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Master thesis:

**The English verb in eighteenth-century prescriptive grammars /**

**Engleski glagol u preskriptivnim gramatikama osamnaestog stoljeća**

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## **1. Introduction**

The basic idea of prescriptive grammar is that every language should have prescribed grammatical rules that should be applied as they are written without the possibility of analysis and changes caused by the fact that speakers have a different opinion in relation to the imposed rule. Linguists dealing with prescriptive grammar aim to prescribe, not describe, grammatical rules to be applied without hesitation and to impose ways in which they will be spoken and written thereby establishing something they consider an ideal language.

As Milroy and Milroy (2002:1) state “prescription depends on an ideology (or set of beliefs) concerning language which requires that in language use, as in other matters, things shall be done in the ‘right’ way.”

This thesis will deal with the English verb in 18<sup>th</sup> century grammars with special emphasis on the prescriptive rules that were established back then, and are respected even now. The paper will consist of four parts.

The first part of the paper will provide a historical overview of the development of prescriptive grammar from the very beginning of English grammar writing. In this part social, political, cultural and religious circumstances that preceded the rise of prescriptivism will be described with the purpose of introducing the readers to the background of what happened before the rise of prescriptivism in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

This part will deal with the reasons why the flourishing of prescriptive grammar occurred in the 18<sup>th</sup> century when there was a great growth of the printing industry, and an increase in the number of people who climbed the social ladder and tried to use a more polite and refined version of the language. As Fitzmaurice (1998) explains “the aim of the normative grammars that were widely published in the 18<sup>th</sup> century was to provide a model of speech for those who were socially ambitious” (as cited in Beal et al, 2008:206).

Deviations from the prescribed rules of prescriptive grammar are still considered to indicate a lower socio-economic status and a lower level of education, as well as certain social and professional values and aspirations.

The importance of classical languages, especially Latin, led to the insistence on having strict rules and making the language polite and refined. As Milroy and Milroy (1999:72) explain the preference and admiration for Latin made the prescriptive grammarian more “inclined to preserve tense, number and person distinctions as much as they could, on the model of Latin. We can attribute the relative conservatism of SE in this respect to the standard ideology in the shape of eighteenth-century prescriptivism.”

The following part will deal with the definitions of the basic terms. It will show the distinction between the two grammatical approaches, prescriptive and descriptive grammar, as well as provide theoretical explanations of these terms and examples on the basis of which they differ from each other.

The main, third, part of the paper will deal with the description of verbs and comments on their use in a selection of English grammars of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The following grammars of the English language published in the 18<sup>th</sup> century will be used for research: Joseph Priestly (1762) *The Rudiments of English Grammar*, Robert Lowth (1766) *A short introduction to English grammar*, John Burn (1766) *A practical English grammar of the English language* and Anne Fisher (1789) *A Practical new grammar, with exercises of bad English, or, An easy guide to speaking and writing the English language properly and correctly*.

The prohibition of the use of the double negative and split infinitives, as well as, the distinction in meaning between the uses of *will* and *shall* and the insistence of the use of *you were* for the second person singular will be described in detail.

The paper will provide an explanation of how the prescriptive grammars affected the development of standard language we speak today. If we take into account the fact that one of the basic goals of prescriptive grammar is to establish language standards and promote "correct" in relation to "incorrect" grammar, we come to the conclusion that prescriptive grammar still plays a significant role in the standardization process and continues to guide speakers in using language effectively for communication purposes.

## **2. The rise of prescriptivism**

### 2.1. Historical background

In order to understand the circumstances that preceded the phenomenon of prescriptive grammar in the English language it is essential to get acquainted with the historical background, as well as political, social and cultural conditions in the country.

As Cole states (2003:119) “there are many factors that contributed to bringing about the present attitude of belief in and dependence on grammars and dictionaries. While some of them trace their roots back to antiquity, most of them arose in the years between 1650 and 1800. Prescriptivism did not develop in a vacuum but was part of, and the result of, the whole intellectual way of thinking during this period.”

#### 2.1.1. Political, social, cultural and religious circumstances

The period of the 16<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries in Britain is referred to as Early Modern Britain. This period was marked by a lot of wars, especially with France, the English Civil War as well, the English Renaissance, numerous reformations, as well as the Glorious Revolution. The main problems that the British were faced with in this period were related to political, economic and social tensions caused mostly by religious division in the country.

Economic problems were rooted in the rapid inflation caused by the influx of the New World gold, insufficient royal revenues that could no longer meet the demands of the kings, changes in agriculture, namely the decrease in the growing grain and the increase of raising sheep.

The mentioned economic problems led to social tensions. The more demand for work, by those who were expelled from the farms, decreased the wages which led to the unhappiness of the working class. The rising middle class wanted to take part in the government and the nobles wanted to regain the privileges they had before.

The political problems occurred with the insistence on the division of colonies. This led to the wars with France, the Netherlands and Spain.

The religious situation in the country was unstable in the 16<sup>th</sup> century due to the current king's, Henry VIII's, problem with Catholicism. He decided to separate from the Roman church because the Pope did not give him the permission to divorce his wife Catherine. The changes in structure brought the English king at the head of the Church.

The separation of the Church of England from the Church of Rome changed the type of education that was offered at British universities. Before, universities had been seen as schools for clergy and the now the situation changed in a way that the study of science and humanities started to be available (Cole, 2003:120).

The appearance of the so-called Dissenting academies in the 17<sup>th</sup> century contributed to the rise of consciousness about the English language. “The Dissenters were Protestants who separated from the Church of England in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries” (“English Dissenters”, 2019 Wikipedia). The Dissenting academies offered their students higher education similar to the one Oxford and Cambridge already had. But unlike Oxford and Cambridge, the lectures were in English. These academies promoted modern education by bringing ‘practical’ subjects into the curriculum long before Oxford and Cambridge (Hahn, 1997:194). “It was in these academies that we see some of the first systematic attempts to explain the English language for English speakers” (Lynch, 2009).

### 2.1.2. The attitude towards the language prior to the 18<sup>th</sup> century

Until the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, English was considered unworthy and rude when compared to Latin, Greek and French. This caused a lot of borrowed terms to be imported into the language with the purpose of and the urgent need for the English to be able to handle academic discussions.

According to Tieken-Boon van Ostade (2008), the creation of the British colonies set the ground for the social mobility of the British. They were able to travel and look outside their traditions searching for other ways of behaviour. Those were some of the reasons why the grammarians started writing the grammars with the rules of how both to behave and speak. They did not want their traditions and language to be lost in the new world. Here, a strong sense of nationalistic feeling which tried to defend the English language against those new, modern languages that the people were now exposed to, could still be



found. “The need to formulate the rules for using the correct language became a priority” (Finegan 1980: 19, as cited in Cole, 2003: 121).

“This national feeling led to a greater interest and pride in the national languages, while the language of international Christendom, Latin, slowly fell into the background” (Barber et al., 2009:186).

The appreciation of the common language was increased even more by the translations of the Bible into English. Due to the Reformation all people were granted primary education and given the opportunity to learn to read and write. The insistence of having the access to the Bible without the interpretations of the priests lead to the popularization of English.

The development of the movable printing press opened the possibilities for people to own their own copies of not only the Bible, but all sorts of books which “helped diffuse the knowledge in all levels of society” (Cole, 2003:120). The Licensing Act (1662) regulated the use of the printing presses for the printing of unlicensed books and pamphlets. Thanks to this Act, the licensers that supervised what was being published were appointed by the king and “severe penalties by fines and imprisonment were denounced against offenders” (“Licensing of the Press Act 1662”, n.d.).

“At this point all kinds of printed material became available, from newspapers, journals, pamphlets, to books” (Cole, 2003:120). Along with this rose the number of literate people.

### 2.1.3. The first English dictionaries

The number of words that the speakers of English used more than doubled between 1500 and 1650. Since “many of the new words were borrowed into English from the Latin or Greek of the Renaissance, or from the far-off countries visited by travellers and traders, they must have seemed hard to understand to many of the population” (Simpson, 2012).

Prior to the 18<sup>th</sup> century expansion in dictionary writing there were attempts to offer the readers dictionaries that dealt with the borrowings from Greek and Latin, as well as the words that entered the language through trade.

According to Simpson (2012) “The first monolingual dictionaries were ‘hard word’ dictionaries, explaining in simple form many of the strange and difficult words which entered English over the previous decades”.

The first book generally regarded as the first English dictionary was written by Robert Cawdrey in 1604 called *A Table Alphabeticall containing and teaching the true writing and understanding of hard usuall English words, borrowed from Hebrew, Greeke, Latine, or French*. After Cawdrey, the publications continued with Joh Bullokar’s *English Expositor* in 1616, Henry Cockeram’s *English Dictionarie or Interpreter of Hard English Words* published in 1623 and Thomas Blount’s *Glossographia* in 1656 (Simpson, 2012).

However, the main flourishing of the dictionary writing started in the middle 18<sup>th</sup> century. In 1755 Samuel Johnson published his first dictionary and thus set the path for the definition of spelling and later for all other elements of the language such as grammar and punctuation.

#### 2.1.4. The influence of Latin

Latin was perceived as a model and authority for the development of the rules of English grammar as well since a common opinion of the period was that English did not have codified grammar at all and things needed to be changed. Correctness related to Latin was not the only ideal that people had to reach. Another was politeness. Grammatical correctness was closely related to politeness and refinement. The need to eliminate all the elements that were considered barbarous and inappropriate led to creating a refined language.

Crystal (2003:112) explains that “their [the prescriptivists’] aim was to find grammatical patterns which could characterize polite speech and writing. That meant formal English.” As a result “the prescriptive grammarians went out of their way to invent as many rules as possible which might distinguish polite from impolite speech”.

As Cole writes (2003:122) “18<sup>th</sup> century grammars were based on Latin and all the examples mentioned needed to be translated into Latin and compared to Latin structures. The structures that did not have the analogy in Latin were considered bad and incorrect. English was strictly compared to Latin and where differences were found, English was

judged faulty. The result was borrowing into the English language elements of style and rhetoric that were purely Latin”.

The differences in social status became even more prominent, so wealth and status no longer belonged only to the upper class since the middle class rose rapidly on the social ladder. The demand for education grew rapidly and the middle class families insisted that their children gain both classical education as well as become competent readers in English.

The rise of social and occupational groups which had little or no Latin, but which were eager to read and to learn, and wanted books in English. Such were many of the practical men of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England – skilled craftsmen, instrument makers, explorers, navigators, soldiers – often from the citizen or yeomen classes.

On the other hand, there were social groups which fought hard for the retention of Latin, because their professional monopoly depended on excluding ordinary people from the mysteries of their art; physicians appear to have been particularly bitter in their attacks on medical works published in English. This led to fierce controversy about the suitability of English for works of science and scholarship, which raged especially in the second half of the sixteenth century (Barber et al., 2009:186).

According to Barber et al. (2009:185) the restoration of English as a major literary language happened in the late Middle Ages, “and the beginnings of the establishment of a standard form of written English started. This did not mean, however, that English was the only language used in England: Latin still had great prestige as the language of international learning, and it was a long time before English replaced it in all fields.”

“The people of this period wanted to settle the usage of English beyond a shadow of a doubt and to set up a standard that could be appealed to at any time when one was in doubt or there was a difference of opinion” (Cole, 2003:124).

As a result people became aware of the fact that they themselves can have an impact onto the formation of the language. Very soon it was realized that there is no control over the use of English and the need for regularization and standardization.

## 2.2. The beginnings of prescriptivism

One of the first advocates of having prescribed rules of the language was the poet John Dryden. He admitted that when writing he sometimes had problems expressing his thoughts elegantly and eloquently in English so he had to first translate them into Latin and then know how to tell them in English (Cole, 2003:122). David Crystal (2013) noted that Dryden was convinced that this method of translating his own writings into Latin and then translating them back into English would make his works better (as cited in Lynch, 2009).

It is believed that Dryden was the first one who objected to ending a sentence with a preposition. As Crystal (2006:111, 112) writes “this has its roots in Latin language tradition since in Latin prepositions go before nouns. That is why they are called ‘preposition’. It was only a century later that the prescriptive grammarians welcomed Dryden’s decision with open arms.”

Daniel Defoe in *An Essay upon Projects* (1697:233) insisted on encouraging “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 style, and to purge it from all the Irregular Additions that Ignorance and Affectation have introduc’d.”

In 1741 Samuel Richardson wrote a book called *Letters Written to and for particular Friends, on the Most Important Occasions: Directing Not Only the Requisite Style and Forms to Be Observed in Writing Familiar Letters; but How to Think and Act Justly and Prudently, in the Common Concerns of Human Life*. This book contained 173 letters that offered templates for real-life situations and it contributed greatly to teaching people what the appropriate style is.

Jonathan Swift, the author of *Gulliver’s Travels*, was among those who advocated for the formation of an Academy to regulate language. In his *A Proposal for Correcting, Improving and Ascertaining the English Language* (1712:4-5) he accuses the Poets from the Time of the Restoration of contributing very much to the spoiling of the English Tongue and explains that they are not the only ones who contributed “to the maiming of the Language but also a foolish Opinion, advanced of late Years, that we ought to spell exactly as we speak” (1712:7). He proposes that “a certain Number of such Persons that

are best qualified for the Work assemble at some appointed Time and Place and fix the problems” (1712:7).

Swift (1712:9) suggests that some method should call “for ascertaining and fixing our Language for ever, after such Alterations are made in it as shall be thought requisite” and he proposes “the creation of an English Academy that would be in charge for fixing the language and keeping it pure” (as cited in Crowley, 2001:28).

The publication of over 200 works on grammar followed in the period between 1750 and 1800 (Auer, 2008:74). Handbooks that were published prior to this period merely contained the prescribed rules of what to use and in which situations usually written in the imperative form, so as not to question the opinion of the author.

### 2.2.1. An English Academy

Cole (2003:126) explains that “the idea of an academy for English can be traced back as early as the last part of the sixteenth century to a suggestion by John Baret in the preface to *The letter A in his Alvearie, or Triple Dictionarie, in Englishe, Latin, and French* (1573). His proposal was mainly concerned with the orthography of English and recommended that a group of scholars look into reforming spelling.”

The beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century was marked by a number of proposals for establishing an English Academy, an institution that would take care of the language itself and that would prevent the usurpation of the language by some vulgar expressions (Cole, 2003: 124).

The first idea was to create an academy on the model of the Italian academy, the Accademia della Crusca found in 1582 with the purpose of “separating the flour (the good language) from the bran (the bad language)” (Accademia della Crusca [Origins and foundation], n.d.).

After the Italian one, a French academy, the French Académie, was created in 1635 with the idea to “cleanse the language of impurities, whether in the mouths of the people or among men of affairs, whether introduced by ignorant courtiers or preachers or writers....it should undertake to compile a dictionary, a grammar, a rhetoric, and a treatise

on the art of poetry" (Baugh and Cable 1978: 261, as cited in Cole, 2003:126). "The French Academy helped to cultivate the image of French as an elite, and, therefore, desirable language" (Raby, 2008).

The English looked up to both of these academies believing that they need to create a similar one in order to purify their own language. The idea was to create a learned society as an active educational and regulatory body. They saw the opportunity to save the language from what they believed to be a rapid decline (Cole, 2003:126).

"Not only would an academy help correct the defects of English, but, in the eyes of seventeenth and eighteenth century authors, it would confer a much-needed sense of legitimacy upon the English language" (Raby, 2008).

Lynch (2009) explains that "the Englishmen had long felt inferior next to their Continental brethren. The French, Italians, even the Spanish and Germans – all had produced impressive dictionaries and grammars to codify their languages. English seemed to lag behind" and that was one of the main reasons they struggled to achieve the language refinement through an official academic body.

In Defoe's words having an academy would "encourage polite learning, polish and refine the English tongue and advance the so much neglected faculty of correct language, establish purity and propriety of style, and purge it from all the irregular additions that ignorance and affectation have introduced" (as cited in Fitzmaurice, 1998:309).

The main reason why Defoe suggested the establishment of an academy was to restrict any unfamiliar coinages and neologisms. In his opinion English was not inherently defective but had a great potential for becoming so.

Swift even addressed a letter for the establishment of the academy to the Earl of Oxford, the Lord Treasurer of England under the title *A Proposal for Correcting, Improving, and Ascertaining the English Tongue* published in 1712. In his proposal he stated (1712:3) "if you do not take some care to settle our language, and put it into a state of continuance, I cannot promise that your memory shall be preserved above a hundred years, farther than by imperfect traditions."

However, very soon there appeared objections to establishing an academy. The main objections were based on the idea that only a few educated people of the upper class

would use the rules imposed by the academy while the majority of English-speaking people would never hear of the rules that the academy would make and would thus never follow them (Cole, 2003:129).

Thus, according to Cole (2003:129), “the 18<sup>th</sup> century was marked by disbelief in the efficacy of an academy and a resistance to its formation since people started to believe that language might not be able to be fixed in an unchanging form by an academy.”

“Instead of academy-produced resources, private dictionaries and grammars were beginning to be available and to supply the needs of the English people” (Cole 2003:129), which led to the massive publications of grammar books some of which will be used for the research in this paper.

### 2.2.2. The flourishing of prescriptivism

Most of the grammar books published in the years to come adopted the prescriptive method of writing insisting on the correct and proper use of language and rejecting, what the grammarians believed to be, incorrect and improper forms.

According to Fitzmaurice (1998:326) “the most prolific writers of grammars were schoolteachers, who published practical digests of more authoritatively argued and philosophically based works. And the producers of these self-help grammars were careful to target their market. Most of them designed their works for their own schools and academies, supplementing the basic grammars with readers: anthologies of moral writing for the general education and edification of their charges.”

As was already mentioned, there are many factors that influenced the rise of the interest in the study of the rules of the English language such as the change from the absolute monarchy into a constitutional monarchy, the growing power of the middle class and the fact that the population nearly doubled between 1700 and 1800, the establishment of Commonwealth and the expansion of colonies.

The middle classes believed that, by acquiring ‘polite’ language, they would also get access to ‘polite’ society. Grammar books, in addition to spelling books and dictionaries,

were perceived by social climbers as a help on their way to achieving this aim. There was, in other words, a market for these books, and one that was considerable due to the increase in population in the 18th century.

Lynch (2009) writes that “[t]he late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries see the rise of a kind of publication known as the conduct manual, the ancestor of modern etiquette guides.” The purpose of “these manuals was to ease the anxiety of social arrivistes as they made their way in an unfamiliar culture. These conduct manuals are among the first works to explain English grammar to native English speakers”.

The beginning of the 18th century brought a significant change in the existing situation. Local newspapers, periodicals started to be published in other places as well. The purchase of books and pamphlets started to become a regular thing.

In addition, the copyright situation had changed dramatically over the same period of time, in that there was no longer any perpetual copyright. “This meant that provincial publishing received an enormous impetus, that cheap editions of the classics could now be produced, and that unaltered reprinting of established bestsellers, such as the grammars, had become possible everywhere. Lowth’s grammar, for example, sold 34,000 copies by 1781 (Locher et al., 2008:139).

“A commonly held belief about English was that there had been a prior age when the language was pure, and that it was desirable to restore English to its former state. A second commonly held belief was that the former pristine purity of the language could be restored, that the imperfections and elements of what was thought of as ‘decay’ could be identified and then corrected” (Cole, 2003: 124).

The fact that English did not have already existing rules and codified grammar became an interest for a number of scholars. They insisted on defining the language and making rules that the others will follow. However, usage differed very greatly because every writer had his own individual judgment on what was correct and what was not.



### 2.3. The polite 18<sup>th</sup> century English

As Hickey (2010:1) states “[t]he most prevalent standard wisdom about the eighteenth century is that it is the period in which prescriptivism in English established itself [...] Another common view of the eighteenth century is that it is the period in which codes of politeness [...] became fixed and mandatory for the established classes in English society, and for those who aspired to belong to these.”

Hickey (2010:2) also reminds that “it is true to say that the 18<sup>th</sup> century is a period in the history of English in which the major changes in the language had already taken place”.

A major change happened in the understanding of the importance of teaching English as well. As Hickey (2010) states, the prevailing feeling among people was that the English language has been neglected in the teaching of young people and that it should deserve more attention in the schools.

Up to this moment, higher class children were taught classical languages such as Latin and Greek and knowing those languages was considered a sign of prestige. The opinions changed and the demand for knowing proper English became the imperative. Using particular language structures became the sign of a higher social status and the point of differentiation between the growing middle class and the trading class (Cole, 2003: 122). Stein (1994:8, as cited in Locher, 2008:136) explains that “by the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, a new notion of ‘politeness’ had developed, one that is closely linked to prescriptivism, in that two poles between ‘correct’/’proper’ language spoken by so-called ‘polite society’ and ‘incorrect’/’low’/’vulgar’ language usage are created.” The need for establishing prescriptive rules arose partly from this insistence on politeness.

### 2.4. Why the 18<sup>th</sup> century?

The next logical question that arises here is why all of the mentioned changes in the English language happened in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and not before. Some of the reasons have already been discussed in the previous chapters so they will be just briefly mentioned here.

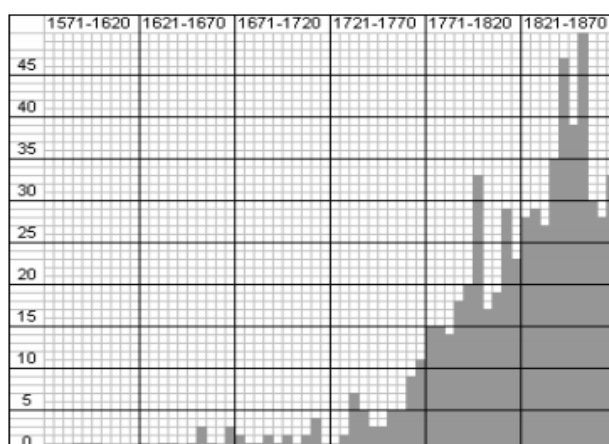
It is true that prior to the 18<sup>th</sup> century there were some activities related to grammar writing, establishing rules of pronunciation and language usage. But those activities were not as prominent and massive as they appeared to be in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

For the sake of comparison let us look at the following information. The list below shows some grammars that were published in the 16th and 17th centuries (Locher, 2008:128):

- William Bullokar 1586 *Pamphlet for Grammar*
- Paul Greaves 1594 *Grammatica Anglicana*
- Charles Butler 1633 *The English Grammar*
- Ben Jonson 1640 *English Grammar*
- John Wallis 1653 *Grammatica Linguae Anglicanae*
- John Wharton 1654 *An English Grammar*.

However, from the 1750s onwards, there is a flourishing in the publications of the English grammars and evidence shows that in the last decades of the 18th century 99 grammars were published (Michael, 1997:41, as cited in Locher, 2008:129).

Figure 1 shows the mentioned flourishing in the publication of the English grammars.



*Figure 1:* The increase in the number of grammars on the English language. (Michael, 1987: 12, as reprinted in Locher, 2008: 129)

Locher (2008: 133) states there are four reasons for the flourishing of the publications in English in the 18th century:

- a new market situation with so-called ‘social climbers’,
- a process of language standardization is involved,
- the notion of politeness,
- new developments in the printing trade play an important role.

The high demands for the guidance by the rising middle class lead to the production of various grammar books, handbooks and textbooks. They needed the rules for pronunciation and grammar that would help them integrate fully into the society without showing signs of their previous social status. This demand laid the grounds for the development of the prescriptive grammar.

Although the rise of nationalism led to the advancement of the English language, the model for making the rules was still seen in the classics. Writers of the first textbooks that prescribed the rules of how to use the proper English were greatly under the influence of Latin.

“British writers justly feared that, as the fluid and multidialectal English replaced Latin, chaos and instability could destroy the relative ease of clear and exact communication afforded by the stable classical language in universal scholarly use throughout Europe” (Finegan 1980: 19, as cited in Cole, 2003:121). In order to make it more appealing and acceptable they imported the models of the Latin grammar into it.

Tieken-Boon van Ostade states (2008:10) that “the eighteenth century was a crucial period in the history of English grammar writing. On the one hand it shows an important increase in the output of grammars of English, which can be related to the need for the codification of the language in the absence of an Academy that would have taken this in hand, as well as to the increased social mobility, particularly during the second half of the century, and the concomitant need for grammar to provide linguistic guidance.”

### 3. Defining the main terms

In order to proceed to the following chapters that will deal explicitly with the rules prescribed by the grammarians of the 18<sup>th</sup> century first let us define two approaches to grammar writing.

#### 3.1. Descriptive grammar vs Prescriptive grammar

According to the Oxford English Dictionary the term 'prescriptive' means

*“attempting to impose rules of correct usage on the users of a language.”*  
(“Prescriptive”, Lexico.com, 2019)

While 'descriptive' is defined as

*“denoting or relating to an approach to language analysis that describes accents, forms, structures, and usage without making value judgements.”* (“Descriptive” Lexico.com, 2019)

Nordquist (2018) says that “the term *descriptive grammar* refers to an objective, non-judgmental description of the grammatical constructions in a language. It's an examination of how a language is actually being used, in writing and in speech.”

The approach first examines the way language is actually used by its native speakers, analyses it and then describes the rules about the structure. The linguists concerned with this type of grammar do not give you the rules to follow but rather they look at the use of the language by the speakers and then describe what they notice is happening. The linguists do not give suggestions of what to use and how and they do not recognize good and bad grammar, correct and incorrect grammar.

Moreover, this type of grammar acknowledges that a single language can have multiple dialects, which all have their own rules that can differ from one dialect to another. The insistence on accounting for as much of the variety of one language as possible is another important characteristic of descriptive grammar.

Hazen (2015) notes that “descriptive grammars do not give advice; they detail the ways in which native speakers use their language. A descriptive grammar is a survey of a language. For any living language, a descriptive grammar from one century will differ from a descriptive grammar of the next century because the language will have changed.”

Prescriptive grammar, on the other hand, gives the speakers the set of rules that define what they should, or more precisely ought to, use and what not to use. Prescriptive grammarians make a clear distinction between the good and bad grammar and tell what is right or wrong based on their own personal preferences.

“Linguistic prescription, or prescriptive grammar, is the attempt to lay down rules defining preferred or "correct" use of language. These rules may address such linguistic aspects as spelling, pronunciation, vocabulary, syntax, and semantics” (“Linguistic Prescription”, Wikipedia, 2019).

According to *the Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary & Thesaurus* prescriptivism is “the belief that there are correct and wrong ways to use language and that books about language should give rules to follow, rather than describing how language is really used” (“Prescriptivism”, n.d.).

Millar (1995:127) defined prescriptivism as “the conscious attempt by language users to control or regulate the language use of others for the purpose of enforcing perceived norms or of promoting innovations” (as cited in Nordquist, 2018).

What linguists concerned with prescriptive grammar do is prescribe the rules that they believe people should follow in order to communicate effectively. They focus on what their idea of correct English is and base their rules on it disregarding the other forms.

The aim of prescriptive grammar is to choose one variety of language and present it as socially preferred language that all people should use and whose rules they should obey.

Jespersen in his book *Essentials of English Grammar* (1933:19) compares these two approaches to linguistic research and favours descriptive grammar saying that “instead of serving as a guide to what should be said or written, it aims at finding out what is actually said and written by the speakers of the language investigated and thus may lead to a scientific understanding of the rules followed instinctively by speakers and writers.”

### 3.2. Research material

As the title says, the concern of this thesis is the approach to the English verb system in 18<sup>th</sup> century prescriptive grammars. The thesis will look into the following four grammars as its main corpus but some other relevant sources will be used and cited as well:

1. *A Practical Grammar of the English Language etc.* by John Burn (1766)
2. *A short introduction to English Grammar* by Robert Lowth (1764)
3. *The Rudiments of English Grammar* by Joseph Priestley (1772) and
4. *A Practical new grammar, with exercises of bad English, or, An easy guide to speaking and writing the English language properly and correctly* by Anne Fisher (1789).

First, let us look at some specifics of the 18<sup>th</sup> century grammar books and investigate what they all have in common.

Most 18<sup>th</sup> century grammarians use the question–answer form of writing. Priestley justifies this by saying it is the most convenient method and the most intelligible to the scholar (1772: vi). Apart from the mentioned method of writing 18<sup>th</sup> century grammar books, another notable style of writing was an informative essay.

Locher (2008:130) states that “[i]n the title pages or prefaces, it is usually mentioned that the grammars are written for young men, ladies, children, and/or schools or foreigners. The authors often mention that English is not taught at schools and that their book is intended to fill this gap.”

The core of Priestley’s and Lowth’s corpus relies on the authors of that time. According to Tiekens-Boon van Ostade (1997:452, as cited in Straajier, 2016:21) “most of the quotations from many of the writers cited in Lowth’s grammar as models of correctness were actually criticisms of their usage”. Both Priestley and Lowth used those works as normative sources in *The Rudiments of English Grammar* and *A Short Introduction to English Grammar*.

Apart from the mentioned writers, “Adam Ferguson, James Harris, David Hume, Samuel Johnson, Mary Wortley Montagu, Alexander Pope, Adam Smith, Tobias Smollett,

Jonathan Swift, and Arthur Young are all named as being among the best writers, but they also provide examples of incorrect grammar or usage” (Straajier, 2016:21).

Straajier (2016:23) concludes that “[t]he norms of linguistic correctness were collectively created by a discourse community of grammarians in the second half of the eighteenth century, to which Priestley naturally also belonged. This discourse community collected the usage of the best authors as well as examples of bad English, out of which they formed a normative canon for the English language.”

The grammar books in question offer their readers examples of false grammar with the purpose of ensuring their readers would follow the prescribed rules correctly and dismiss the usage that is, in their opinions, incorrect. All of them devote a significant number of pages of their grammar books to the rules of syntax.

### 3.2.1. *A Practical Grammar of the English Language etc.* by John Burn

In the title page to his *A Practical Grammar of the English Language*, Burn (1766) explains that he will write about “the several PARTS of SPEECH [that will be] clearly and methodically explained; their CONCORD and GOVERNMENT reduced to GRAMMATICAL RULES and illustrated by a variety of EXAMPLES: together with RULES of COMPOSITION”. He highlights the fact that his grammar is intended for the use of schools.

He emphasises the fact that the future and happiness of youth in life depend on education. He points out that the knowledge in the first and most important place starts with the “accurate acquaintance of the mother–tongue; so as to be able not only to read it with some degree of ease and gracefulness; but also to analyze, and trace out the particular meaning of every word they read” (1766:4). He states that it is his intention with this grammar to promote such values.

In his *Preface*, Burn defines Grammar as “an art which teaches the choice of proper words, the relation they bear to one another, with their proper arrangement into phrases or sentences” (1766:6).

His aim is “not only to entertain the young folks, but also to have a tendency to open their understandings, enlarge their ideas, and to raise in them a stronger thirst after farther knowledge of the language” (1766:8). In the *Preface* he strongly believes that if the English Grammar was taught in English schools it would add “gracefulness to the conversation of the people in general!” (1766:13) and it would contribute to “polishing the minds of youth in the early part of life; as well as qualifying them for carrying on, to greater advantage, whatever branch of business they may follow” (Burn, 1766:13). The sooner people start learning the English grammar, “it is to be presumed, they would become sooner proficient in the Latin” (1766:13).

He comments on the other grammar books published in that period and justifies the writing of yet another grammar book by stating that “it did not appear to him, upon trial, that any of them was sufficiently calculated for the mere English scholar; so as to convey into his or her mind, a tolerably just notion of the idiom of our own tongue, which comes often, nay every day of one’s life into play; whereas other languages come but seldom. To remedy, therefore, in some measure this defect, has been his principal aim” (1766:15).

### 3.2.2. *A short introduction to English Grammar* by Robert Lowth

Robert Lowth was a distinguished man in his age. His numerous jobs include Bishop of Oxford, Bishop of St David's, Archdeacon of Winchester and Professor of Poetry at Oxford University. He is considered to be the author of one of the most notable grammar books of the 18<sup>th</sup> century dealing with the problems of the language usage of that time. Some modern-day authors claim his grammar book was not as prescriptive as it was believed in the past. What is clear is the fact that his grammar book served as a model for some later authors to write their own grammar books. It was widely plagiarised with evidence that some of his contemporaries copied even whole chapters.

A certain William Hill, in the fourth of his *Fifteen Lessons, on the Analogy and Syntax of the English Language*, observed that “Bishop Lowth ... may well be accounted the Father of English Grammar” (Hill 1833: C4r, as cited in Tieken-Boon van Ostade, 2010).

In the first sentence of his *Preface*, Lowth states that “the English Language [...] had been considerably polished and refined; its bounds have been greatly enlarged; its energy,



variety, richness, and elegance, have been abundantly proved by numberless trials, in verse and in prose, upon all subjects and in every kind of style: but whatever other improvements it may have received, it had made no advances in Grammatical accuracy” (Lowth; 1764:iii).

He explains that although “the English Language as is spoken by the politest part of the nation, and as it stands in the writings of our most approved authors, often offends against every part of Grammar” (Lowth, 1764:vii). He is persuaded that this claim is true and rejects another possibility there is, that the English language is actually irregular and capricious in its nature and as such is not reducible to a system of rules.

Lowth argues that “the English Language is perhaps of all the present European Languages by much the most simple in its form and construction” (1764: viii). This might be one of the reasons why the English grammar has been so neglected. He explains that it is precisely this simplicity that makes people “take it for granted” (1764: x).

He justifies writing this grammar by stating that there is no other grammar that “teaches us what is right by showing what is wrong; though this perhaps may prove the more useful and effective method of instruction” (1764: xiv).

It is known that Lowth originally wanted to write a grammar for his son and only later he adapted it for the public at large scale. His grammar is “therefore normative in nature, and it is for this reason that Lowth pointed out in the preface to the first edition that he focused on ‘practice’ as he called it, rather than on the system of the language” (Tieken–Boon van Ostade, 2008:7).

Both Lowth and Burn believe that by properly learning the grammar of your mother tongue it will be easier for you to learn a foreign language later, especially Latin.

Lowth believed that (1764: xv, xvi) “a competent Grammatical knowledge of our own Language is the true foundation upon which all Literature, properly so called, ought to be raised. If this method were adopted in Schools; if children were first taught the common principles of grammar by some sort of clear System of English Grammar, which happily by its simplicity and facility is perhaps fitter than any other for such a purpose, they would have some notion of what they were going about, when they should enter into the Latin Grammar; and would hardly be engaged so many years, as they now are, in that most

irksome and difficult part of literature, with so much labour of memory, and with so little assistance of the understanding.”

### 3.2.3. *The Rudiments of English Grammar* by Priestley

Joseph Priestley was an English chemist, philosopher, grammarian and a teacher at Warrington Academy, best known for his contribution in the research of oxygen and carbonated water. His insistence on writing a good grammar book based on pedagogical teaching made him one of the most influential grammarians of his time (“Joseph Priestley and education”, n.d.).

Priestly argues that retaining the technical terms of the Latin grammar is “exceedingly awkward and absolutely superfluous; being such as could not possibly have entered into the head of any man, who had not been previously acquainted with Latin” (1772:vii).

He criticizes other grammarians for leaning too much onto Latin which is contrary to English modes of speaking. He believes his contemporaries have taken a wrong method of fixing the language.

He agrees with the other grammarians that “introducing the English grammar into English schools cannot be disputed; a competent knowledge of our own language is both useful and ornamental in every profession, and a critical knowledge of it is absolutely necessary to all persons of a liberal education” (1772:xx).

In the *Preface to the Rudiments of the English Grammar*, Priestly explains his methods and ideas he had before writing the grammar book. He says (1772:vi) “I have also been so far from departing from the simplicity of the plan of that short grammar, that I have made it, in some respects, still more simple: and I think it, on that account more suitable to the genius of the English language.”

He goes on to explain his point of view (1772:vii) “A little reflection may, I think, suffice to convince any person, that we have no more business with a *future tense* in our language, that we have with the whole system of Latin moods and tenses; because we have no modification of our verbs to correspond to it; and if we had never heard of future tense in some other language, we should no more have given a particular name to the combination

of the verb with the auxiliary *shall* or *will*, than to those that are made with the auxiliaries *do*, *have*, *can*, *must*, or any other.”

He justifies his choice of rules by saying (1772:xi) “I think there will be an advantage in my having collected examples from modern writings, rather than from those of Swift, Addison and others, who wrote about half a century ago, in what is generally called the classical period of our tongue. By this means we may see what is the real character and turn of the language at present; and by comparing it with the writing of preceding authors, we may better perceive which way it is tending, and what extreme we should most carefully guard against”.

#### 3.2.4. *A Practical new grammar, with exercises of bad English, or, An easy guide to speaking and writing the English language properly and correctly* by Anne Fisher

Anne Fisher was the first notable female grammarian. According to Rodriguez Gil (2002) “her approach to English grammar was far removed from the main Latinate tradition that inspired contemporary grammarians when writing their books. Fisher decided to depart from the weight of this tradition, and to portray her native tongue after the observation and description of its own nature”.

According to the modern day linguists she did not blindly follow the approach of the other 18<sup>th</sup> century grammarians who worked on prescribing the rules for the use of the English language and grammar but she blended the prescriptive and descriptive language analysis (Rodriguez Gil, 2002).

Fisher's grammar was one of the most popular along with Lowth's and Ash's. The fact that she was among the first to add exercises of false grammar made it distinct. “According to Michael (1970:196, 473) such exercises proved extremely popular, and they are found throughout the period. Murray even took them out of the grammar proper and published them under the title of *English exercises* (1797)” (as cited in Tiekens-Boon van Ostade, 2000).

Tiekens-Boon van Ostade (2000) explains that Fisher “was concerned with the pedagogical aspects of teaching English grammar inventing a native metalanguage for

those who did not already have and were very likely not going to have a knowledge of Latin”. “She uses a terminology that departed from more conventional terms, and which aimed to anglicise the terms or make them sound more vernacular, with words such as ‘quality’ for ‘adjective’ and ‘name’ for ‘noun’, or ‘helping verb’ for ‘auxiliary verb’ ” (Rodriguez Gil, 2002).

## 4. The English Verb

The following chapter will offer the insight into the already mentioned 18<sup>th</sup> century grammar books with the particular emphasis on the verb as a part of speech. In addition to describing and comparing information about the verb, its kinds, qualities, forms and tenses, special attention will be devoted to the prescriptive rules related to its use.

### 4.1. Parts of speech

According to Lowth there are nine parts of speech: the article, the substantive, the pronoun, the adjective, the verb, the adverb, the preposition, the conjunction and the interjection. He gives us rules in a chapter called *Sentences*. His definition and explanations are more detailed than Burn's.

Burn claims there are nine kinds of words or parts of speech: the article, the noun, the pronoun, the adjective, the verb, the adverb, the preposition, the conjunction and the interjection (1766:19). He writes rules after every part of speech and its definition enabling his readers to see examples of false grammar and to learn the proper usage.

In the third part of his grammar book called *Syntax*, Priestly gives us the rules related to the order of words in a sentence and the correspondence of one word to another.

He believes there are eight classes of words: Nouns, Adjectives, Pronouns, Verbs, Adverbs, Prepositions, Conjunctions, and Interjections. He does not recognize articles as parts of speech as the other two grammarians whose grammars will be investigated in this paper. In his words articles are "adjectives, as they necessarily require a noun substantive to follow them" (1772:146).

In the third part of her grammar book called of *Syntax or Construction*, Fisher gives us fourteen general rules for forming a sentence and includes the examples of false grammar as well as her contemporaries. Unlike her colleagues, Fisher claims there are four Parts of Speech (1789:69): Names, Qualities, Verbs and Particles.

#### 4.2. The definition of a verb

Since the main purpose of this thesis is the investigation into the usage and rules related to the English verb let us first look at the definitions of the verb as a part of speech given by the four mentioned grammarians.

Lowth (1764:30) defines a verb as follows, the “Verb is a word which signifies to be, to do or to suffer”. He goes on by explaining the different parts of his definition saying, “[b]y the first it is implied, that there is such a thing as the Power of Speech, and it is affirmed to be of such a Kind; namely, a Faculty peculiar to Man: by the second it is said to have been acted upon, or to have suffered, or to have had something done to it; namely, to have been bestowed on Man: by the last, we are said to act upon it, or to do something to it, namely, to pervert it” (Lowth, 1764:30).

Burn’s definition of a verb is the same as Lowth’s. “It is called *verb* or *word* by way of eminence, because it is the principal word in a sentence and without it, either expressed or understood, no sentence can subsist; as, *James writes. – James is. – James is hurt.*” (Burn, 1766:40-1).

Priestley’s definition of a verb is a simple one. According to him, a “Verb is a word that expresseth what is affirmed of, or attributed to a thing” (Priestley, 1772:13). The author explains further what he meant by the subject of an affirmation by saying that it is the “person or thing concerning which the affirmation is made” (Priestley, 1772:13).

Anne Fisher defines the verb as follows: “A *Verb*, as it is commonly called, is that Part of Speech which betokens the doing, being, or suffering of a Thing; to which belong the several Circumstances of Person, Number, and Time” (Fisher, 1789:86).

According to Greenwood (1711:135) the Verb that is used without expressing either the Person or Thing, that is, *does*, or *suffers*, or the Number; and then the Preposition, *To* is set before it; as, to burn, to love. This type of verb is called a *Verb Infinitive or Infinitive*, that is, *not bounded*; because its Signification is not determined to any Person or Number.

#### 4.2.1. Kinds of verbs

In Lowth's opinion there are three kinds of verbs (Lowth, 1764: 30): "Active, Passive and Neuter. A Verb Active expresses an Action, and necessarily implies an Agent, and an Object acted upon: as to love; *I love Thomas*".

"A Verb Passive expresses a Passion, or a Suffering, or the receiving of an Action; and necessarily implies an Object acted upon, and an Agent by which it is acted upon: as, to be loved; *Thomas is loved by me*" (Lowth, 1764: 30, 31).

"So when the Agent takes the lead in the Sentence, the Verb is Active, and is followed by the Object: when the Object takes the lead, the Verb is Passive, and is followed by the Agent" (Lowth, 1764: 31).

"A Verb Neuter expresses Being, or a State or Condition of Being; when the Agent and the Object acted upon coincide, and the event is properly neither Action nor Passion, but rather something between both: as, *I am, I sleep, I walk*" (Lowth, 1764: 31).

Lowth's explanation of the transitive verbs is as follows, "the Verb active is called also Transitive, because the Action passeth over to the Object, or hath an effect upon some other Thing: and the Verb Neuter is called Intransitive, because the Effect is confined within the Agent, and doth nor pass over to any object" (Lowth, 1764:31).

Here Lowth gives his readers a further explanation of the distinction between the verbs that are absolutely neuter and verbs that are active transitive saying that the difference between them can cause confusion among the readers. This difference, in his words, "is not always clear and Grammar is not so much concerned with their real, as with their Grammatical properties" (Lowth, 1764:31). Lowth agrees with Burn by stating that many English verbs can be both active and neuter and the context of the sentence determines the kind.

As was previously mentioned, Burns explains there are four kinds of verbs: active, passive, neuter and substantive and for each kind he gives a detailed definition followed by some examples. "A verb active is a verb which expresses an action that falls on another subject or object; as, *The master teaches me*" (Burn, 1766:41).

“The passive verb is that which expresses a passion or which receives the action from some other agent or object, and is conjugated with the auxiliary verb am or be; as, *I am taught by the master*” (Burn, 1766:41).

“A neuter verb is that which signifies an action terminating wholly in the agent; as, *I sit, thou walkst, he sleeps, you run, they ride*” (Burn, 1766: 41).

The verb *to be* in Burn's grammar is referred to as verb substantive, because it “expresses the being, or substance, which the mind forms on itself of, or supposes to be in, an object; as, *I am, thou art* etc.” (Burn, 1766: 41).

Priestley defines the two kinds of verbs that there are in his opinion.

“A verb transitive, besides having a subject, implies, likewise, an object of the affirmation, upon which its meaning may, as it were, pass; and without which the sense would not be complete. The verb *to conquer* is transitive, because it implies an object, that is, a person, or kingdom, etc. conquered; and Darius is that object, when we say, *Alexander conquered Darius*” (Priestley, 1772: 13).

“A verb neuter has no object, different from the subject of the affirmation; as to rest. When we say *Alexander resteth*, the sense is complete, without any other words” (Priestley, 1772: 14).

Priestley uses the term radical form of verbs to refer to something which is today known as the infinitive. Priestley's definition of the radical form of verbs is “that in which they follow the particle *to*, as *to love*” (Priestley, 1772: 14).

#### 4.2.2. Person and number

Burn and Lowth agree that verbs are defined by person, number, time and mode. Priestley simplifies the situation explaining that the verbs are determined by number, person and tense.

Burn explains that when it comes to the person, there are “three persons that belong to a verb *I, thou, he, she, it* for singular and *we, ye (you), they* for plural” (Burn, 1766: 42). These are called nominatives to the verb because “the nominative is the name which



stands before the verb, as the subject of the proposition or affirmation spoken of, and they must agree with the verb in person and number; as *I write, thou writest, he writes, we write, you write, they write*” (Burn, 1766: 42).

This definition is followed by the explanation of noun – verb agreement “any substantive noun may be the nominative to the verb. If the noun be of the singular number, the verb must be the third person singular; but if the noun be plural, the verb must also agree with it in the third person plural” (1764:42).

Lowth gives the explanation of how the verb “varies in its endings to express or agree with different persons of the same number as, *I love, Thou lovest, He loveth, or loves*” (Lowth, 1764: 32). The variations happen when expressing “different Number of the same Person: as, *Thou loveth, ye love; He loveth, they love*” (Lowth, 1764: 32).

Here Lowth explains as well that (1764: 32) “the plural ending *en* that was in use before (they loven, they weren) is rejected now as unnecessary and obsolete”.

The only comment about number that is mentioned in Priestley’s grammar is the one that the “number is something that verbs have in common with nouns” (Priestley, 1772:14). Here, he also explains that the termination of verbs is affected by tense and person.

#### 4.2.3. Mode (Mood)

Some grammarians refer to this category as mood. The question of mode/mood has concerned the grammarians from the 17<sup>th</sup> century onwards.

In the 18<sup>th</sup> century the attitude towards this category was somewhat different from the one we have today. Some grammarians included the infinitive into this category although it is now perceived as a non-finite verb form. Some grammarians believed even then that this category did not exist.

According to Lowth (1764:33) “the Mode is the Manner of representing the Being, Action and Passion”. In a footnote, he gives a more detailed explanation defining mode as “a particular form of the Verbs, denoting the manner in which a thing is, does, or suffers; or expressing an intention of mind concerning such being, doing, or suffering” (Lowth, 1764:33). He clarifies that “as far as Grammar is concerned, there are no more Modes in

any language, than there are forms of the Verb appropriated to the denoting of such different manners of representation” (Lowth, 1764:33).

In Lowth’s words, the indicative expresses the declaration or the question, the Imperative shows the bidding, the subjunctive is the one that “is subjoined as the end or design, or mentioned under a condition, a supposition, or the like, for most part depending on some other Verb, and having a Conjunction before it” (Lowth, 1764:33), the infinitive is “barely expressed without any limitations of person or number, and when it is expressed in a form in which it may be joined to a Noun as its quality or accident, partaking of the nature of an Adjective, it is called the Participle” (Lowth, 1764:33).

According to Burn (1766:42) what is meant by mode is “the particular form of the verb which expresses the manner of who any person or thing *is, does* or *suffers*; and it denotes some intention of the mind concerning such *being, doing* or *suffering*”.

In his words there are four modes (1766:42): “the Indicative, the Imperative and Precative, the Conjunctive or Subjunctive and the Infinitive”. He adds that “there are other modes, such as the Optative which expresses a wish, and the Potential denoting power or the want of it” (Burn, 1766:42).

The indicative is the mode which “simply declares, denies or questions; the Imperative is the one that bids, commands and threatens, the Precative prays or exhorts, the Conjunctive shows a condition, supposition or doubt and it depends on some other verb following or preceding it, the Infinitive expresses the time and signification of the verb, but it does not express number or person” (Burn, 1766:43).

Priestley does not mention the notion of mode. He simply explains that there are situations in which the changes of termination in persons of verbs is not always observed. This happens generally after the words, *if, though, e’er, before, whether, except, whatsoever, whomsoever* and words of *wishing*. The mentioned form is called the *conjunctive* form of tenses.

Fisher argues that there are no moods in the English language and further explains that although the English does not have any moods and only two times, the other times of the verb are expressed by “helping verbs *do, may, can, am* and *be* in the present Time; *did,*

*have, had, might, could* and *was* in the past Time; and *shall* and *will* in the future Time” (Fisher, 1780:89).

#### 4.2.4. Tense

According to Crystal (2003:195) “the Latinate grammatical tradition suggested there are three tenses and the 18th century grammarians stuck to that idea.” This debate still exists among linguists and the opinions are divided.

An example of a contemporary attitude towards the claim that English has got a two tense system can be seen in Huddleston (2002:51):

There are two tense systems in English. The primary one is marked by verb inflection and contrasts preterite (*She was ill*) and present (*She is ill*). The secondary one is marked by the presence or absence of auxiliary *have* and contrasts perfect (*She is believed to have been ill*) and non-perfect (*She is believed to be ill*). The perfect can combine with primary tense to yield compound tenses, preterite perfect (*She had been ill*) and present perfect (*She has been ill*). Once this distinction is clearly drawn, it is easy to see that English has no future tense: *will* and *shall* belong grammatically with *must, may, and can*, and are modal auxiliaries, not tense auxiliaries.

On the other hand Declerck ([1991] 2015:8, 9) claims that:

there is a total lack of consensus as to a question of how many tenses there are in English. A great many linguists hold that we can speak of different tenses only if we have to do with morphologically differentiated verb forms which leads to the conclusion that there are only two tenses in English: the past tense and the present (or ‘nonpast’) tense. In this theory, such verb forms involving different auxiliaries as *will do, has done, will have done* all belong to the same (in this case: present) tense. However, many linguists hold that tenses may be formally marked by auxiliaries as well as by inflectional morphemes, and therefore consider the above verb forms as realizations of different tenses.

Lowth says that in order to express the time of the verb you need the assistance of other verbs, called “auxiliaries, or helpers; ‘do’, ‘be’, ‘have’, ‘shall’, ‘will’: as *I do love, I did love; I am loved, I was loved; I have loved, I have been loved; I shall, or will love, or be loved*” (Lowth, 1764:34).

In Lowth’s words (1764:35) “Time is Present, Past and Future”.

<b>To H A V E.</b>		
<b>Indicative Mode.</b>		
<b>Present Time.</b>		
	<b>Sing.</b>	<b>Plur.</b>
<b>Person.</b>	<b>1. I have,</b>	<b>We</b>
	<b>2. Thou hast [7],</b>	<b>Ye</b>
	<b>3. He hath, or has [8];</b>	<b>They</b>
		<b>} have.</b>

Facsimile 1: The forms of the present time of the indicative mode of the verb *have* in Burn (1766: 45)

Burn explains that tense is “the distinction of time” (1766:44). In his opinion “there are three principal distinctions of time, the present, the past and the future” (1766:44). According to him (1766: 44) “the present tense regards the time that is now, in which the being, action or passion is represented as begun and carrying on. The past represents the action as done and finished in a period wholly past. The future refers to an action as not yet begun”.

Apart from these two, Burn mentions the perfect and preterpluperfect. “The perfect represents the action as finished and limited to some period that extends to the present; as, *I have this morning written*” (Burn, 1766:44). “The preterpluperfect is used, not only to express the action past, at some particular period; but it has also respect to some other actions as also past; as *I had written before he came*” (Burn, 1766:44).

Burn clarifies that two of the mentioned times are expressed by the principal verb; “the present and past times of the Indicative; *I love, I loved, I do love, I did love*. All the other times of the

principal verb are expressed when the auxiliary or helping verbs, ‘have’, ‘shall’, ‘will’, ‘may’, ‘can’, ‘might’, ‘could’, ‘would’ and ‘should’ are joined to the participle past of the principal verb” (Burn, 1766:44).

<b>To H A V E.</b>					
<b>Indicative M O D E.</b>					
<b>Present Time.</b>					
	<b>Singular.</b>			<b>Plural.</b>	
<b>Persons</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>I have,</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>We</b>	} <b>have.</b>
	<b>2</b>	<b>§ Thou hast,</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>Ye or you</b>	
	<b>3</b>	<b>He has, or hath.</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>They</b>	

Facsimile 2: The forms of the present time of the indicative mode of the verb *have* in Lowth (1764: 35)

Facsimiles 1 and 2 show that there is no distinction between Burn's and Lowth's conjugation of the verb *to have*.

Lowth explains, as well, the two possibilities for the third person singular by saying that *hath* is probably used for serious and solemn style and *has* for the familiar style. The same rule can be applied to *doth* and *does*.

While Burn and Lowth agree that there are three times in the English language: the present, the past and the future, Priestley clarifies there are two tenses, “the present tense – denoting the *time present*, and the preter tense – which expresseth the *time past*” (1772: 14). The changes in termination of the verbs show different tenses, such “the preter tense is generally formed by adding [ed] or [d] to the first person of the present tense (which is the same as the radical form of the verb) as *I love, I loved*. But many verbs form their preter tense without regard to any rule or analogy; as *to awake, I awoke; to think, I thought*” (Priestley, 1772:14, 15). This is the reference to the irregular verbs.

Priestley gives us a detailed explanation of what happens in the second person singular by saying that “in both tenses, the second person singular adds [st] or [est] to the first person (which, in the third person singular of the present tense, changes into [eth] or [es] all the persons of the plural number retaining the termination of the first person singular” (Priestley, 1772:15).

The following illustrations shows the conjugation of the verb *to love* according to the rules.

<b>A. Present Tense.</b>	
Singular.	Plural.
<i>I love.</i>	<i>We love.</i>
<i>Thou lovest.</i>	<i>Ye love.</i>
<i>He loveth, or loves.</i>	<i>They love.</i>
 <b>Preter Tense.</b>	
<i>I loved.</i>	<i>We loved.</i>
<i>Thou lovedst.</i>	<i>Ye loved.</i>
<i>He loved.</i>	<i>They loved.</i>

Facsimile 3: The forms of the present and preter tense of the verb *love* in Priestley (1772: 15)

Burn and Lowth have the same conjugation for the past time as well.

<i>Past Time.</i>	
<i>Singular.</i>	<i>Plural.</i>
1 I had,	1 We
2 Thou hadst,	2 Ye or you
3 He had.	3 They
	} had.

Facsimile 4: The forms of the past time of the verb *have* in Burn (1766: 46)

<b>Past Time.</b>	
1. I had,	We
2. Thou hadst,	Ye
3. He had ;	They
	} had.

Facsimile 5: The forms of the past time of the verb *have* in Burn (1766: 46)

Priestley ends here and does not recognize the future as a tense, as already mentioned in Section 2.2.3, which is similar to many today's grammars and the opinion of many modern grammarians, while Burn and Lowth give a conjugation of the future time as follows

*Future Time.*

1 I shall or will 2 Thou shalt or wilt 3 He shall or will.	} have.	1 We 2 Ye or you 3 They	} shall or will have.
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Facsimile 6: The forms of the past time of the verb *have* in Burn (1766: 46)

*Future Time.*

1. I shall, or will, 2. Thou shalt, or wilt [9], 3. He shall, or will,	} have;	We Ye They	} shall, or will, have.
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Facsimile 7: The forms of future time in Lowth (1764: 36)

Fisher claims there are three times or tenses; i.e. “the present Time, that now is, the past Time, or what has been, and the future Time, or Time to come” (Fisher, 1789:87). Two of these are expressed by the verb itself, the present time and the past time. “The present Time is the verb itself, while the past Time commonly ends in *ed*” (Fisher, 1789:88).

	Singular.		Plural.
Person	1. <i>I love.</i> 2. <i>Thou lovest, or you love.</i> 3. <i>He loveth, or loves.</i>		1. <i>We love*.</i> 2. <i>Ye, or you love.</i> 3. <i>They love.</i>

Facsimile 8: The forms of the present time of the verb *love* in Fisher (1789: 88)

Lowth (1764:44, 45) explains that Time “represents the being, action, or passion, as Present, Past, or Future; whether Imperfectly or Perfectly; that is, whether passing in such time, or then finished”. “To express the Time of the Verb the English uses also the assistance of other Verbs, called therefore Auxiliaries, or Helpers; do, be, have, shall, will” (Lowth, 1764:48, 49).

Burn states that apart from the present, past and future, there are also the perfect and preterpluperfect. “The perfect represents the action finished at, and limited to some period that extends to the present; as, *I have this morning written*. [While] the preterpluperfect is used not only to express an action as past, at some particular period, but it has also respect to some other action as also past; as *I had written before he came*” (Burn, 1766: 45). Basically, only two times are expressed by the principal verb itself, while others are expressed by the use of auxiliaries or helping verbs or joined by the participle past of the principal verb.

Priestley talks about compound tenses stating that those “are the tenses of auxiliary verbs used in conjunction with some form, or participle or other verbs” (1772:23). He further explains that for “several tenses auxiliary verb *to have* is joined the *participle preterite*, as *I have written, I have been*. [For some other] the verb *to be* is joined by both participles; the *present* and *preterite*; as *I am hearing, and I am heard*. [There is the situation when] an auxiliary is joined to the *radical form* of the verbs; as *I shall, will, may, must, can or do write*” (Priestley, 1772:23).

Thus, “the compound tenses may be distributed into three classes or orders; according as the auxiliary verbs that constitute them require the *radical form*, the *participle present*, or the *participle preterite* to be joined with them. There are single, double, or triple, according as one, two or three auxiliary verbs are made use of (Priestley, 1772:23).

Fisher (1789:92) explains that “by the Use of helping Verbs (especially when two or more of them come together) we are entirely freed from the various Endings of Verbs in the past Times, or the preterimperfect and preterpluperfect Tenses of the Latin.

When it comes to the compound tenses the grammarians agree that they exist in English grammar and that they need to be formed with the help of auxiliary verbs and participles. Most of the grammarians of the time are aware that there are some who condemn the existence of the compound tenses since they do not exist in Latin and Greek grammar.

In his *English Grammar*, Lindley Murray, a successful American-born lawyer, writer and grammarian justifies this by explaining that it is wrong to regulate the English verbs on the principles of the foreign languages, namely Greek and Latin, since it violates “the nature of the English verb” (1795:87). He explained that even “Greek and Latin require



an auxiliary to conjugate some of their tenses” (1795:87) and used this argument to prove that the idea of conjugation is not exclusively applied to the circumstances of varying the form of the original verb only. Murray explains that “much of the confusion and perplexity that is encountered in the writings of some English grammarians, on the subject of verbs, moods, and conjugations, has arisen from the misapplication of names” (1795:87).

Murray’s contribution to the development of English grammar writing is widely recognized by modern-day linguists. According to Tieken-Boon van Ostade, Murray’s “easy methodological presentation and the judiciously arranged compilations of the previous works made his grammar so popular in the last years of the century and during the nineteenth century, to such an extent that he has been named the ‘Father of English grammar’, and together with Robert Lowth he is considered the epitome of English prescriptive grammar” (as cited in Yanez-Bouza, 2015:220).

#### 4.2.5. Participles

In the grammar books that are used as the corpus for the investigation into the rules and definitions related to verbs, participles take a considerable part of the chapter related to verbs since they are used to form other tenses.

Lowth (1764:46, 47) explains that a participle is “a form which may be joined to a Noun as its quality or accident, partaking thereby of the nature of an Adjective”.

Burn's definition (1766:45) of a participle says it “is the verb stripped of its assertive quality”. Participle present is formed by adding *ing* to the verb while participle past and passive of the regular verbs are formed by adding *d* or *ed* to the verb. “Participles can become both adjectives and substantives when they are stripped of their relation to time. Time is what makes the distinction between the participle and the form that becomes a substantive or an adjective“ (Burn, 1766: 58).

According to Priestley (1772:17) “participles are adjectives derived from verbs, and retaining their signification... The participle *Present*, which denotes that the action spoken of is then taking place, ends in [ing] as *hearing*, *writing*, [while] the participle

*Preterite*, which denotes its being past, ends in [ed] being the same as the first person of the preter tense; as *loved* (Priestley, 1772:17). However, not all preterite participles end in 'ed'.

According to Fisher (1789:99), there are two types of participles, “the Active Participle, that ends always in *ing*; as *loving*; and the Passive Participle, that ends always in *ed*, *t* or *n*; as *loved*, *taught*, *slain*”. “All Participles, except that in *ing*, are always to be used in the past Time, after helping Verbs *have* or *had*; as *I have seen*, *I have drunk* etc. also with *am* or *be* to make passive Verbs; as *I am forsaken*, *it was given*; *the Lottery was drawn*, etc.” (Fisher, 1789:126).

#### 4.2.6. Auxiliary verbs

All four grammarians agree that apart from the participles, auxiliary or helping verbs need to be used to express other times.

Lowth (1764:59) demonstrates how “with little variation of the Principal Verb the several circumstances of Mode and Time are clearly expressed by the help of the Auxiliaries, *be*, *have*, *do let*, *may*, *can*, *shall*, *will*”.

He provides a detailed explanation of when to use each of the mentioned auxiliary verbs (1764:61) “*Do* and *have* make the Present Time; *did*, *had* the Past; *shall*, *will* the Future: *let* is employed in forming the Imperative Mode; *may*, *might*, *could*, *would*, *should* in forming the Subjunctive”.

He points out that (1764:64) “when an Auxiliary is joined to the Verb, the Auxiliary goes through all the variations of Person and Number, and the Verb itself continues invariably the same. When there are two or more Auxiliaries joined to the Verb, the first of them only is varied according to Person and Number. The Auxiliary *must* admits no variations”.

Burn (1766:54,55) observes the same rule and explains that “whenever an auxiliary is joined to a principal verb, the variations of number and person fall only upon the auxiliary; and when there are more auxiliaries than one, the variations fall only on the first of them, and the principal verb and other auxiliaries remain invariable. The times of these auxiliaries can only be determined, with precision, by their connexion with the other

words of the sentence in which they stand. However, by them the several circumstances of Time and Mode may be clearly expressed, with little variations of the principal verb”.

Priestley (1772:18) classifies auxiliary verbs and states that “the principal [ones] are *to do, to have* and *to be* and the imperfect verbs are *shall, will, can, may* and *must*, [since they] express no certain distinction of time; and, therefore, have no proper tense: but they have two forms, one of which expresses absolute certainty, and may, therefore, be called the *absolute form*; and the other implies a condition, and may, therefore, be called the *conditional form*”.

Fisher (1789:90) refers to auxiliaries as helping verbs. In her words “helping verbs are also called defective Verbs because they are not used in their own Tense, besides they have no Participle, neither do they admit any helping Verbs before them, except these four *do, have, am* and *will*, which are sometimes used as principal Verbs”.

She explains as well (1789:91) that “when a helping Verb comes before another Verb it changes its Ending, and the other does not”.

#### 4.2.7. Irregular verbs

Lowth (1764:47) explains that when verbs do not form the past time active and the participle perfect or passive by adding *ed* to the verb they are considered to be irregular. In his opinion the nature of the English language, its accent and pronunciation, is such that usually in pronunciation of regular verbs people make contractions by saying *lov'd* or *turn'd*.

“Verbs that end in *ch, ck, p, x, ll, ss* in the Past Time Active and the Participle Perfect or Passive admit the change of *ed* into *t*; as *snatcht, checkt, snapt, mixt*” (Lowth, 1764:68).

“Those that end in *l, m, n, p*, after a diphthong, moreover shorten the diphthong, or change it into a single short vowel; as *dealt, dreamt, meant, felt, slept* etc for the purpose of quickness of the pronunciation. The verbs that end in *ve* change *v* to *f*; *leave – left*” (1772:68).

He further explains that (1764:69) “the formation of the verbs in English, both Regular and Irregular, is derived from the Saxon. The irregular verbs in English are all Monosyllables, unless compounded; they are for the most part the same words which are Irregular in the Saxon”.

Lowth classifies Irregular verbs into three classes – the first class belongs to those verbs that are irregular by contraction, the second class of irregular verbs are the ones that end in *ght*, and the third class represents the verbs that end in *en*.

Burn (1766:58) defines “an irregular verb as a verb which does not form the past time, and participle perfect, by the addition of ‘d’, or ‘ed’ to the present of the Indicative; as I love, I loved, I have loved”.

According to him (1766:58) the first sign of irregularity happens in those verbs in which the syllable ‘ed’ is contracted “by rapid utterance or poetical licence into ‘d’ or ‘t’; for example *lov’d* instead of *loved* or *learnt* for *learned*”. This irregularity takes place with “verbs ending in *ce*, *ch*, *sh*, *k*, *x* and *s* in which it is usual to change *ed* into *t* in speaking; as *trac’t* or *snatcht*, even though they should be pronounced and written as *traced* and *snatched*” (Burn, 1766:59).

Verbs that end in *l*, *m*, *n* and *p* which come after a diphthong form their past time and participle “by changing the diphthong into the short sound of a single vowel; for example feel - felt, dream, *dreamt*, mean, *meant*, keep, *kept*” (Burn, 1766:59).

Verbs that end in *ll* and *ve* make their past time and participle “by changing *ll* into *lt* and *ve* into *ft*; as dwell - dwelt, leave – left” (Burn, 1766:59).

Some verbs that end in *d* and *t* have the same form for the present and past times and participles, such as *read*, *read*, *read*, *cut*, *cut*, *cut*; while others change *d* into *t*; as in *bend*, *bent*, *bent*.

“Many participles end in *en*; such as *spoken*, *taken*, *chosen* etc” (Burn, 1766:59).

Priestley offers his readers a 'catalogue of verbs irregularly inflected'. He admits extracting his catalogue “chiefly from Mr. Ward's catalogue but without taking any notice of his distinction of conjugations” (Priestley, 1772:47) and explains that he deliberately omitted all those verbs in which the irregularities appear due to “the quick pronunciation

of regular preterite tenses and participles, whereby *ed* is contracted to *t*” (Priestley, 1772:53). “This contraction is not admitted in solemn language except in verbs which end in *l*, *ll* or *p*; for example *creep*, *crept*;  *dwell*, *dwelt*” (Priestley, 1772:53).

In the chapter dealing with irregular verbs Fisher provides a detailed explanation of the reasons why certain verbs became irregular. According to her (1789:81) the first irregularity happens because of “the Quickness of Pronunciation, by changing the Consonant *d* to *t*, (the Vowel *e* in the regular Ending *ed*, in the past Time, being cut off) that the Pronunciation might be made more easy and free; and seems rather a Contraction than an Irregularity”.

She further gives a list of letters that take the ending *t* after them which causes the verbs to be irregular and provides a lot of examples for her readers to make sure they will understand and accept the rules.

The second irregularity happens with some words in the present Time ending in *d*, or *t*, and have the past Time the same as in the present; as *read*, *cost*” (Fisher, 1789:94). And, the third irregularity belongs to many more irregularities that are given in an alphabetical List in her book (1789:94).

#### 4.3. Prescriptive rules

The late 18<sup>th</sup> century was marked by a great demand in the publishing of grammar books that would lead the readers to understanding what the correct and incorrect forms of English grammar were. The readers were expected to follow the rules made by the prominent grammarians of the century. Some of the rules that deal particularly with the English verb will be mentioned here together with the explanations and justifications given by contemporary grammarians.

Those rules include:

- The condemnation of the double negative
- The condemnation of the split infinitive
- The use of *you were* for the second person singular
- The use of *shall/will/will* for prediction and *will/shall/shall* for promise.

#### 4.3.1. The condemnation of the double negative

The double negative is a grammatical construction in which two negative words are used in the same sentence to express a single negation.

According to David Crystal (2003:45) “the Old English principle behind the use of double or triple negative is simple: extra negative words increase the emphasis, making the negative meaning stronger. By Shakespeare's time the double negative was rarely used by educated speakers, but it was still common in many dialects.”

Most of the grammarians of the 18<sup>th</sup> century argued that the use of the double negative is illogical and as such should be banned. The justification of the condemnation of the use of the double negative says that it is linguistically illogical but, as seen from the present-day perspective it does not violate linguistic but mathematical rules.

Some modern authors believe that Lowth introduced the idea of double negative in the second edition of his grammar as a result of suggestions sent in by readers of the first edition. In his *A Short Introduction to English Grammar with Critical Notes* (1764) he condemned the use of the double negation stating that it is illogical (Beal, 2004: 114).

According to Ingrid Tieken-Boon van Ostade (1982), Lowth was not the first 18<sup>th</sup> century grammarian to discuss multiple negation. There were a number of other authors of that time that dealt with the problem of multiple negation such as “Jones (1724), Duncan (1731), Kirkby (1746), Martin (1758), Fisher (1745, 1750) and Gough (1760)” (as cited in Beal et al, 1968: 201).

In the section about Adverbs, Burn talks about the problem of having two negatives in one sentence. He first explains the difference between *no* and *not* used in a sentence and states (1766:76) “*no* stands alone in an answer, *not* is used with some other word either expressed or understood; as, *Can you lend me a Crown? No.* and *Will you go to the country tomorrow? I will not*”.

He gives his readers an example of false syntax (1766:76) “*my son can transact that affair whether I be present or no. He say, he will carry off the goods wither I will or no;*” and explains that *no* is used as an adjective before a substantive; “as *No man is altogether free from error*”.

He, then, clarifies the use of double negation by stating that (1766:77) “two negatives make an affirmative, and therefore ought not be used in a denying form, as *I can eat no more*: not, *I cannot eat no more*. *I cannot give more for it, that is as much as to say, I can give some more for it*”.

According to Lowth (1764:96) “two Negatives in English destroy one another, or are equivalent to an Affirmative as

*Nor did they not perceive the evil plight*

*In which they were, or the fierce pains not feel* (Milton, P.L. 335)”.

Lindley Murray, who is said to have copied most of Lowth’s grammar and his rules, also states that “two negatives in English, destroy one another, or are equivalent to an affirmative: as, ‘*Nor did they not perceive him*,’ that is, ‘they did perceive him.’ ‘Never shall I not confess;’ that is, ‘I shall never avoid confessing;’ or, ‘I shall always confess’” (1795:158).

Murray comments this use of double negation to express the affirmative and concludes that “it is better to use regular affirmative, then two negatives, to express an affirmation” (Murray, 1795:158).

Priestley (1772:136) explains that “in some cases, two negative particles were formerly used, as in Greek, where we now use only one. When the negative is included in subject of affirmation, a negative meaning has the appearance of a positive one. *I can do nothing*, i.e. *I cannot do any thing*”.

Fisher (1789:125) states that “a Negative in English cannot be expressed by two Negatives; as, it was not good for nothing; I cannot eat none. Such Expressions are Solecisms, which instead of Negatives make Affirmatives, and signify as much as, It was good for something: I can eat some”.

Later (1789:132) she gives a definition of Solecism saying that it “is a preposterous Way of speaking or writing, and generally implies or literally signifies, a Contradiction or Blunder”.

Apart from these four authors whose grammar books are the subject of this investigation into the English verb there were other grammarians of the time who discussed and disapproved the use of the double negation.

According to Beal (2004: 113) “[t]he ‘double negative’ was common in earlier English, but it was first overtly condemned by Greenwood, who [in his *An Essay towards a Practical English Grammar*] stated that ‘two Negatives, or two Adverbs of Denying do in English affirm’” (1711:160). He writes about the position of an adverb of denying in a sentence stating that “we put our Adverb of Denying after the Verb; as *I do not love him, I love not him* or *I love him not*” (Greenwood, 1711:182).

As was mentioned in Beal et al. (2008:199) another contemporary grammarian, “Benjamin Martin (1748), looked at this problem of double negation from the mathematician's perspective saying that the two negatives answer to the addition of two negative quantities in Algebra, the sum of which is negative. But our ordinary use of two negatives (in which the force of the first is much more than merely destroyed by the latter) corresponds to the multiplication of two negative quantities in Algebra, the product of which is affirmative; as mathematicians very well know.”

In *English in Modern Times*, Joan C. Beal (2004:114) states that “Tieken (1982) and Austin (1984) demonstrate that double negation was used in informal and lower-class writing and speech throughout the eighteenth century”.

The use of double, or multiple negative was socially stigmatized and playwrights used these constructions in the dialogues of the vulgar speakers.

#### 4.3.2. The split infinitive

A split infinitive is a grammatical construction in which a word or phrase, usually an adverb or adverbial phrase, occurs between the marker *to* and the bare infinitive (uninflected) form of a verb.

Crystal (2003:45) states that “in Old English, the infinitive was shown by an inflectional ending *-(i)an*, then the particle began to take over. Originally a preposition, *to* developed



a function as a purpose maker ('in order to'), but then lost all its semantic content acting solely as a sign of the infinitive.”

According to Crystal (2003:196) “traditional grammars have long objected to the insertion of an adverb between the particle and the infinitive form of a verb. The particle *to* plus a verb make a grammatical unity and the two parts should stay together.”

Yanez-Bouza (2006) writes that “forms not parallel in Latin grammar were condemned as bad, incorrect, inaccurate, absurd, inelegant, or branded as solecisms” and this was the one example of it.

For the four grammarians whose grammar books are used in the research of this paper there is no question about the position of the particle *to* related to the infinitive form. All of them do not even mention the situation in which *to* can be used in either place expect next to the verb itself, as can be seen in the following definitions.

Lowth explains that (1764:114) “*to* before a Verb is a sign of the Infinitive Mode: but there are some few Verbs, which have commonly other Verbs following them in the Infinitive Mode without the sign *to*: as *bid, dare, need, make, see, hear, feel*, as also *let*, and sometimes *have*, not used as Auxiliaries: as “*I bade him do it; you dare not do it; I saw him do it; I heard him say it.*””

Burn gives us a similar definition of the infinitive saying that (1766:98) “*to* before the verbs is the sign of the infinitive; as, *Every man ought to be virtuous*. The sign *to* should be left out after these verbs, *bid, dare, need, make, see and hear*; as, *He bade me do it*”.

Priestley explains that (1772:18) “the radical form of the verb preceded by the particle *to* is the name of an action or state, as *to love*”. [According to him] “the radical form of a verb preceded by the particle *to* is no more than the name of an action or state; as, *to die* is common to all men; i.e. *death* is common to all men” (Priestley, 1772:18).

Fisher offers a more simple explanation of the situations in which one should use the infinitive form; “when two principal Verbs come together, the latter of them expresses an unlimited Sense, with the Preposition *to* before it; as, *he loved to learn: I chose to dance*: and is called the *infinitive* Verb, which may also follow a Name or Quality; as, a *Time to sing*, a *Book delightful to read*” (1789:123).

Her further explanation is that “the Scholar will best understand this, by being told that *infinitive* or *invariable Verbs* having neither *Number*, *Person* nor *Nominative Word* belonging to them, are known or governed by the Preposition *to* coming before them. The Sign *to* is often understood; as *bid Robert and his Company (to) tarry; you will find him (to be) honest, etc.*” (Fisher, 1789:123).

Beal in *English in Modern Times* (2004:112) states that

The proscription of the split infinitive first occurs in 1834. In an article in the *New England Magazine* the author signed by 'P' writes: 'I am not conscious, that any rule has been heretofore given in relation to this point; no treatise on grammar or rhetoric, within my knowledge, alludes to it. The practice, however, of not separating the particle from its verb, is so general and uniform among good authors, and the exceptions are so rare, that the rule which I am about to propose will, I believe, prove to be as accurate as most rules, and may be found beneficial to inexperienced writers. It is this:—*The particle, TO, which comes before the verb in the infinitive mode, must not be separated from it by the intervention of an adverb or any other word or phrase; but the adverb should immediately precede the particle, or immediately follow the verb.* (1834:469, as cited in Bailey, 1996: 248)

Freeman (2013) writes that “Richard Taylor (1840) called split infinitives a “disagreeable affectation”, which is more a stylistic dislike than a reasoned grammatical principle. Solomon Barrett Jr (1859) called them a “common fault” and “highly improper”, but he didn’t say what was faulty and improper about them”.

As Crystal (1995:193) states, split infinitives were one sign of linguistic inadequacy.

The prescriptive idea of why you should avoid splitting infinitives is motivated by the wish to achieve clarity of expression and to avoid ambiguity.

#### 4.3.3. *Will/shall/shall*

The grammar and the use of the English language in the 18<sup>th</sup> century went so far as to prescribe rules for the use of specific words for specific purposes. One such thing refers to the use of *will* and *shall*.

Lowth clarifies that (1764:60, 61) “*will* in the first Person singular and plural promises or threatens; in the second and third Person only foretells: *shall*, on the contrary, in the first Person simply foretells; in the second and third Person promises, commands, or threatens. But this must be understood of Explicative Sentences; for when the Sentence is Interrogative, just the reverse for the most part takes place: Thus, „I *shall* go; you *will* go; express event only: but, „*will* you go? “ imports intention; and „*Shall* I go?“ refers to the will of another.. but again, „he *shall* go,“ and „*shall* he go? Both imply will, expressing or referring to a command. *Would* primarily denotes inclination of will; and *should*, obligation: but they both vary their import, and are often used to express simple event”.

Lowth explains that (1762:61) “this distinction was not observed before when it was the case to use *shall* in the second and third person to express the event, and *should* was used in the places when people now make use of *would*. He advises his readers to check the given explanations in the Vulgar Translation of the Bible” (i.e. the King James Bible).

According to Priestley (1772:38) “when we simply foretell, we use *shall* in the first person, and *will* in the rest; as *I shall* or *he will write*: but when we promise, threaten or engage, we use *will* in the first person, and *shall* in the rest, as *I will* or *he shall write*”.

Burn refers to Lowth's explanation and paraphrases it by saying (1766:52) “the distinction betwix shall and will is not easily determined; but Dr. Lowth observes, that ‘Will in the first person singular and plural promises or threatens; in the second and third person simply foretells: that shall, on the contrary, in the first person simply foretells; in the second and third person promises, threatens or commands; „as, “I will go; we will go; they will come to morrow.’”

“But when a question is asked, *will* seems to be improper in the first and *shall* in the second; as will I go? This looks as if I asked, whether it be my own pleasure to go or not, which is absurd: but when I say, shall I go? The meaning is simply this, is it your pleasure that I go? So when I say, will you go? It is plainly intimated, that it is my pleasure that you should go, and yours is solicited” (Burn, 1766: 52, 53).

In the same manner Fisher (1789:81) explains that “*will*, in the first Person, promises or threatens, but in the second or third, only simply foretells; *shall*, in the first Person, simply expresses, but in the second and third Person commands or threatens”.

Murray states the same as Lowth but comments that “the given distinctions are true of explicative sentences only, while when the sentence is interrogative, just the reverse, for the most part, takes place: thus, ‘I shall go; ye will go;’ express event only: but, ‘will ye go?’ imports intention; and ‘shall I go?’ refers to the will of another. But, ‘He shall go’, and ‘shall he go?’ both imply will; expressing or referring to a command” (1795:76).

Murray (1795:76) explains the difference between *would* and *should* by stating that “*would* primarily denotes inclination of will; while *should* shows obligation”.

Greenwood (1711:147) offers a similar explanation by saying that “*shall* in the first Person expresses the future Action or Event; but in the second and third Person, it promises, commands, or threatens”.

On the other hand, “*will* in the first Person promises or threatens; but in the second and third Person it barely foretells” (Greenwood, 1711: 147).

He (1711:147) gives his readers a further explanation by writing sentences and commenting on their meaning. He explains that if somebody says “*I shall go*, or *I will go*, it means willingness or resolution to go; but when one says *You shall go* it states a command”.

Rissanen (1999: 210) explains the origin of the distinction in the use of *shall* and *will* by saying “the periphrastic expression of future with *shall* and *will* goes back to Old English, although these verbs develop into ‘real’ auxiliaries only in Early Modern English. In the earlier periods they retained much of their modal meaning of obligation or volition. This inherent modal colouring can be seen in the choice of the two auxiliaries even in Modern English.”

He draws on Jepsen’s findings (MEG IV 18.1; Strang 1970:206) and further explains the use of these two stating that the origin “might go back to the model set by the Wycliffite Bible translation, which used *shall* for unmarked and *will* for volitionally marked future. This practice would have been copied by the schools in their translation exercises. This theory certainly gives a much simplified picture of the development; yet it seems that *will* developed its pure (predictive) future use later than *shall*, in colloquial speech, as a ‘change from below’“(1999:210).

According to Rissanen (1999:210)

[this] peculiar pattern of distribution in which *shall* is the future auxiliary used with the first-person subject while *will* is used in the second and third persons can be first traced in Early Modern English. The grammarian Mason states this rule in 1622, and Wallis in 1653 (Visser §1483), but the tendency can be traced in texts as early as the sixteenth century. This distributional pattern has been called ‘linguistically abnormal’, but, in fact, it reflects a development typical of a transitional period, particularly if we accept the existence of two simultaneous trends: *shall* as the auxiliary of written language and the literate mode of expression and *will* as the auxiliary favoured in colloquial language and the oral mode of expression. In the second and third persons, the modal use of *will* was obviously less frequent than that of *shall* – volition was less easily projected to other persons than obligation or necessity. For this reason, the purely predictive *will* was easily established in the second and third person. When the referent of the subject was the speaker himself, the opposite situation was characteristic: obligation was probably a less natural and less frequently expressed motivation for the speaker’s own action or state than volition or intention; therefore *shall* resisted the tendency to be superseded by *will* longer in non-modal contexts. In questions, the situation is reversed: it is less common to inquire about the volition or intention of the speaker than of the addressee. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the normative tendencies of the grammarians no doubt contributed to the establishment of this distinction in the Southern standard.

Rissanen (1999) explains that the early 16<sup>th</sup> century was marked by the use of both *shall* and *will* to indicate future, although there is a slight bias in favour of *shall*. The investigation into both formal and informal, speech-based and non-speech-based texts dating from 1500–70 shows that “the distribution is more clearcut. In late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century texts, the distribution in the first and second persons is still fairly even, but in the third person *will* predominates, and in the second half of the seventeenth century, even second-person subjects clearly favour *will*, while *shall* is more common in the first person” (Kytö 1991:323, table 22, as cited in Rissanen 1999: 212). The role played by colloquial language is particularly obvious in tracing the history of the supremacy of *will* over *shall* in the third person: this development is seen in, for instance, private correspondence (Kytö 1991: 324). As the use of *will* is common even in the first

person from the early sixteenth century on, it is easy to understand why the *shall/will* distinction was never established, in the form of a ‘rule’, in colloquial or regional varieties. One reason for this may well have been the early development of the contracted form *ll* in speech” (Rissanen, 1999:211).

#### 4.3.4. *You were*

In *The Cambridge Encyclopaedia of the English Language* Crystal explains (2003:71) that

in Old English *thou* (and its related forms) was used for addressing one person; *ye* (and its related forms) for more than one. *Thou* and *ye* served as subjects while *thee* and *you* as object. In Middle English *ye/you* came to be used as a polite singular form alongside *thou/thee*, while in Early Modern English, the distinction between *ye* and *you* gradually disappeared, and *you* became the norm in all grammatical functions and social situations. *Ye* soon became restricted to archaic, religious or literary use.

Barber et al. (2008: 197) explain that “during the seventeenth century, *you* gradually supplanted *thou* in the speech of the gentry and the citizenry, and by the end of the century was the normal form; *thou*, however, continued to be used in the literary language, especially in poetry. The lower classes, too, continued to use *thou*, and it survives in some modern dialects in northern and western England“.

Both Burn and Lowth address the changes that happened with the use of *thou* for the second person singular.

Lowth gives his readers a more detailed description of the insistence of the use of plural *you* instead of *thou* for the second person singular. He explains (1764:50) that this change is not happening only in polite but in familiar style as well. Since people tend to use the plural *you* for the second person singular” the verb must agree with it in the plural number as well, so it must be *you have* and not *you hath*. *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 inadvertently fallen into it.”

According to Lowth (1764:51) “*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*.”

Lowth goes on criticizing some of his contemporary authors like Swift, Addison, Walter and Pope, who continued using *was* even though they started using *you* for the second person singular:

“‘*Knowing that you was my old master’s good friend.*’ (Addison, Spect. No 517.)” (1764:50)

Burn does not devote as much space to this problem as Lowth but yet he mentions it and explains (1766:129) “‘*tho’ we apply you to a single person, yet the verb agreeing with it should be in the plural number; thus, Knowing that you were my old master’s good friend, I could not forbear sending you the melancholy news of his death (Spectator)*”.

In the section about pronouns, Priestley speaks about the difference in the use of *thou* and *you*. He explains that *thou* is used as the second person but (1772:82) “by the compliance of modern times, we use the plural *you* instead of the singular *thou*, when we mean to speak respectfully to any person; but we do not use *ye* in this manner. We say *you*, not *ye*, *are reading*. However, in very solemn style, and particularly in an address to the Divine Being, we use *thou*, and not *you*.”

Thus, the use of *you* for the second person singular became associated with formality and solemn style, while *thou* was related to addressing social inferiors or equals.

Fisher (1789:70) simplifies the rule by stating that “it is customary among us (as likewise among the French and others) to express ourselves so: But then we say *you*, and not *ye*; and the Verb that is put to is always of the plural Number; for we say, *you love*, which is plural: and not *you lovest*, which is singular. So likewise, out of Compliance, as we say *you* for *thou* and *thee*, so we frequently say *your* for *thy*, and *yours* for *thine*.”

Greenwood’s explanation is (1711:119) “when we speak to another, we use the Word *Thou* or *You*; but when we speak to more than one, we use the Word *Ye* or *You*; which Words *Thou* or *You* and *Ye* are said to be of the *Second Person*.”

Greenwood (1711:119) mentions the custom of the English and the French to use the plural *you* and not *ye* form when one speaks to one particular person. In the same manner

it is allowed “to use *your* for *thy* and *yours* for *thine*. When we want to speak in an Emphatical Manner, or make a distinct and particular Application to a Person, we often use *Thou*; as, *Remember O King, thou art a Man*. Otherwise if any one speaks to another, in the *Singular Number*, as *Thou Thomas*, it is reckoned a Sign or Contempt or Familiarity” (1711:119).

Beal (2004:69) explains that

in Early Middle English, the use of second-person pronouns in English was determined by number and case. Thus, in the singular *thou* was used as subject, and *thee* in other cases, whilst in the plural *ye* and *you* were used respectively. However, from the thirteenth century onwards, probably under the influence of French, it became fashionable amongst the higher classes to use *ye/you* as polite forms of address to a single interlocutor. By the sixteenth century, the use of *thou/thee* versus *ye/you* was socially and pragmatically constrained, and authors such as Shakespeare could use this variation to reflect the shifting moods and relationships of his characters.



## 5. The impact of prescriptivism on standardization

### 5.1. Definition of the standardization

Dictionary definitions of the verb 'to standardize' include:

'to make things of the same type all have the same basic features' ("Standardize", Cambridge, n.d.)

'to bring into conformity with a standard especially in order to assure consistency and regularity' ("Standardize", Merriam-Webster, n.d. Definition 1)

'to cause (something) to conform to a standard' ("Standardize", Oxford English and Spanish Dictionary, Thesaurus, and Spanish to English Translator, n.d. Definition 1)

'to make objects or activities of the same type have the same features or qualities; to make something standard' ("Standardize", Oxford Learner's Dictionaries, n.d.)

As can be observed, the idea behind standardization is to make something uniform as well as to prevent it from not conforming to the rules.

"In linguistics this term is usually used to refer to the process of one variety of a language becoming widely accepted throughout the speech community as a superdialect norm – the 'best' form of the language – rated above regional and social dialects, although these may be felt to be appropriate in some domains" (Ferguson, 1966:31, as cited in Pilliere and Lewis, 2018).

Simply put, standardization is the process in which one variety of language becomes formally accepted and as such should be used by all the people. Apart from insisting on standardization for the linguistical purposes, the communicative function of language is essential.

Standardization denotes the efforts of the social elite to establish the most prestigious language system in an effort to convince people that there are correct and incorrect forms of language and that by using those correct forms their social status will grow.

According to Straaijer (2019)

the process of standardization brings to a language a uniformity and consistent norm and form of writing and speaking, and the promotion of uniformity and consistency usually entails the reduction or elimination of variation. On a social level, the standard language is usually identified as the variety with highest prestige. Outside the linguistic community, the standard language—particularly the written mode—is usually considered an integral part of national (or supraregional) identity, being seen as the most widely used variety of the language, the official variety of the language, the national language, or even just as *the* language of that nation.

## 5.2. Standard English

This paper will not deal with the process of standardization and its benefits and consequences in detail. The main goal is to describe how and why the prescriptive grammars of the 18<sup>th</sup> century influenced the process of the standardization of the English language.

At this point it is important to describe the situation in the country and grounds that were laid for the standardization to take place. The 18<sup>th</sup> century witnessed the increase in the population numbers. As a result, there were more and more people who were climbing the social ladder since the importance of the middle class significantly grew. Their goal was to acquire the proper language. “This ‘proper’ language is what they were given to believe they would find in the grammars. They wanted to avoid appearing as if they belonged to the ‘lower’ classes, and they hoped that they could better their social situation by acquiring ‘proper’ English” (Locher, 2008:138)

Nunberg (1999:7) explains that “a number of developments influenced the rise of standard English: the ever-increasing dominance of London and the Southeast, the growth in social and geographic mobility, and in particular the introduction and spread of print, which led to both higher levels of literacy and schooling and to the gradual standardization of English spelling.”

On the other side, the prevailing idea among the linguists and learned people was that the English language was deteriorating and that it was past its prime is also reflected in the grammars which try to ‘fix’ proper language usage (Locher, 2008:134).

It is important to note that the idea of standard did not appear with the publication of 18<sup>th</sup> century grammars. In the centuries before, there were some attempts of trying to establish a norm that would be used by a majority of people. Thus, as early as the 15<sup>th</sup> century, there existed Chancery Standard which presented a register – specific variety of written English used for court and legal documents; in 1569 John Hart published *An Ortographie of English* which offered a reform in spelling, and in the following century, Christopher Cooper issued *Grammatica Linguae Anglicanae* (1685) which presented London speech as the best dialect.

However, the earliest reference to ‘southern or standard English’ in the Oxford English Dictionary dates from 1836 (Hickey, 2013:2), while according to the Merriam – Webster Dictionary “the first known use of Standard English dates back to 1829 saying: the English that with respect to spelling, grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary is substantially uniform though not devoid of regional differences, that is well established by usage in the formal and informal speech and writing of the educated, and that is widely recognized as acceptable wherever English is spoken and understood” (“Standard English”, n.d.).

### 5.3. Stages in the standardization process

Language standardization is a process by which one variety of language undergoes changes in grammar, spelling, pronunciation and system of writing in order to achieve uniformity. Standard language is believed to be superior over the different variants and dialects that are being used together with the standard form.

Standardization is seen as a process which has four stages. In Haugen’s model these stages include: 1. selection, 2. codification, 3. implementation, and finally 4. elaboration. However, Milroy and Milroy in *Authority in Language* elaborate on Haugen’s four-stage model with a proposal that standardization comprises seven elements: selection,

acceptance, diffusion, maintenance, elaboration of function, codification and prescription (as cited in Pilliere and Lewis, 2018).

Standardization begins with the selection of one variety. Usually, the chosen variety is the one which is spoken by better educated, or more powerful group of people. According to Milroy (2000) choosing one variety over the others results in stigmatizing people who do not speak the proper language. Those who want to learn the proper language turn towards the grammar books being published at the time believing that there they would find it.

When it comes to the English language, the first stage is traditionally identified as the selection of the East Midlands dialect, due largely to economic and political factors as explained by Nevalainen and Tieken-Boon van Ostade (as cited in Pilliere and Lewis, 2018). The variety that became the basis of the Standard was the one spoken by the merchant class in London.

When the proper variety is chosen it has to be accepted by influential people. The variety is usually promoted through institutions, authorities, schools, the media etc., while the other, non-standard forms tend to be used less and perceived as uncouth and vulgar. The promotion of the accepted variety spreads through the whole area or country, geographically and socially.

The next step, the process of codification, happens through the publication of grammars, dictionaries, manuals, guides etc. “It involves setting up normative rules for grammar, orthography, pronunciation and the usage of vocabulary” (“Codification (linguistics)”, n.d.).

The codification of the English language bloomed with the expansion in the publications of grammar books in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

#### 5.4. The role of prescriptivism in standardization process

At this point, standardization leans against the prescription since the codification is usually done by a small group of scholars who are among the greatest language authorities of their time. “Prescription reflects the need for the standard to be continually maintained or monitored by norm authorities, norm enforcers, norm codifiers, and norm subjects”

Dictionaries and grammars are two means of gatekeeping, but equally important is the role of style and usage guides in enforcing the norm and maintaining the Standard” (as cited in Pilliere and Lewis, 2018).

Milroy and Milroy (1985:30) have been quick to point out that “the effect of codification and prescription has been to legitimize the norms of formal registers of Standard English” and to stigmatize other varieties, labelled non-standard. The Standard thus becomes the norm against which variants and other varieties are measured” (as cited in Pilliere and Lewis, 2018).

One of the first important books to be published prior to this period was Samuel Johnson's *Dictionary* in 1755, since before its publication there existed only the bilingual dictionaries or the ones that dealt with words difficult to understand and use. This *Dictionary* was the first one which dealt with ordinary English words.

Then, the publications of grammar books flourished in the years to come, only to make the process towards standardization of the English language even more prominent.

Those grammar books offered strict rules of how to use the language in a proper way and what to avoid. The authors usually used the word 'vulgar' to relate to the improper use of language to influence the minds of their readers. They provided their readers with sets of mistakes, or as the grammarians called them, false syntax, to show which variety is accepted and which are not.

“The main effect of these exercises was to equate the standard language – or what it believed to be the standard language – with the language as a whole and with ‘correct usage’ in that language, and this notion of correctness has a powerful role in the maintenance of the standard ideology through prescriptivism” (Milroy/ Milroy, 1999, as cited in Hickey, 2013:10).

## 6. Conclusion

The tendencies to fix, standardize and refine the English language arose in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. It was believed that the lack of rules and standard caused many corruptions in the language itself so it was about time to standardize it by establishing a set of rules regarding its usage.

The 18<sup>th</sup> century witnessed a notable increase in the publishing of grammar books as a result of various changes that the society was faced with. Some of the most important changes include the rise of the middle class and their demands for the guidance of how to speak and write properly. Closely related to this is the insistence on politeness and refinement in the language usage that was modelled on the Latin language. The impact of Latin was enormous and the grammarians insisted on using it as a model for the formation of their own grammar rules. Most grammarians emphasised that their grammar books aimed at the students who needed to learn the proper language.

The aim of this paper was to present the English verb from the point of view of the 18<sup>th</sup> century grammarians. The roots of the usage that we employ now can be found in the grammars of the grammarians such as Lowth, Priestley, Fisher and others who were considered to be language authorities of the time. Their works are notable and the rules that they established are to some extent respected even now with the same intention as in the 18th century: to sound and seem more polite and refined.

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