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AUTHORITY IN LOWTH'S AND PRIESTLEY'S PREFACES TO THEIR *ENGLISH GRAMMARS*[1]

DOLORES FERNÁNDEZ MARTÍNEZ

Universidad de las Palmas de Gran Canaria, Spain

ABSTRACT

The eighteenth century was a crucial period in the process of codification of the English language and in the history of English grammar writing (Tieken-Boon van Ostade 2008b). The need for grammars to provide linguistic guidance to the upper social classes, and to those who aspired to belong to them, led to an important increase in the output of English grammars. Since most of the grammar writers were clearly in competition with one another for a share of the market, they turned the prefaces to their grammars into highly persuasive instruments that tried to justify the need for that specific grammar. Priestley's and Lowth's grammars epitomized, respectively, the two main trends of grammatical tradition, namely descriptivism and prescriptivism. Taking a critical discourse analysis approach, this paper aims to examine how both writers claimed their authority through the presentation of the different individuals involved in the text, specifically, the author and any potential readers. We will examine how individuals are depicted both as a centre of structure and action through Martin's (1992) identification systems and Halliday's (2004 [1985]) transitivity structures. Such an approach fits in with Wicker's (2006: 79) assessment of prefaces as textual networks of authority in which it is essential to interrogate how the readers who support and influence the texts are represented and addressed.

1. Introduction

The eighteenth century was a crucial period in the history of English grammar writing. The growing interest in vernaculars and the awareness about the correct

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use of the language as a feature of social distinction led to a significant increase in the output of grammars (Tieken-Boon van Ostade 2008a). The concern of grammarians about fixing the English language met the growing demand of people looking for linguistic stability and a systematic presentation of the language. English grammatical tradition has received growing attention in recent years (e.g. Tieken-Boon van Ostade 2008b; Hickey 2010a), but despite the vast possibilities of study this period offers, other directions of research remain rather unexplored. Norms of linguistic correctness in the eighteenth century were ultimately created by a discourse community of grammarians whose joint enterprise produced a shared commitment to the discursive practices (Watts 2008: 45; Straaijer 2011: 233). The focus on the codification of the written language produced the standardisation of a highly institutionalised elitist social discourse, although not always consciously accepted by the members of that community. That community of grammarians also left their social and linguistic imprint on the different written material they produced. The potential they offer to examine how writers depicted themselves and intended readership must be highlighted from a discourse analysis point of view.

This study aims to carry out a discourse analysis on the discourse patterns used by grammarians in the presentation of their works. To this end, we will analyse the prefaces of two of the most significant English grammars of the eighteenth century, namely, Robert Lowth's (1762) *A Short Introduction to English Grammar* and Joseph Priestley's (1761) *The Rudiments of English Grammar*.[2] Priestley's grammar has usually been ranked on the same level as Lowth's in the popular press, being often regarded as the only counterpart to Lowth's work (Straaijer 2011: 130). Lowth and Priestley represent the two opposing traditions of prescriptivism and descriptivism, respectively, within the practices of eighteenth-century grammarians. Eighteenth-century English grammars were predominantly prescriptive, whereas descriptive grammars were rare. Prescriptivism exemplified the doctrine of correctness; descriptivism embodied the doctrine of usage. The former tried to lay down grammatical rules to which usage must conform; the latter focused on usage and custom.[3]

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2 The editions consulted in this article have been taken from Eighteenth Century Collections Online (ECCO).

3 Twentieth-century historical linguistics accepted the dichotomy between prescriptivism and descriptivism, although these concepts had little meaning for eighteenth-century grammarians. Nowadays, strongly opposing views are no longer acceptable, since prescriptive grammar offers relevant insight into descriptivism and there seems to be a blend of prescriptive and descriptive language accounts in the grammars of this period (Rodríguez-Gil 2003). In his quantitative analysis of prescriptive and descriptive language, Straaijer (2009) asserts that there is a prescriptive-descriptive continuum, rather than a dichotomy. Two years later, he remarks that Priestley's and Lowth's grammars "are neither completely prescriptive, nor completely descriptive" (Straaijer 2011: 257), and goes one step further by stating that the

In the eighteenth century the endeavour to dominate the editorial market led to a gradual increase in grammatical productivity which was especially noticeable during the second half of the century (Tieken-Boon van Ostade 2008c). In order to make their grammars appealing to prospective readers, grammarians wrote convincing prefaces that exposed the positive qualities of the grammars. Prefaces may thus be considered as rich fields of discursive exploration in which linguistic structures functioned as highly persuasive instruments. They were introductory material used by the authors to explain in greater detail the process of elaboration of the grammar, to encourage and justify the need for that specific grammar, and even to specify the intended readership. Thus, not surprisingly, scholars have commented on the traces of authority exhibited by both Lowth and Priestley in their works. Lowth has been regarded as an authoritarian bishop and his grammar as one of the most respected English grammars of its time (Tieken-Boon van Ostade 2009: 78). Since his intention was to impose his private norm of correctness on the language, he based his grammar on the linguistic errors committed by what he considered to be the best authors. Such an approach had never been previously attempted and was the cause of his popularity among the public (Tieken-Boon van Ostade 2010: 2). Likewise, Priestley felt that although languages change by being used, the language scholar, and especially the grammarian, had a leading role in the maturation process of the English language (Straaijer 2011: 174). Hodson (2008: 179-180) has also remarked on some of the ways in which Priestley exerts authority, specifically his strong defence of the decisions made in writing his grammar. There his tone was markedly upbeat, particularly as regards the quality of his text, on which he expressed a high level of confidence.

2. Theoretical and methodological framework

Critical discourse analysis takes a particular interest in issues of ideological power and social inequality (Fairclough 1995, 2001 [1989]). In critical analysis, discourse is not only considered as a tool for the social construction of reality, but also as an instrument of power and control. This theoretical framework matches the authority traits found in Lowth and Priestley and, in general, in the eighteenth-century context, where "what was going on at the time was a veritable battle for the dominance of the market" (Tieken-Boon van Ostade 2008c: 104). In eighteenth-century England, a discourse community implied "a com-

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relationship between the two approaches should be represented in a two-dimensional continuum, rather than one-dimensional. Accordingly, it could be assumed that neither Priestly nor Lowth had the intention to be descriptive or prescriptive in the sense that these terms have been understood. Far from the prescriptive-descriptive polarization, the difference between Lowth and Priestley could be regarded as one of emphasis (Beal 2004: 111).

munity of common interests, goals and beliefs rather than a community of individuals" (Watts 2008: 52). Grammarians had a unifying concern with controlling the editorial market, but since there were not conventional tendencies, each one put also a lot of effort into displaying a persuasive and legitimate individual authority, especially perceptible in the prefaces to their grammars. Prefaces written in earlier stages of the English language, for instance, in the Old English period (e.g. Discenza 2001; Harbus 2007) have attracted the attention of scholars as rich fields of exercise of authority. But despite the prospective of research prefaces to eighteenth-century English grammars offer for the study of connotations of power and control, they remain an area hitherto unexplored from a critical discourse analysis point of view.

Despite relying on a variety of grammatical approaches, critical discourse analysis has traditionally preferred Halliday's (2004 [1985]) *Introduction to Functional Grammar* as the most suitable tool for analysis (Fairclough 1995, 2001 [1989]). Previous research has also underlined the flexibility of functional grammar to be applied to earlier periods of the English language (e.g. Cummings 1995; Davies 1996). This paper aims to examine how Lowth's and Priestley's prefaces depict the different individuals or participants involved in the text, namely, the author and any potential readers, from a critical discourse analysis perspective. To this end, we will examine how participants are presented both as a centre of structure and action through Martin's (1992) identification systems and Halliday's (2004 [1985]) transitivity structures. Connotations of control and inequality, as explained by critical analysis, may be unveiled by observing how the two-fold role of individuals, as both a focus of structure and action, enacts in the text (Chiapello – Fairclough 2002: 193). Such an approach fits in with the view of prefaces as textual networks of authority in which it is essential to interrogate how the readers who support and influence the texts are represented and addressed (Wicker 2006: 79).

Martin's system of identification may be used to study the way in which language is structured to refer to the participants in discourse, as well as the relevance attached to them. Considering that "The more central the participant … the more likely it is to provide a referent for a phoric item…" (Martin1992: 107), this system enables us to evaluate the relevance of individuals as a focus of structure in terms of the referential chains they generate. As regards their function as a focus of action, Martin (1992: 129) comments on the role of the participants as agents within Halliday's transitivity arrangement: "The entry condition for the identification network … was participant, where this can be defined as a person, place or thing, abstract or concrete, capable of functioning as Agent or Medium in transitivity..." Halliday's (2004 [1985]: 168-305) transitivity structure depicts reality in terms of the three components of participants, processes and circumstances. Thus, transitivity structures support the function

of the clause as representation in order to give a picture of reality as a complex of processes associated to some participants and circumstances.

The purpose of this work is to establish the role assigned to participants through the linguistic devices mentioned. By applying these instruments we will try to describe the way in which Lowth and Priestly impose their authority on their respective grammars, how they construct a role for themselves as textual mediators for the potential readers, and how they encourage them to value the process of construction of the grammars and use them.

3. Analysis

3.1. Lowth's preface

On a first approach, the identification systems used in Lowth's preface to refer to the author and the intended readership focus on the third person, first person singular and first person plural:

Identification systems:
- Third person: potential readers
- Third person (+superlative): neither reader nor author
- First person singular (*I*): author
- First person plural (*we*): implicit *we* involving author and reader
- Second person (*you*): reader

Lowth's preface starts by claiming that although the English language had been much cultivated during the last two hundred years, it had not made any advances in grammatical accuracy. Lowth refers to Swift, who *made a public remonstrance ... of the imperfect State of our Language* [i-ii], in order to support his own statement (*Swift must be allowed to have been a good judge of this matter* [ii]). Both the modal verb *must* and the following relational transitivity structure which establishes Swift's authority as *a good judge* underline the legitimacy of Lowth's judgment. Additionally, relational processes combined with superlatives reinforce Lowth's assessment (*he is one of our most correct, and perhaps our very best prose writer* [ii]).

Lowth specifies the intended readership when he refers to *every person of a liberal education* [viii-ix]. By placing them in transitivity structures of verbal processes (*every one who undertakes to inform or entertain the public, that he should be able to express himself with propriety and accuracy* [ix]), he describes a desirable linguistic behaviour which is implicitly linked to the acceptance and use of his grammar. Lowth presents the third person in an exemplary way in order to impose strategically on the reader a pattern of actions

to follow: *When he has a competent knowledge … he then will apply himself with great advantage to any foreign language…* [xii].

In the structure *as it is spoken by the politest part of the nation, and as it stands in the writings of our most approved authors* [iii], Lowth repeats the same pattern of third person+superlative, but now a new element comes to the fore with the first person singular *I*: *I am afraid, the charge is true* [iii]. These constructions illustrate Tieken-Boon van Ostade's views (2009, 2010) about how Lowth based his grammar on linguistic errors committed by what he considered to be the best authors, which she regards as one of his most distinctive traits of authority. The superlative turns the third person into a reference of quality which, combined with the first person singular, legitimates Lowth's arguments. The double-sided construction of posing question and provinding answer which frames the previous structures is reiterated next. Once more, the first person singular appears dominating the answer in order to enforce the validity of the author's judgement (*I am persuaded* [iii]).

The use of verbs of cognition associated to the first person singular depicts an author who is reluctant to deprive the text of his explicit presence. Lowth is presented as a centre of reflection controlling the reliability of the message and implementing his opinion: *as far as I can find* [ii], *I believe, they may be sufficient to answer the purpose intended; to evince the necessity of the Study of Grammar…* [ix], *I think* [xi]. And although at some points he seems to decline any position of control in the text, these constructions can be assessed as linguistic devices to reinforce his authority: *I will not take upon me to say* [x].

In the eighteenth century "codes of politeness became fixed and compulsory for those who aspired to belong to the established classes in English society" (Hickey 2010a: 1). In this sense, Lowth's preface encodes some prototypes of grammatical behaviour considered as referents of quality. The combination of third person + superlative is also employed to depict a situation of linguistic insufficiency in the past (*the imperfect State of our Language* [ii]) which legitimates, and contrasts with, an ideal state of linguistic perfection described through the third person. In the following example the relational arrangement (*the greatest Critic and most able Grammarian of the last age … was frequently at a loss in matters of ordinary use and common construction in his own Vernacular Idiom* [viii]) equates with a deficient mental process of cognition. Lowth combines nominal phrases including superlatives with the different types of processes (cognitive, affective and existential): *our best Authors … have sometimes fallen into mistakes, and been guilty of palpable errors in point of Grammar* [ix]. Rather than providing a plain description of reality, the mixture of different verbs emphasizes the mistakes of the past. Thus, the author achieves a more effective impact on the reader by referring to misguided grammatical attitudes and their inherent downbeat feelings. Rather than encouraging the

readers explicitly to proceed in some way, Lowth first leads them strategically to think and understand. Accordingly, in order to control their subsequent material actions, the author previously implements a meticulous mental predisposition: *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* [x]. Therefore, those structures pave the way for further expected actions performed by the reader under the subtle guidance ot the author. In the initial passive structure *and yet no effectual method hath hitherto been taken to redress the grievance of which he complains* [ii], Lowth criticises the disregard of grammarians for the linguistic deficiency. By omitting the third person agent, the text focuses on the action of neglect in the past, which favours the role of the author as a guide to linguistic evolution.

Consequently, the references to the past activate the appearance of linguistic patterns which describe the prospects of linguistic improvement. These prospects met the linguistic aspirations and demands of society at that time, and functioned as a mirror in which people could see themselves as they desired to be. Lowth presents the reader as a person who is to benefit from a good grammar, a person who is not a common reader, but a perfect reader. The combination of material and mental processes illustrates a pattern of accurate actions supported by wise thinking: *all those who are initiated in a learned education* [xi], *all others likewise, who shall have occasion to furnish themselves with the knowledge of modern languages* [xi], *The learner is supposed to be unacquainted with…* [xi].

Through the first person plural or inclusive *we* Lowth transfers to the audience the commitment to the amendment of the imperfect state of the language. By means of verbs of cognition the author imposes on the reader the challege of linguistic development: *But let us consider, how, and in what extent, we are to understand this charge brought against the English language* [ii], *Were the Language less easy and simple, we should find ourselves under a necessity of studying it with more care and attention* [vi]. From a critical perspective, the inclusive *we* conveys a high degree of power to the author (Fairclough 2001 [1989]: 106). Through the fusion of all the identification systems, the first person plural impacts on an extensive audience and hence reinforces the idea of a universal readership. But the inclusive *we* also complies with Lowth's oscillating attitude that alternates manifestations of control with some other affective positions of closeness and interruption of power. With a joint commitment and a disguished emotional and approaching posture the reader is more easily manipulated.

Through the first person plural with verbs of cognition Lowth describes the reader's distorted grammatical conception of his experience with the language: *we take it for granted that we have a competent knowledge and skill, and are able to … we meet with no rubs or difficulties in our way … 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 [vi-vii]. Lowth places him as a victim of a deficient grammatical past situation and tries to inflict trust in his capacities to improve his linguistic competences through a subsequent pattern of actions to follow which involve strategically the acceptance of his grammar: *if we would attain to a due degree of skill in it* [viii]. Thus, he makes the reader be aware of the need to establish rules and, implicitly, to profit from his grammar.

Once he has appealed to the capacity of judgement and reflection of the reader, Lowth employs material processes to produce some structures of alert which refer to the risk of extending the situation of linguistic deficiency in time: *ordinary method of instruction which we pass thro' in our childhood* [vii], *and it is very seldom that we apply ourselves to it afterward* [vii]. Lowth contrasts those structures with a guided linguistic experience with the language in the present and the future (*If we would attain to a due degree of skill in it* [viii]) and with a guaranteed ideal state of grammatical competence through a mixture of material, cognitive and verbal processes: *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* [x].

The identification systems used in the preface also include a reference to the second person *you,* which represents a more direct and persuasive way of addressing the reader: *would you go about to explain it to him?* [xii]. Despite its restricted presence in the text, the second person allows to establish a link between the exemplifying role of the third person, the inclusive *we* and the reader as a mere addressee.

As has been explained, the third person reference dominates the text, sometimes intermingled with the first person plural, the first person singular and the second person. Through a methodical use of transitivity structures participants are portrayed in such a way as to promote the benefits of Lowth's grammar and encourage its use. A summary of the functions attached to the identification systems through transitivity structures evinces the controlling purpose of the author over the reader:

Third person
- Supports the author's opinion and hence reinforces his authority.
- Imposes a desirable linguistic behaviour on the reader.
- Provides a reference of quality.
- Implements a reflexive attitude on the reader which, in turn, supports material actions.
- Emphasizes a past deficient grammatical state in order to both activate the prospectives of linguistic improvement and control future actions.

First person singular
– Strengthens Lowth's judgement.

First person plural
– Imposes a challenge on the reader.
– Describes a distorted grammatical experience with the language.
– Introduces structures of alert in order to guide the reader's linguistic behaviour in the future.
– Describes the perfect reader.
– Inflicts trust on the reader.

Second person:
– Addresses the reader in a more direct and persuasive way.

3.2. Priestley's preface

An outline of the identifications systems employed in Priestley's preface evinces a text supported on the third person as the main structural nucleus, but also on the first person singular and plural. Despite the similarities of identification systems with Lowth's text, the functions attached to the transitivity structures illustrate significant differences between both authors:

Identification systems:
Third person elided as agent in passive structures: mainly author, but also reader
Third person as agent in active structures: reader
Third person singular (*the author*): author
Third person (+/–superlative): neither reader nor author
First person singular (I): author
First person plural (*we*): implicit *we* involving author and reader

Priestley's preface starts by making an extensive use of the passive voice, being this a linguistic device which will be maintained throughout the text. Its main purpose is to focus the attention of the reader on the actions, rather than the agent, undertaken in the production of the grammar: *care hath been taken*, *All the rules that relate … are laid down…* [iii], *Technical terms have neither been affected nor avoided: more than are here introduced were judged unnecessary* [iii], *they have not been wholly avoided* [iii]. By drawing attention to these processes Priestly pretends to underline a skillful and laborious method of construction which justifies the merit and quality of this grammar and hence, anticipates implicitly the approval of the reader. Transitivity structures comprise

a two-sided pattern of material and mental processes which illustrate both the physical actions performed in the production of the grammar and the carefully reflexive attitude supporting it: *The method of Question and Answer hath been made choice of, as being judged to be…* [iv], *It is not denied that use hath been made of…* [iv], *for language … must be fixed…* [vi]. Whereas Lowth focused on the reader and the difficulties he may experience with the language, Priestly prefers to divert those difficulties to his working tasks as a way to provide excellence to the grammar, but also in order to convey authority to himself.

Passive constructions oppose the use of the explicit third person subject referring to prospective users of the grammar: *that young persons of both sexes take a pleasure in learning new words, and by that means more easily obtain clear ideas…* [iii-iv]. The third person as a potential beneficiary of Priestley's grammar is associated to material, relational and affective processes which depict him within a state of linguistic improvement: *a language that many persons have leisure to read and write, are both sure to be brought, in time, to all the perfection of which they are capable* [vii], *All the skill that our youth at school have in it, being acquired in an indirect manner* [viii]. As in Lowths' preface, Priestley contrasts a grammatically misguided attitude in the past (*men of learning made very little use of it…* [ix]) with structures imposing a proper linguistic behaviour on the reader and the anticipated acceptance of the grammar: *youth may be led on in a regular feries of compositions* [ix], *The propriety of introducing the English grammar into English schools, cannot be disputed* [viii]. A third person elided agent is also used in passive structures to denounce a mistaken grammatical behaviour in the past: *hath this grammatical performance been conducted* [vii]. The end of the preface becomes quite specific as regards the identify of the reader with transitivity constructions which evince the explicit relationship between the teacher and the pupil as users of the grammar: *it can be no manner of trouble to any teacher to supply the want of them … and requiring his pupils to point out, and rectify, his mistakes* [xi].

The passive, as opposed to the active, may be assessed as a device of linguistic distinction between the reader and the author. The former materializes through a double-sided role as a focus of structure and action, whereas the presence of the latter in the text is almost limited to its function as a centre of action. As regards the types of processes, verbs of cognition and affection dominate in order to describe the practice and understanding of the prospective reader with the language and the feelings produced by that experience: *allowing a person … to understand the meaning and force of English words, he will here meet with an account of their inflections* [v], *a language that many persons have leisure to read and write* [vii]. Accordingly, in both prefaces the system of transitivity shows how "Before the reader is even introduced to the text they

have already been assimilated into it by the preface's anticipation of how they will read the book" (Wicker 2006: 79).

Priestley refers explicitly to himself as the author of the grammar through the third person singular (*The author*). Despite the sparse overt allusions to his role, they will suffice to certify his function as agent in the many passive constructions which scaffold the text. This explicit occurrence takes place in transitivity structures which portray the clear connection between the author and the potential reader: *The author hath no higher views in what he now presents to the public, than to give the youth of our nation…* [v]. That link materializes through verbs of action which also allow for a specific reference to the intended readership presented as *the youth of our nation* [v]. At the end of the preface the blending of material, cognitive and affective processes connects the prospectives of success of the grammar to a meticulous effort in its production which, in turn, certifies its excellence: *the author of this attempt is not without hopes of better success. For since he hath been apprized of those faults, and hath endeavoured to avoided them, he flatters himself…* [x].

Superlative forms appear in the passive as references of quality, although not in the role of agents themselves: *the best and most numerous authorities have been carefully followed* [vii]. These references may also perform as agents, although not in the superlative form, inflicting connotations of authority: *but since good authors have adopted different forms of speech … one authority may be of as much weight as another* [vi].

As in Lowth's grammar, Priestley employs the first person singular combined with processes of cognition at some specific points in the preface. Its purpose is to support the truthfulness of his arguments through the authority conferred to himself as a centre of reflection (*I think* [vii], *I believe* [viii], *I believe* [ix]). Likewise, by means of the inclusive *we* the author presents the reader as a participant affected by the erroneous grammatical undertakings of the past: *For this simplicity in the grammar of our language … we are indebted to the long continued barbarism of the people from whom we received it* [v]. Material verbs place the readers as receivers of a mistaken linguistic heritage (*The words we afterwards received from those languages…* [vi]), but also implicitly as actors with a challenge for a new future: *we must introduce into our schools English grammar* [ix]. The author confers the idea of a joint commitment so as to lead to a more desirable linguistic status: *We need make no doubt but that the best forms of speech will, in time, establish themselves by their own superior excellence…* [vii].

In contrast to Lowth's text, there is not such a systematic pattern of transitivity elaborated around the first person plural and the third person as agents, although the functions attached to them remain the same. Rather than being presented as autonomous and self-sufficient participants, Priestley

portrays the reader as a passive agent submitted to his control, imposing on him the actions to be undertaken through a methodical arrangement of the passive voice. A summary of the functions attached to the identification systems through transitivity structures unveils similar purposes of authority over the reader:

Third person
- Focuses on the process of construction of the grammar as a guarantee of both its quality and the acceptance of the reader.
- Describes the reader as beneficiary of the grammar within a framework of linguistic improvement which contrasts with the misguided linguistic experience in the past.
- Presents the author as an agent establishing explicit connections with the reader.
- Allows the author to assume the success of his grammar and the quality work supporting it.
- Provides references of quality to emphasize authority.

First person singular
- Presents the author as a centre of reflection supporting the truthfulness of his arguments.

First person plural
- Depicts the readers as affected by the linguictic neglect of the past and with a challenge and joint commitment to the future.

4. Conclusion

The analysis of Lowth's and Priestly's prefaces has illustrated how both authors impose their authority on their respective grammars. They encourage strategically the intended readers to value the process of construction of the grammar and the need for that specific grammar. But they also construct a role for themselves as textual mediators for the potential readers. This fact provides evidence of how grammar writers were clearly in competition with one another for a share of the editorial marked at that time and how that pressure materialized as a kind of discourse of rivalry. The results obtained from the analysis carried out in this paper show how their convincing arguments to support the convenience of their grammar rest on a systematic codification of identification systems and transitivity structures. However, the discursive strategies of Lowth and Priestley to present participants in the text are divergent. Lowth's preface represents a discourse of participants as a centre of structure and action. Prescriptivism

through Lowth's text uncovers more richness of referential systems with individuals performing different roles in order to convince the reader of the convenience of establishing rules and using that grammar. Priestley's text is concerned with actions rather than participants. It is a preface of explicit processes and implicit participants, whose main structural core is supported by the passive voice and whose main concern is the description of the process of production of the grammar. Nevertheless, despite employing different strategies, the linguistic devices examined reveal similar functions. Both prefaces emphasize mistaken grammatical approaches in the past and both impose a reflexive attitude and challenge on the reader which facilitates, in turn, the establishment of a pattern of future actions which will lead to linguistic improvement. In both cases the author meddles in the text as a centre of reflexion controlling the truthfulness of the message and in both cases the author tries to anticipate the success of his work and its acceptance by the reader.

This paper has tried to foster the application of critical discourse approaches to the study of eighteenth-century grammars. With this purpose in mind, we have made an appeal for the analysis of the discourse patterns used by grammarians in the presentation of their works. Although the results obtained may provide significant information about their social and linguistic impact, further research remains to be done in order to determine the possible connection between the presentation of participants in the prefaces and the popularity of their respective grammars. Further work may also help to discern if the conclusions drawn through the analysis of these two texts could also be applied to the rest of prefaces labelled either as descriptive or prescriptive. The application of this method of analysis to other prefaces could lead us to conclude if the trends of descriptivism and prescriptivism crystallise, respectively, into consistent discourse patterns as the ones described here.

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