H. Steinthal, *Geschichte der Sprachwissenschaft bei den Griechen und Römern* (2nd ed.), Berlin, 1891; L. Kukenheim, *Contributions à l'histoire de la grammaire grecque, latine et hébraïque à l'époque de la Renaissance*, Leyden, 1951; R. H. Robins, *Ancient and Mediaeval Grammatical Theory in Europe*, London, 1951, and *A Short History of Linguistics* (2nd ed.), London, 1979; G. A. Padley *Grammatical Theory in Western Europe 1500-1700: The Latin Tradition*, Cambridge, 1976, pp. 29-57.

² The important humanist models available to them were Lorenzo Valla's *De linguae Latinae elegantia* (c. 1440, first printed 1471), Perotti's *Rudimenta grammatices* (c. 1464, first printed 1473), Sulpizio's *Grammatica* (1475), Antonio de Nebrija's *Introductiones Latinae* (1481); Johannes van Pauteren (Despauterius), whose grammatical output was published by Robert Estienne in 1537 under the title *Commentarii grammatici*; Melanchthon's *Grammatica Latina* (1525) and *Syntaxis* (1526); Linacre's *De emendata structura Latini sermonis* (1524); and the various editions of Lily's *Shorte Introduction of Grammar* (1549).

³ For general accounts of the Latinizing vernacular grammars of the period see the following works, several of which are now somewhat dated: C.-L. Livet, *La Grammaire française et les grammairiens du XVI^e siècle*, Paris, 1859; A. Loiseau, *Etude historique et philologique sur Jean Pillot et sur les doctrines grammaticales du XVI^e siècle*, Paris, 1866; J. Tell, *Les Grammairiens français depuis l'origine de la grammaire en France jusqu'aux dernières oeuvres connues*, Paris, 1874; A. Benoist, *De la Syntaxe française entre Palsgrave et Vaugelas*, Paris, 1877; G. Huth, 'Jacques Dubois Verfasser der ersten latein-französischen Grammatik (1531)', *Programm des Königl. Marienstifts-Gymnasiums zu Stettin*, 1899, pp. 3-21; M. H. Jellinek, *Geschichte der neuhochdeutschen Grammatik von den Anfängen bis auf Adelung*, Heidelberg, 1913-14; L. Kukenheim, *Contributions à l'histoire de la grammaire italienne, espagnole et française à l'époque de la Renaissance*, Amsterdam, 1932 (reprinted Utrecht, 1974); O. Funke, 'William Bullokar's *Bref Grammar for English* (1586). Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der frühneuenglischen Grammatik', *Anglia*, LXII (1938), pp. 116-37, and 'Die Frühzeit der englischen Grammatik. Die humanistisch-antike Sprachlehre und der national-

Introduction

By and large, they belong to a northern grammatical tradition standing in contrast to the more rhetorically orientated grammars of the south, whose authors may be placed in a second category of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century grammarians. The honour of having produced the first vernacular grammars goes to Italy and Spain. As W. K. Percival points out in his important article 'The Grammatical Tradition and the Rise of the Vernaculars',⁴ grammars of the vulgar tongues in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries were confined almost exclusively to Italy, Spain and France. Percival's article is required reading for anyone who ventures into the tangled domain of vernacular grammar, for it makes a number of pertinent observations that need to be borne in mind from the outset. First, he regards the question of whether there ever *was* a 'characteristically Renaissance approach' to language and grammar, with more or less ascertainable chronological boundaries, as 'very much a debatable issue'. He considers that fifteenth-century humanist grammar has its theoretical foundation in 'certain trends' in the grammatical tradition of Provence and northern Italy. If one discounts the two novel departures provided by J. C. Scaliger's *De causis linguae Latinae* (1540), which really belongs with the philosophical grammar movement of the following century, and by Antonio de Nebrija's epoch-making venture into Castilian vernacular grammar (1492), Renaissance linguistics becomes 'nothing more than a further step in the development of medieval grammatical theory, a mere offshoot of one local variety of the medieval grammatical tradition'. If Percival can prove his thesis, it is of capital importance for a study of the origins of vernacular grammar. Two things, he concedes, have so far prevented the verification of his theory: the lack of knowledge of the primary source material between 1350 and 1600, and the lack of mutual awareness among scholars working respectively in the

sprachliche Gedanke im Spiegel der frühneuenglischen Grammatiker von Bullokar (1586) bis Wallis (1653). Die grammatische Systematik und die Klassifikation der Redeteile', *Schriften der literarischen Gesellschaft Bern*, iv (1941), pp. 1-91; I. Poldauf, 'On the History of some Problems of English Grammar before 1800', *Prague Studies in English*, lv (1948), pp. 1-322; J.-C. Chevalier, *Histoire de la syntaxe: naissance de la notion de complément dans la grammaire française (1530-1750)*, Geneva, 1968; I. Michael, *English Grammatical Categories and the Tradition to 1800*, Cambridge, 1970; E. Vorlat, *English Grammatical Theory 1586-1737*, Louvain, 1975. On the English and French grammars of the period see further Padley, unpublished section (pp. 252-458) of Oxford doctoral thesis (1970): 'Grammatical Theory in Western Europe 1500-1700. A consideration of the theories of the Latin grammarians, and of their application by the vernacular grammarians of English and French'.

⁴ *Current Trends in Linguistics*, ed. T. A. Sebeok, The Hague and Paris, xiii, 1975, pp. 231-75.

Introduction

Latin and the vernacular grammatical traditions. The trends of which he speaks make their appearance quite early:

Renaissance linguistic theory had its origins in a tradition of lexicographic and grammatical writing which emerged in northern Italy and Provence in about the eleventh century and developed to some degree independently of the . . . northern tradition . . . The peculiarity of this southern tradition was that it was oriented towards rhetoric rather than dialectic, rhetoric in this instance being not the art of forensic eloquence but the technique of written composition, or the *ars dictandi*, as it was called in those days.⁵

The distinction Percival draws here between a logic-chopping North and a rhetorically orientated South is indeed a valid one, borne out by the eclipse of the early rhetorical schools such as Orleans by the Aristotelian logicians of the University of Paris. Percival suggests, as a source for much in humanist grammar, the *Regulae grammaticales* of Guarino Veronese, composed some time before 1418, and constituting the 'first humanistic grammatical treatise', the 'prototype on which all subsequent humanist grammars of Latin were based'.⁶ This grammar undertakes a reform of medieval syntax, and unmistakably influenced early Italian humanist grammars of Latin such as that of Perotti. Though for Percival humanist grammatical practice has its roots in medieval theory, what makes it specifically humanist is its treatment of syntax, a part of grammar which had 'undergone a purge' at the hands of Guarino. To investigate the matter in detail would require, as Percival notes, a close knowledge both of medieval theory and of Guarino's syntactic practice and its parallels in humanist grammars. Such an enquiry would be more specifically relevant to the Latinizing grammarians of our first category, which are not the object of the present study. More relevant at this point is the fact that the North-South cleavage posited by Percival is illustrated in the respective regions by two very different types of grammatical production. In the South, Valla's *De linguae Latinae elegantia* is only the first in a series of rhetorically conceived grammars.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 233.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 238. The British Library volume (I. A. 30276) beginning '[P]artes grammaticae sunt quattuor. videlicet littera, syllaba, dictio et oratio' is ascribed in the catalogue to Guarino Veronese and tentatively dated 1480. It deals mostly with verbs and verb government, using the medieval terms 'persona agentis' and 'persona patientis' to indicate subject and object functions, and setting up semantic classes of 'verba acquisitiva' (requiring a following dative), 'effectiva' (taking an ablative) and 'possessiva' (taking a genitive), etc. The British Library editions of Perotti's *Rudimenta grammatices* (Venice, 1473; composed c. 1464) are described on their title-pages as published 'cum additionibus regularum . . . Guarini Veronensis'.

Introduction

In this regard the early Italian vernacular grammars simply insert themselves into an existing tradition. A preoccupation with correct usage was always a hallmark of Renaissance grammar, but in Italy, thanks to the length and intensity of the 'questione della lingua' debates as to which dialect should be the standard literary one, questions of usage and rhetorical matters tend to usurp the whole field of grammar. A similar process, at a much later stage, takes place in seventeenth-century France when, the language having been codified and the various veins of grammatical theory temporarily exhausted, grammarians imitating Vaugelas concentrate solely on the prescription of good usage. The Italian 'questione della lingua' and the seventeenth-century French movement towards the purification, and some would say the accompanying impoverishment, of the language are matters of absorbing interest. Their importance for a history of grammatical theory is however only incidental. The present study accordingly proposes to concern itself with yet a third category of grammarians.

Here, a distinction can be made between on the one hand those early vernacular grammarians who content themselves with describing their native tongue in terms of a grammatical framework designed for Latin, forcing the vernacular into a Latin straitjacket, and on the other hand those who, though often enough equally guilty in this respect, also adopt the metalanguage, the overt linguistic theory of their Latin models. In this way the vernacular is made to conform to a double norm, to that of Latin grammar as such, and to the exigences of a theory. All grammars of course have a pedagogical purpose, and one may add to this group those grammarians who are self-consciously pursuing a pedagogical theory. Often enough, of course, these two subcategories cross-cut each other, the particular linguistic theory being pressed into service to serve pedagogical ends. To treat the whole of West European vernacular grammar in one volume would be a vast, and economically unviable, undertaking. In the present work I therefore propose to examine some of the causes, both theoretical and pedagogical, that lie behind certain strands in the tangled skein of the grammatical output of the period, leaving aside the more or less purely descriptive grammarians, be they simply adaptors of vernaculars to the Latin framework, or writers of prescriptive and rhetorically orientated grammars designed to inculcate correct usage. The touchstone is whether the authors

Introduction

treated follow an overt theory, linguistic or pedagogical. In limiting the study to those authors, it is possible to give a not too unwieldy account of some of the major currents in the grammatical theory of the period: the rise of Ramism, the drive to produce a more manageable pedagogy and one more appropriate to the vernaculars, the shifting relationships between logic, rhetoric and grammar, the influence of seventeenth-century rationalism and of empiricism as exemplified by the English Royal Society, and the spread in the vernaculars of various theories of general or universal grammar. Further, this study aims to show the extent to which grammatical theory remains dependent on the great Latin sources of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Overall, it is a study of norms, and their working out in the development of vernacular grammar. On a theoretical level, these norms are provided by a small number of seminal Latin works: Linacre's *De emendata structura Latini sermonis* (1524); Ramus' *Dialecticae institutiones* (1543) and *Grammatica* (1559); J. C. Scaliger's *De causis linguae Latinae* (1540); Sanctius' *Minerva* (1587); Campanella's *Grammatica* (1638); and the *Grammatica audax* (1654) of the Spanish bishop Caramuel. These major Latin works, together with developments in the relative standing of logic and rhetoric and the great pedagogical impetus associated with (among others) Comenius, provide the intellectual framework within which the *theoretical* basis of much of vernacular grammar between 1500 and 1700 has to make an accommodation. It is against this backcloth that a shift of emphasis running from the extremes of Ramism to those of universal grammar can be examined.

Part I

Grammar and pedagogy

1. THE IMPACT OF RAMISM: HISTORY OF A WITHDRAWAL

i THE RAMIST REVOLUTION

Much of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century grammatical theory is a reflection of the changing status and relationships of the three Renaissance 'arts' of logic, grammar and rhetoric. The Renaissance is the period in which logic, though it retains its place in the university curriculum, is 'dethroned' by grammar and gradually disappears from the schools.¹ Of cardinal importance here is the question whether rhetoric also is to be deemed an integral part of grammar, or treated as a separate and distinct branch of learning. The history of linguistics shows a regular swing of the pendulum between periods of 'observational adequacy' (to use the term popularized by Chomsky) in which the province of grammarians is 'the practical knowledge of the general usages of speakers and writers',² and periods of 'explanatory adequacy' in which their aim is to demonstrate the underlying 'causes' of a language by applying to it a logical or philosophical metalanguage. Medieval Modistic linguistics had followed the latter of these two aims, while early humanist grammarians had by and large followed the former. The divorce of rhetoric from grammar holds the danger of course that it will increasingly be seen as an optional extra, an additional beautification of language, and that grammatical studies will take on an aridity like that which, for some, characterizes the Bloomfieldian descriptive linguistic school of the thirties and forties of the present century. Further, the adoption of an 'observational' or an 'explanatory' approach determines the status of logic, which will be seen either as an extra-linguistic device ensuring economy of description, or as providing the underlying bases of language itself. The importance of Ramus in the history of linguistics lies in his having, with far-reaching

¹ See F. Watson, *The English Grammar Schools to 1660: their Curriculum and Practice*, Cambridge, 1908, p. 3.

² Thus Dionysius Thrax (see R. H. Robins, *A Short History of Linguistics* (2nd ed.), London, 1979, p. 31).