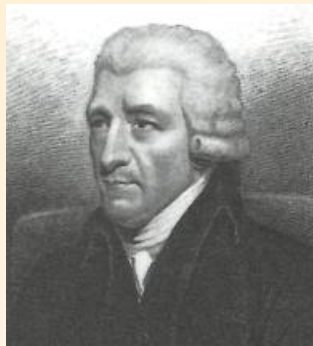
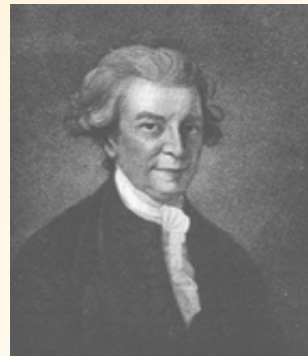


# The Rise of Standard English

Raymond Hickey, University of Duisburg and Essen



John Walker (1732-1807)



Thomas Sheridan (1719-1788)



Robert Lowth (1710-1787)



Samuel Johnson (1709-1784)

# Structure of talk

- Background to the language concerns of the 18th century.
- The main authors in 18th century language studies.
- The extent to which these authors effected notions of standards afterwards, i.e. their legacy.
- The “Standard English” debate today.

## Early references to the speech of London as the emerging standard

The language of the court in London came to be perceived in the late 16th and 17th centuries as a guideline for speakers from the provinces. Initially, this is a very benign type of prescriptivism without the censure of provincial forms which was to develop in the 18th century.

**John Hart** (d. 1574) in *An orthographie of English* (1569) offers a reformed spelling of English so that ‘the rude countrie Englishman’ can speak the language ‘as the best sort use to speak it’.

**George Puttenham** (d. 1590) in *The arte of English poesie* comments that ‘After a speach is fully fashioned to the common vnderstanding, & accepted by consent of a whole countrey & nation, it is called a language’. He then proceeds to mention that he regards the prime form of this language as ‘the vsuall speach of the Court and that of London and the shires lying about London within lx. myles and not much aboue’

About a century later, **Christopher Cooper** in his *Grammatica linguae anglicanae* (1685) stated that he regarded London speech as ‘the best dialect’, the ‘most pure and correct’, but he was quite liberal towards variation: ‘Everyone pronounceth them (words) as himself pleases’.

# Concerns about changing English

# A Proposal for Correcting, Improving, and Ascertaining the English Tongue

Jonathan Swift

A Proposal for Correcting, Improving, and Ascertaining the English Tongue, in a Letter to the Most Honourable Robert Earl of Oxford and Mortimer, Lord High Treasurer of Great Britain, Printed from Benjamin Tooke, at the Middle Temple Gate, Fleetstreet, 1712

To the Most Honourable Robert Earl of Oxford, &c.

My Lord,

What I had the Honour of mentioning to Your Lordship some time ago in Conversation, was not a new Thought, just then started by Accident or Occasion, but the Result of long Reflection; and I have been confirmed in my Sentiments by the Opinion of some very judicious Persons, with whom I consulted. They all agreed, That noting would be of greater Use towards the Improvement of Knowledge and Politeness, than some effectual Method for *Correcting, Enlarging, and Ascertaining our Language*; and they think it a Work very possible to be compassed, under the Protection of a Prince, the Countenance and Encouragement of a Ministry, and the Care of Proper Persons chosen for such an Undertaking. I was glad to find Your Lordship's Answer in so different a Style, from what hath been commonly made use of on the like Occasions, for some Years past, that all such Thoughts must be deferred to a Time of Peace: A Topick which some have carried so far, that they would not have us, by any means, think of preserving our Civil or Religious Constitution, because we were engaged in a War abroad. It will be among the distinguishing Marks of your Ministry, My Lord, that you had the Genius above all such Regards, and that no reasonable Proposal for the Honour, the Advantage, or the Ornament of Your Country, however foreign to Your immediate Office was ever neglected by You. I confess, the Merit of this Candor and Condescension is very much lessened, because Your Lordship hardly leaves us room to offer our good Wishes, removing all our Difficulties, and supplying all our Wants, faster than the most visionary Projector can adjust his Schemes.



1667-1745

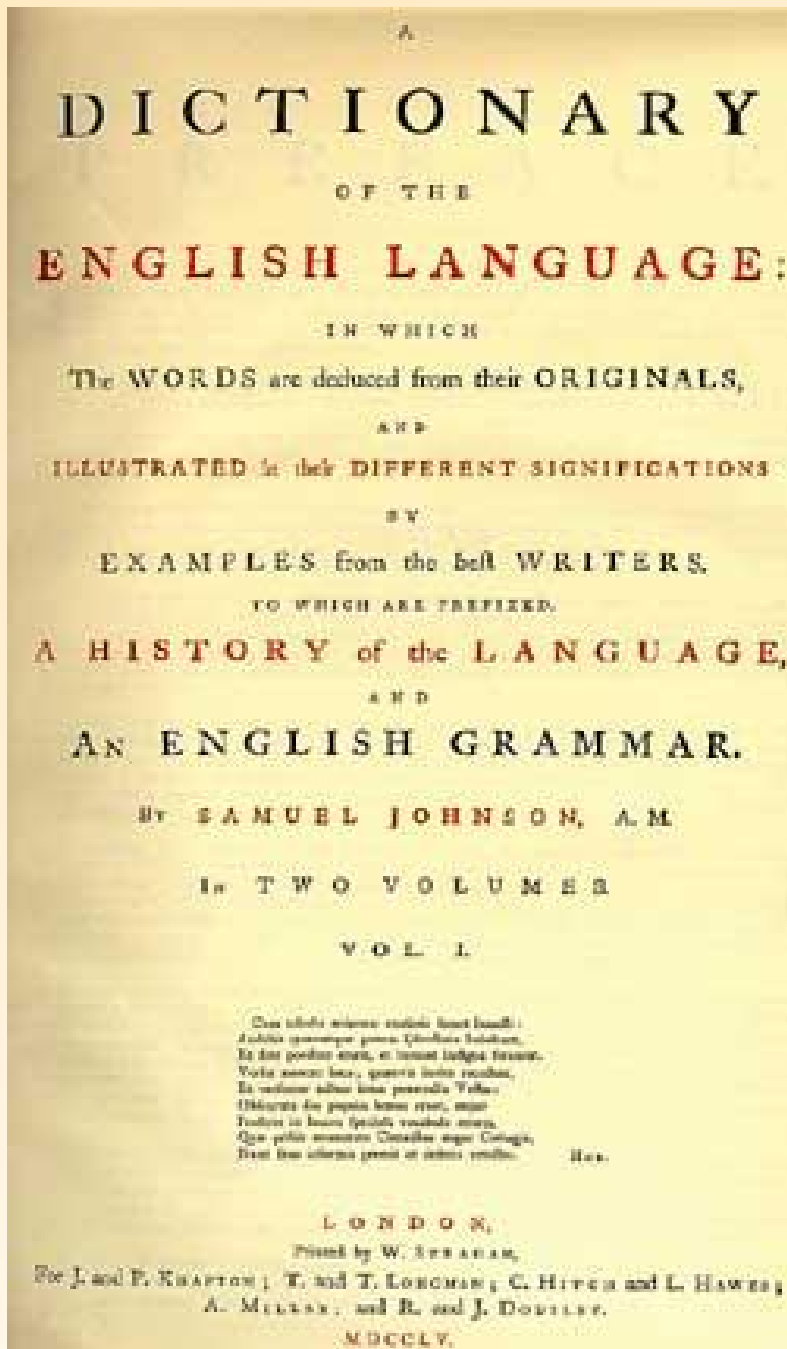
# Dictionaries of English



## Samuel Johnson (1709-1784)

English writer and lexicographer. Johnson was a major critic and scholar who was known both for his brilliant conversation and the quality of his writing. As a man of letters his influence on literature in his day and later periods was considerable. His significance for linguistics lies in the fact that he compiled the first major monolingual dictionary of English, his *Dictionary of the English language* (1755), which was a model for all future lexicographers.





OA'TMEAL. *n. f.* [*oat* and *meal.*] Flower made by grinding oats.

*Oatmeal* and butter, outwardly applied, dry the scab on the head. *Arbuthnot on Aliment.*

Our neighbours tell me oft, in joking talk,  
Of ashes, leather, *oatmeal*, bran, and chalk. *Gay.*

OA'TMEAL. *n. f.* An herb. *Ainsworth.*

OATS. *n. f.* [*aten*, Saxon.] A grain, which in England is generally given to horses, but in Scotland supports the people.

It is of the grass leaved tribe; the flowers have no petals, and are disposed in a loose panicle: the grain is eatable. The meal makes tolerable good bread. *Miller.*

The *oats* have eaten the horses. *Shakespeare.*

It is bare mechanism, no otherwise produced than the turning of a wild *oatbeard*, by the insinuation of the particles of moisture. *Locke.*

For your lean cattle, fodder them with barley straw first, and the *oat* straw last. *Mortimer's Husbandry.*

His horse's allowance of *oats* and beans, was greater than the journey required. *Swift.*

OA'TTHISTLE. *n. f.* [*oat* and *thistle.*] An herb. *Ains.*



Young master next must rise to fill him wine,  
And starve himself to see the *booby* dine. *King.*

**BOOK.** *n. f.* [from *boe*, Sax. supposed from *boe*, a beech; because they wrote on beechen boards, as *liber* in Latin, from the rind of a tree.]

1. A volume in which we read or write.  
See a *book* of prayer in his hand;  
True ornaments to know a holy man. *Shakefp. Richard III.*  
Receive the sentence of the law for sins,  
Such as by God's *book* are adjudg'd to death. *Shakefp. Henry IV.*

But in the coffin that had the *books*, they were found as fresh  
as if they had been but newly written; being written on parchment,  
and covered over with watch candles of wax. *Bacon.*

*Books* are a sort of dumb teachers; they cannot answer sudden questions, or explain present doubts: this is properly the work of a living instructor. *Watts.*

2. A particular part of a work.  
The first *book* we divide into sections; whereof the first is these chapters past. *Burnet's Theory of the Earth.*
3. The register in which a trader keeps an account of his debts.  
This life  
Is nobler than attending for a check;  
Prouder, than ruffling in unpaid for filk:  
Such gain the cap of him that makes them fine,  
Yet keeps his *book* uncross'd. *Shakefp. Cymbeline.*

4. *In books.* In kind remembrance.  
I was so much *in his books*, that, at his decease, he left me the lamp by which he used to write his lucubrations. *Addison.*
5. *Without book.* By memory; by repetition; without reading.  
Sermons read they abhor in the church; but sermons *without book*, sermons which spend their life in their birth, and may have publick audience but once. *Hooker, b. v. § 21.*

**TO BOOK.** *v. a.* [from the noun.] To register in a book.  
I beseech your grace, let it be *booked* with the rest of this day's deeds; or I will have it in a particular ballad else, with mine own picture on the top of it. *Shakefp. Henry IV. p. ii.*  
He made wilful murder high treason; he caused the marchers to *book* their men, for whom they should make answer. *Davies on Ireland.*

**BOOK-KEEPING.** *n. f.* [from *book* and *keep.*] The art of keeping accounts, or recording the transactions of a man's affairs, in such a manner, that at any time he may thereby know the true state of the whole, or any part, of his affairs, with clearness and expedition. *Harris.*

**BOOKBINDER.** *n. f.* [from *book* and *bind.*] A man whose profession it is to bind books.

**BOOKFUL.** *adj.* [from *book* and *full.*] Full of notions gleaned from books; crouded with undigested knowledge.

The



**PREFACE.**

IT is the fate of those who toil at the lowest employments of life, to be either driven by the fear of evil, than attracted by the prospect of good, to be exposed to censure, without hope of praise; to be despised by misanthropes, or punished for neglect, where rewards would have been without applause, and diligence without reward.

Among these unhappy mortals is the writer of this dictionary, when mankind have considered, not in the pupil, but the state of science, the printer of literature, deemed only to remove rubbish and clear obstructions from the paths of Learning and Genius, who press forward to acquire and glory, without bestowing a smile on the humble drudge that facilitates their progress. Every other author may aspire to praise; the lexicographer can only hope to escape reproach, and even this negative recompense has been yet granted to very few.

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

When I took the first survey of my undertaking, I found our speech regions without order, and unrecognised without value; whenever I turned my view, there was profligacy to be detested, and confusion to be regulated; choice was to be made out of boundless variety, without any established principle of selection; adjectives were to be detected, without a verbal test of purity, and modes of expression to be rejected or received, without the suffrages of any nation of classical reputation or acknowledged authority.

Having therefore no assistance but from general grammar, I applied myself to the perusal of our writers, and writing whatever might be of use to ascertain or illustrate any word or phrase, accumulated in time the materials of a dictionary, which, by degrees, I reduced to method, establishing to myself, in the progress of the work, such rules as experience and analogy suggested to me; experience, which practice and observation were continually increasing, and analogy, which, though in some words obscure, was evident in others.



35

**THE PLAN OF A DICTIONARY OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE:**  
Addressed to the Right Honourable  
**PHILIP DORMER, Earl of CHESTERFIELD,**  
One of His Majesty's Principal Secretaries of State.

My LORD,

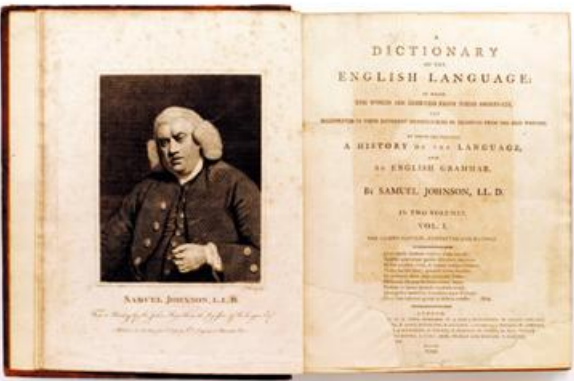
WHEN first I undertook to write an English Dictionary, I had no expectation of any higher patronage than that of the protection of the press, nor prospect of any other advantages than the price of my labour; I knew, that the work in which I engaged is generally considered as drudgery for the blind, as the paper toil of arduous industry, a task that requires neither the light of Learning, nor the activity of genius, but may be successfully performed without any higher quality than that of being furnished with dull patience, and having the track of the alphabet with sluggish resolution.

WITHOUT this opinion, so long maintained and so widely propagated, had its beginning from truth and nature, or from accident and prejudice, whether it be derived by the authority of custom, or the tyranny of ignorance, that of all the candidates for literary praise, the unhappy lexicographer holds the lowest place, neither vanity nor interest incited me to engage. It appeared that the province allotted me was of all the regions of learning generally confided to be the least delightful, that it was believed to produce neither fruits nor flowers, and that after a long and laborious cultivation, not even the barren land had been found upon it.

YET on this province, my Lord, I entered with the pleasing hope, that as it was less, it likewise would be safe. I was drawn forward with the prospect of employment, which, tho' not splendid, would be useful, and which tho' it could not make my life serene, would keep it innocent, which would excite no passion, engage me in no contention, nor throw in my way any temptation to disturb the quiet of others by censure, or my own by flattery.

I COULD not indeed of times, in which princes and statesmen thought it part of their honour to promote the improvement of their native tongues, and in which dictionaries were written under the protection of patronage. In the persons of such undertakings, I willingly paid the homage of believing that they, who were thus admitted for the propriety of their language, had reason to expect that their actions would be celebrated by posterity, and that the eloquence which they promoted would be employed in their praise. But I considered such acts of beneficence as prodigal, would rather be more modest than expectant, and content with the terms that I had stipulated, had not suffered my imagination to flatter me with any other encouragement, when I found that my design had been thought by your Lordship of importance sufficient to attract your favour.

36

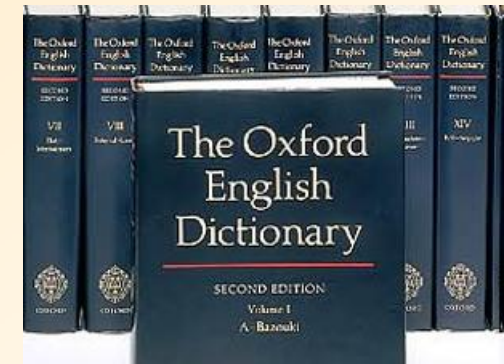


# The legacy of Samuel Johnson

Johnson's dictionary became the standard work of English lexicography because of its range, objectivity and use of quotations from major authors to back up definitions given. It was not until over a century later that it was superseded by the dictionary which was to become the *Oxford English Dictionary*.



# A New English Dictionary on Historical Principles



A proposal was made by Richard Trench in 1857 to the Philological Society to design a new dictionary which would serve as a definitive work on the vocabulary of English with complete historical coverage. The Scotsman James Murray (1837-1915) became the main editor (see inset on right). The first letter was published as a volume in 1888 and all the 12 vols were completed in 1928. A thirteenth supplement volume came out in 1933 (after which it was called the *Oxford English Dictionary* published by Oxford University Press. The twenty-volume second edition appeared in 1989 (this is also available electronically). Work on a much expanded third edition is underway at present.



# Grammars of English



## Robert Lowth (1710-1787)

Author of a normative grammar *A Short Introduction to English Grammar* (1762) which achieved great popularity for the manner in which it made recommendations for grammatical usage, something which was interpreted as very prescriptive, even though this may not have been intended as such. Lowth was professor of poetry in Oxford and later bishop of Oxford and of London (as of 1777).

A SHORT  
INTRODUCTION  
TO  
ENGLISH GRAMMAR:  
WITH  
CRITICAL NOTES.

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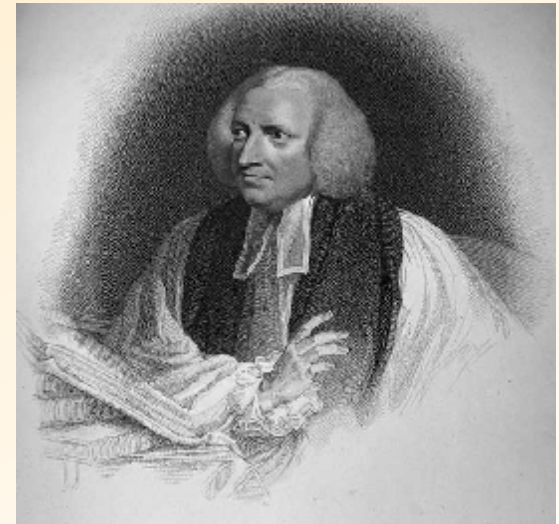
THE SECOND EDITION, CORRECTED.

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Nam ipsum *Latine* loqui est illud quidem in magna laude ponendum: sed non tam sua sponte, quam quod est a plerisque neglectum. Non enim tam præclarum est scire *Latine*, quam turpe nescire; neque tam id mihi oratoris boni, quam civis *Romani* proprium videtur. CICERO.

---

LONDON,  
Printed for A. MILLAR, in the *Strand*; and  
R. and J. DODSLEY, in *Pall-mall*.  
MDCCCLXIII.





# The legacy of Robert Lowth



Lowth is perceived as the original prescriptivist in English grammar and indeed he made statements which match this perception such as the following:

‘The principle design of a Grammar of any Language is to teach us to express ourselves with propriety in that Language; and to enable us to judge of every phrase and form of construction, whether it be right or not’.

He certainly promoted the concern with correctness in grammar and hence was in large degree responsible for the types of evaluative statements about people’s language which came to be common from the late 18th century onwards in the English-speaking world.

## Some of Lowth's strictures



- 1) Use *whom* as the oblique form of *who* is proscribed:

*Whom do men say, that I am?*

- 2) Do not use double negation:

*She cannot love, Nor take no shape nor project of affection.*  
(Shakespeare, *Much ado about nothing*).

- 3) Double comparatives and superlatives are not allowed:

*His more braver daughter* (Shakespeare, *Tempest*).

- 4) These verbs have three forms, not two:

*do: did: done; see : saw : seen*

## Some of Lowth's strictures (cont.)



5) Prepositions should be put before a relative in written style:

*Horace is an author, with whom I am much delighted.*

Note: These strictures are arbitrary, based on Lowth's personal preferences and with linguistic justification. However, he was aware that certain forms, like *thou*, or structures, like *for to be seen*, were obsolete at his time.

In addition, Lowth contrasts what he calls the 'solemn or elevated Style' with 'common conversation', for instance, when discussing the common occurrence of prepositions in sentence-final position.



- Home
- People
- Information
- Events
- M.Phil and PhD
- PhD Defences
- Working Papers
- **Projects**
- Intranet

## The codifiers and the English language: tracing the norms of Standard English

### 1. Introduction

The starting point of this project is Robert Lowth (1710–1787), Hebrew scholar, grammarian and, from 1777 onwards, Bishop of London. Lowth is credited with having written one of the most authoritative English grammars of the eighteenth century (1762) and at the same time blamed for taking a normative approach to grammar. Many prescriptive rules in English grammar are attributed to him, making him the focus of criticism from structural linguists, such as the much maligned stricture against the preposition at the end of a sentence (preposition stranding):

1. It was just the thing he had hoped for.

Lowth is even blamed for rules which he never formulated, such the one against the use of the split infinitive (see "[Bishop Lowth was a fool](#)"), as in

2. He was inclined to frequently write letters of abuse.

The rule, however, dates from the nineteenth, not the eighteenth century (Mittins et al. 1970:69–73). Both instances illustrate the extent to which Lowth is considered an icon of prescriptivism: his name has become "synonymous with prescriptive grammar" (*Oxford Companion to the English Language*). He is usually mentioned in one breath with Priestley (1761) and Murray (1795) (e.g. Finegan 1992:123–126), Priestley because he took a different position on the question of usage as a guiding principle for grammatical correctness, and Murray because his grammar was reprinted in several million copies sold all over the world.

# English in 18th century Britain

To recap: the rise of prescriptivism and the development of a standard of English in Britain is an 18th-century development: dictionaries and grammars were appeared and used by the public.

There were also works on elocution (the art of public speaking, later of accepted pronunciation) which were published in the second half of the 18th century. They were intended to fix the public usage of English, especially pronunciation. These works were even more prescriptive and led to the general condemnation of dialects as vulgar and unacceptable in English polite society.

	Dictionary	Rhetorical grammar	Work on elocution	Provenance
Johnson	1755	---	---	London
Sheridan	1780	1781	1762	Ireland
Kenrick	1773	1784	---	Scotland
Walker	1791	1781	1781	London

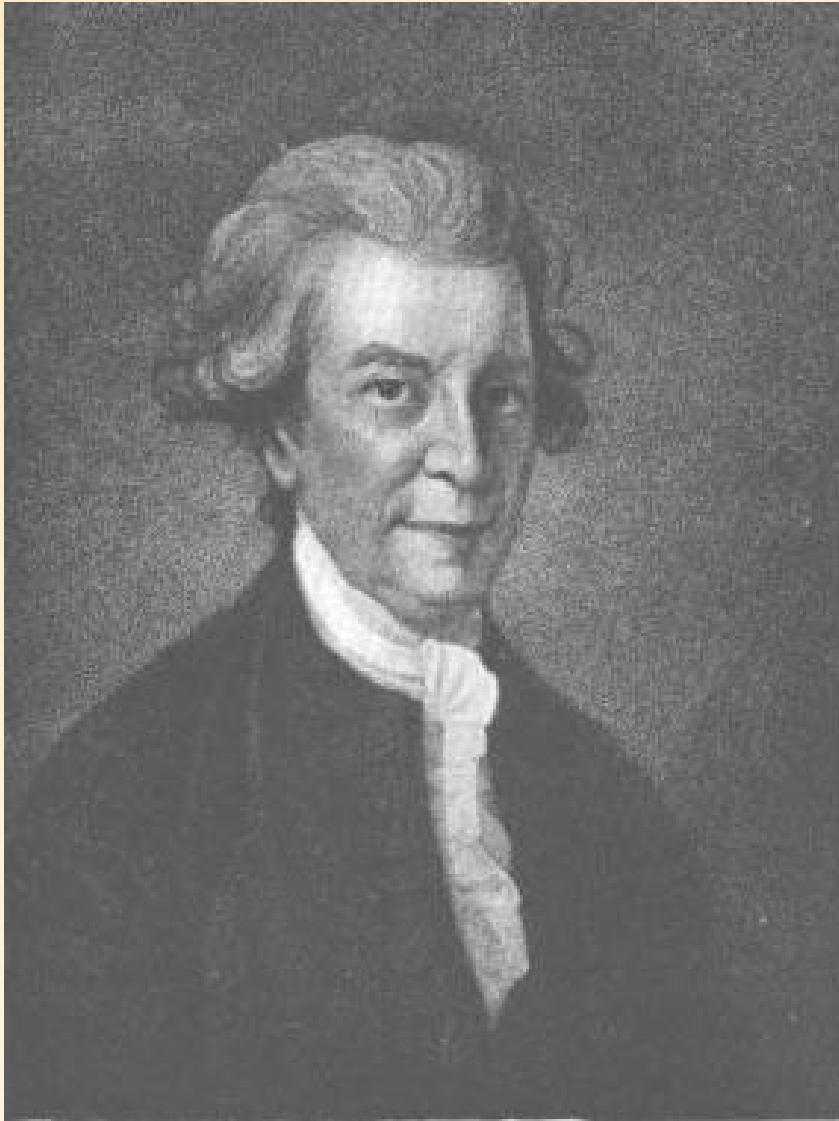
Johnson, Samuel 1747. *The plan of a dictionary of the English language*. London.  
 1755. *A dictionary of the English language*. London.

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Sheridan, Thomas 1762. *A Course of Lectures on Elocution*. Hildesheim: Georg Olms.  
 1780. *A General Dictionary of the English Language*. 2 vols. Menston: The Scolar Press.  
 1781. *A Rhetorical Grammar of the English Language*. Dublin: Price.

Kenrick, William 1773. *A new dictionary of the English language*. London: John and Francis Rivington.  
 1784. *A Rhetorical Grammar of the English Language*. London: Cadell and Longman.

Walker, John 1781. *Elements of Elocution*. London.  
 1785. *A Rhetorical Grammar or Course of Lessons in Elocution*. London.  
 1791. *A Critical Pronouncing Dictionary and Expositor of the English Language*.  
 Menston: The Scolar Press.



**Sheridan, Thomas (1719-1788)**

Irish writer, born in Dublin and educated in London and Dublin. He was first an actor and is the author of a farce *The Brave Irishman; or Captain O'Blunder* (1743; published 1754).

Later he became a travelling expert on elocution. Sheridan produced *A Course of Lectures on Elocution* (1762), *A Rhetorical Grammar of the English language* (1788) and *A General Dictionary of the English Language* (1780) in which he gives guidelines for the correct use of English.

THOMAS SHERIDAN  
OF SMOCK-ALLEY

*recording his life as  
actor and theater manager  
in both Dublin and London;  
and including*

A SMOCK-ALLEY CALENDAR  
*for the years of his  
management.*

BY ESTHER K. SHELDON

PRINCETON UNIVERSITY PRESS  
PRINCETON, NEW JERSEY

1967

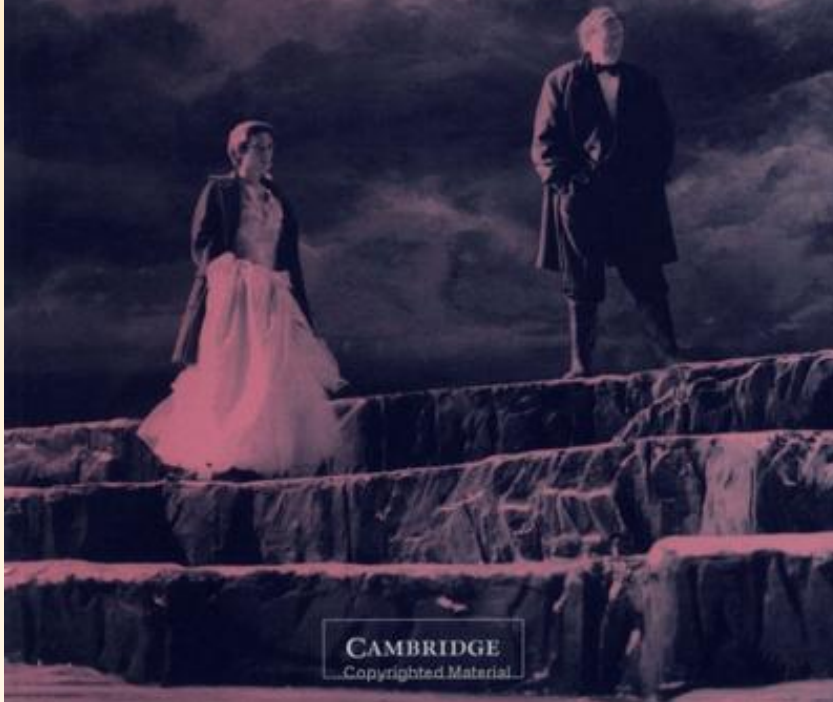




Winner of the Theatre Book Prize 2002

Christopher Morash

A History of  
Irish Theatre  
1601–2000



**Richard Brinsley Sheridan**

(1751-1816)

Playright and son of

Thomas Sheridan

(1719-1788)

Complaining about the state of affairs,  
here of education and public speaking

Sheridan was firmly rooted in the 'complaint tradition' of English writing and lamented the state of British education in his day.

But he was also a manipulator who generated linguistic insecurity among his readers then offered relief in his many prescriptive regulations.

This type of strategy can be found among prescriptivists to this very day.

## BRITISH EDUCATION:

Or, The SOURCE of the

## Diforders of GREAT BRITAIN.

BEING

An ESSAY towards proving, that the Immorality, Ignorance, and false Taste, which so generally prevail, are the natural and necessary Consequences of the present defective SYSTEM of EDUCATION.

WITH

An Attempt to shew, that a Revival of the ART of SPEAKING, and the STUDY of OUR OWN LANGUAGE, might contribute, in a great measure, to the Cure of those EVILS.

IN THREE PARTS.

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| I. Of the Use of these Studies to RELIGION, and MORALITY; as also, to the Support of the BRITISH CONSTITUTION. | III. Their Use in the Cultivation of the IMITATIVE ARTS: shewing, that were the STUDY of ORATORY made a necessary Branch of the EDUCATION of YOUTH; POETRY, MUSICK, PAINTING, and SCULPTURE, might arrive at as high a Pitch of Perfection in ENGLAND, as ever they did in ATHENS or ROME. |
| II. Their absolute Necessity in order to refine, ascertain, and fix the ENGLISH LANGUAGE.                      |  |

By THOMAS SHERIDAN, A. M.

Hoc opus, hoc studium, parvi properemus, et ampli,  
Si volumus patriæ, si nobis vivere chari. H O R.

---

L O N D O N :

Printed for R. and J. D O D S L E Y in Pall-mall.

M.DCC.LVI.

# Sheridan *A Course of Lectures on Elocution* (1762)

A  
COURSE of LECTURES  
ON  
ELOCUTION:  
TOGETHER WITH  
Two DISSERTATIONS on LANGUAGE;  
AND  
Some other TRACTS relative to those SUBJECTS.

By THOMAS SHERIDAN, A. M.

L O N D O N:  
Printed by W. STRAHAN,  
For A. MILLAR, R. and J. DODSLEY, T. DAVIES, C. HENDERSON,  
J. WILKIE, and E. DILLY. M DCC LXII.

# Sheridan *A General Dictionary of the English Language* (1780)

A GENERAL  
DICTIONARY  
OF THE  
ENGLISH LANGUAGE.

One main Object of which, is, to establish a plain and permanent

STANDARD of PRONUNCIATION.

TO WHICH IS PREFIXED

A RHETORICAL GRAMMAR.

By THOMAS SHERIDAN, A.M.

---

QUO MINUS SUNT FERENDI QUI HANC ARTEM UT TENUEM AC JEJUNAM CAVIL-  
LANTUR; QUÆ NISI ORATORI FUTURO FUNDAMENTA FIDELITER JECERIT, QUICQUID  
SUPERSTRUXERIS, CORRUET. NECESSARIA PUERIS, JUCUNDA SENIBUS, DULCIS SECRE-  
TORUM COMES; ET QUÆ VEL SOLA, OMNI STUDIORUM GENERE, PLUS HABET OPERIS,  
QUAM OSTENTATIONIS.

QUINCT. L. I. C. 4.

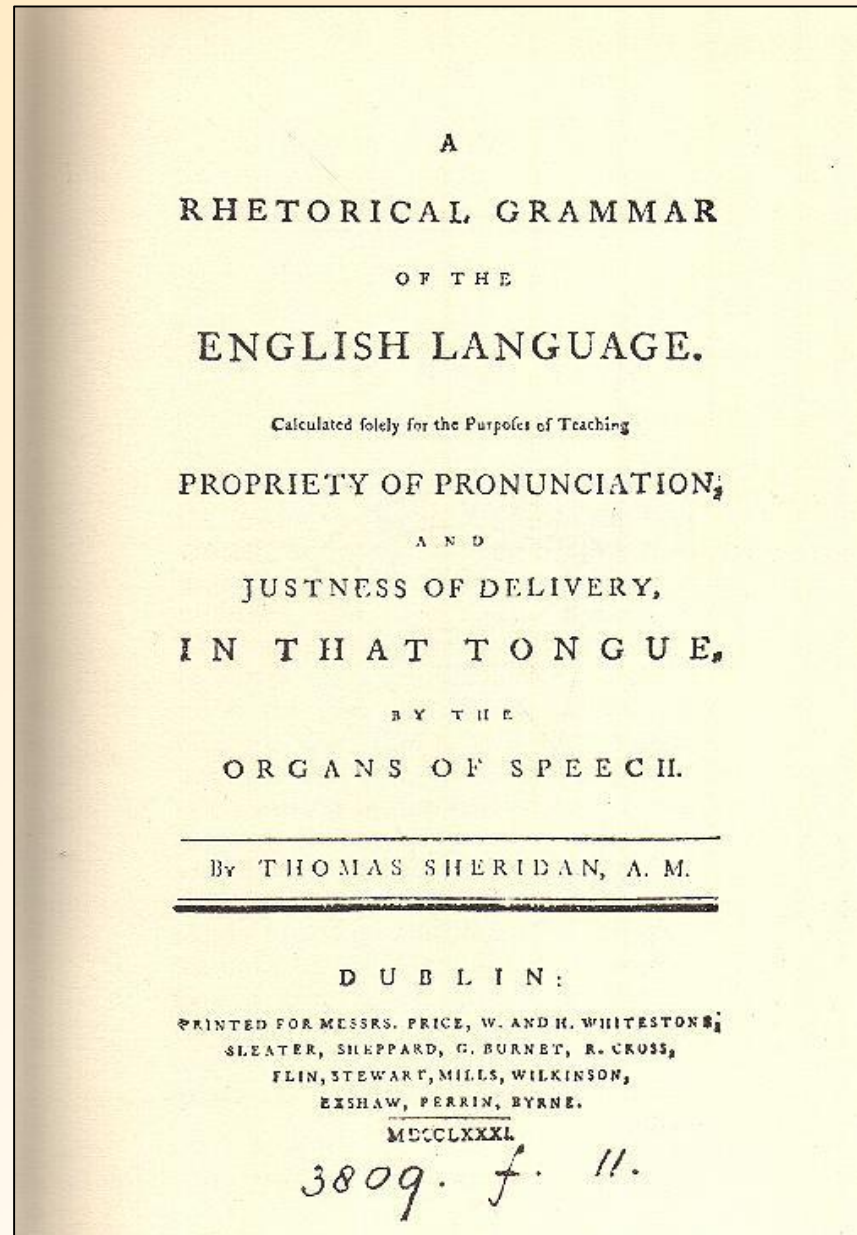
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L O N D O N :

PRINTED FOR J. DODSLEY, PALL-MALL; C. DILLY, IN THE POULTRY;  
AND J. WILKIE, ST. PAUL'S CHURCH-YARD.

MDCCLXXX.

# Sheridan *A Rhetorical Grammar of the English Language* (1781)



# Sheridan's system of phonetic transcription

*Scheme of the Vowels.*

	First	Second	Third
<i>a</i>	<sup>1</sup> <i>hat</i>	<sup>2</sup> <i>hate</i>	<sup>3</sup> <i>hall</i>
<i>e</i>	<sup>1</sup> <i>bet</i>	<sup>2</sup> <i>bear</i>	<sup>3</sup> <i>beer</i>
<i>i</i>	<sup>1</sup> <i>fit</i>	<sup>2</sup> <i>fight</i>	<sup>3</sup> <i>field</i>
<i>o</i>	<sup>1</sup> <i>not</i>	<sup>2</sup> <i>note</i>	<sup>3</sup> <i>noose</i>
<i>u</i>	<sup>1</sup> <i>but</i>	<sup>2</sup> <i>bush</i>	<sup>3</sup> <i>blue</i>
<i>y</i>	<sup>1</sup> <i>love-ly</i>	<sup>2</sup> <i>lye</i>	



*Scheme of the Vowels.*

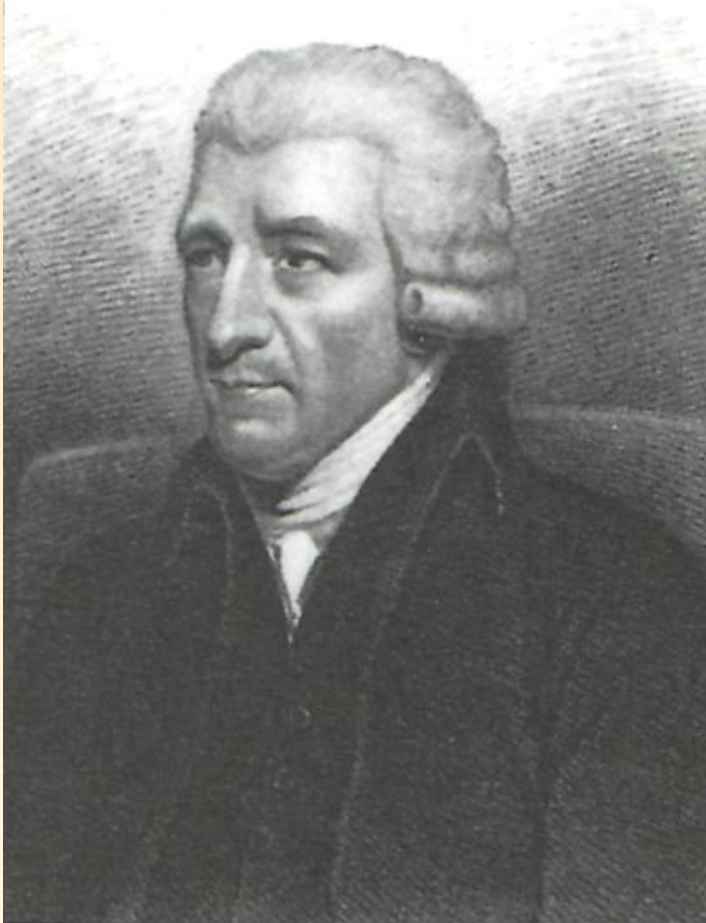
	First	Second	Third
<i>a</i>	<sup>1</sup> <i>hat</i> [æ]	<sup>2</sup> <i>hate</i> [e:]	<sup>3</sup> <i>hall</i> [ɔ:]
<i>e</i>	<sup>1</sup> <i>bet</i> [ɛ]	<sup>2</sup> <i>bear</i> [e:]	<sup>3</sup> <i>beer</i> [i:]
<i>i</i>	<sup>1</sup> <i>fit</i> [ɪ]	<sup>2</sup> <i>fight</i> [aɪ]	<sup>3</sup> <i>field</i> [i:]
<i>o</i>	<sup>1</sup> <i>not</i> [ɒ]	<sup>2</sup> <i>note</i> [o:]	<sup>3</sup> <i>noose</i> [u:]
<i>u</i>	<sup>1</sup> <i>but</i> [ʌ]	<sup>2</sup> <i>bush</i> [ʊ]	<sup>3</sup> <i>blue</i> [u:]
<i>y</i>	<sup>1</sup> <i>love-ly</i> [i]	<sup>2</sup> <i>lye</i> [aɪ]	

Sheridan uses the additional term 'palatine' to refer to /g, k, l, r/

The labial are four,	eb	ep	ef	ev.
Dental eight,	ed	et	eth	eth.
	ez	e s	e h	ezh.
Palatine four,	eg	ek	el	er.
Nasal three,	em	en	ing.	

(Sheridan 1781: 10)

# John Walker



**Walker, John (1732-1807)**  
A Londoner and prescriptive author of the late 18th century, best known for his *Critical pronouncing dictionary* (1791) which enjoyed great popularity in its day.

A  
RHYMING DICTIONARY:

ANSWERING

AT THE SAME TIME, THE PURPOSES

OF

SPELLING AND PRONOUNCING

THE

English Language,

ON

A PLAN NOT HITHERTO ATTEMPTED.

IN WHICH

- I. The whole *Language* is arranged according to it's *Terminations*.
- II. Every *Word* is explained and divided into *Syllables* exactly as pronounced.
- III. Multitudes of *Words*, liable to a *Double Pronunciation*, are fixed in their *True Sound*, by a Rhyme.
- IV. Many of the most difficult *Words* are rendered easy to be pronounced by being classed according to their *Endings*.
- V. Numerous *Classes of Words* are ascertained in their *Pronunciation* by distinguishing them, into Perfect, nearly Perfect, and Allowable Rhymes.

TO WHICH IS PREFIXED

A copious INTRODUCTION to the various Uses of the Work, with critical and practical OBSERVATIONS on Orthography, Syllabication, Pronunciation, and Rhyme;

AND,

FOR THE PURPOSE OF POETRY,

IS ADDED,

AN INDEX OF ALLOWABLE RHYMES,

WITH AUTHORITIES FOR THEIR USAGE FROM OUR BEST POETS.

By J. WALKER,

AUTHOR OF THE CRITICAL PRONOUNCING DICTIONARY, &c.

Fronte, exile negotium,  
Et dignum pueris putes,  
Aggressus, labor arduus. Terentian. Maur.

THE THIRD EDITION, IMPROVED.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR T. CADELL AND W. DAVIES; LONGMAN, HURST, REES ORME, AND BROWN; BALDWIN, CRADOCK, AND JOY; J. BOOTH; SHERWOOD, NEELY, AND JONES; G. AND W. B. WHITTAKER; J. WALKER; AND SIMPKIN AND MARSHALL.

1819.

John Walker 1775

*Rhyming Dictionary  
of the English  
Language*

London

A  
**RHYMING, SPELLING,**  
 AND  
**PRONOUNCING DICTIONARY.**

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A.

- A* The first letter of the alphabet, s.  
*Baa* The cry of sheep, s.  
*Abba* A Syriac word, signifying father, s.  
*As-sa-ra-bac'ca* A plant, s.  
*Fe-luc'cu* A small open boat, s.  
*An-gel'i-ca* A plant, s.  
*Ba-sil'i-ca* The middle vein of the arm, s.  
*Vom'i-ca* An encysted tumour in the lungs, s.  
*Pi'cu* The green sickness; a printing letter, s.  
*Sci-at'i-ca* The hip-gout, s.  
*An-a-sar'ca* A sort of dropsy, or pitting of the flesh, s.  
*Ar-ma'da* A large fleet of ships of war, s.  
*Cas'sa-da* An American plant, s.  
*Co-lo-quin'ti-da* The bitter apple, s.  
*As-a-foet'i-da* A stinking gum, s.  
*Cre-den'da* Articles of faith, s. plur.  
*Pan-a-cæ'a* A universal medicine; an herb, s.  
*I-de'a* Mental imagination, s.  
*Bo-hea'* A species of tea, s.  
*Lea* Grass land enclosed, s.  
*Flea* A troublesome insect, s.  
*To flea* To clean from fleas, v. a.  
*Plea* Allegation; form of pleading; excuse, s.  
*Guin'ea* A gold coin, value 21s. rhymes whinny, s.  
*Di-ar-rhoe'a* A flux of the belly, s.  
*Gon-or-rhoe'a* A venereal running, s.  
*Ap-or-rhoe'a* Effluvium; emanation, s.  
*Dysp-noe'a* A difficulty of breathing, s.  
*Or-thop-noe'a* A disorder of the lungs, s.  
*Pea* A well-known kind of pulse, s.  
*A're-a* An open surface, as the floor of a room, s.  
*Sea* The ocean; large lake, s.  
*Tea* A Chinese plant, s.  
*Yea* Yes, ad.  
*Sofu* A very wide movable seat, s.  
*A'ga* A Turkish military officer, s.  
*O-mé'ga* The last letter of the Greek alphabet, s.



Just as Samuel Johnson had sought patronage for his dictionary from Lord Chesterfield (Philip Dormer Stanhope, 1694-1773), Walker appealed to the famous actor David Garrick (1717-1779) for similar support for his dictionary. Both authors did this by dedicating the plan for their respective dictionaries to their would-be patrons.

TO

DAVID GARRICK, Esq.

SIR,

THE same motives which induced me to solicit your patronage for the General Idea of a Pronouncing Dictionary, have determined me to prefix your name to the present work. If either have a sufficient degree of merit to recommend them to the attention of the public, it is in a great measure owing to the early opportunities I have had of observing your pronunciation on the stage, and the frequent advice you have favoured me with in the prosecution of my enquiries. Without any apology, therefore, I present you with a production, which, if useful to the public, will be allowed to be properly addressed to you; and, if worthless, will at least be a proof of your readiness to encourage even the faintest endeavours in the service of the muses; a disposition which will raise you a nobler monument with posterity than that delicate distinction of character, that intensely animated expression, in which you excel as an actor, or that strenuous perseverance in the arduous duties of a manager, which has so largely contributed to the credit and improvement of the English stage.

I am, SIR,

With the utmost respect,

Your most obedient Servant,

J. WALKER.

A  
RHETORICAL GRAMMAR,  
OR  
COURSE OF LESSONS  
IN  
ELOCUTION.

---

Mira est natura vocis, cujus quidem è tribus omnino fonis inflexo, acuto, gravi, tanta fit, et tam suavis varietas perfecta in cantibus. Est autem in dicendo etiam quidam cantus. CICERO, Orator.

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By J. WALKER,  
AUTHOR OF ELEMENTS OF ELOCUTION, &c.

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LONDON,  
Printed for the AUTHOR,  
And Sold by G. ROBINSON, Pater-noster-Row; and  
T. CADELL, in the Strand.  
MDCCLXXXV.

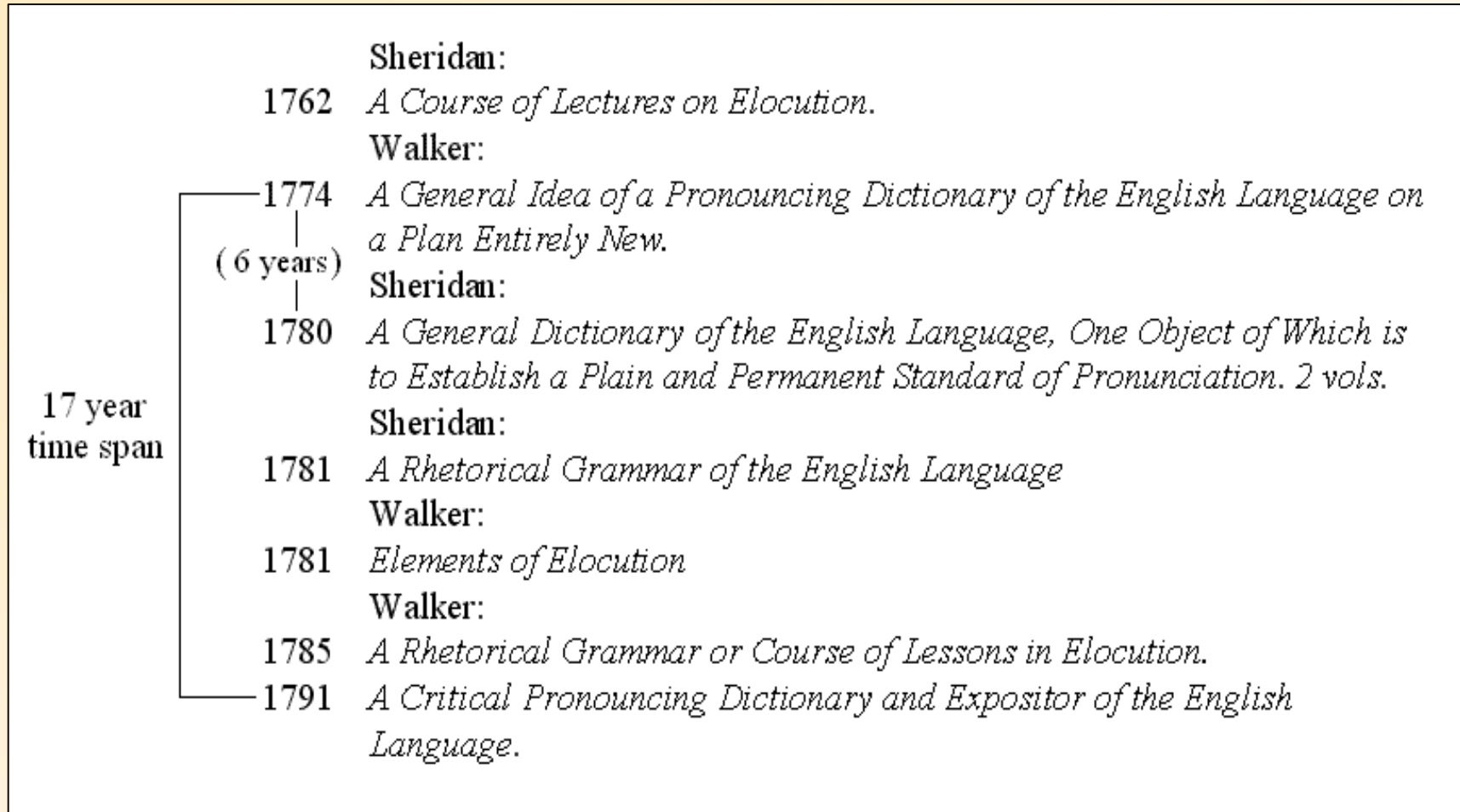
John Walker 1785

*A Rhetorical  
Grammar or Course  
of Lessons in  
Elocution*

London



## Comparison of publication dates for Sheridan and Walker



Walker (1791: iii) on Sheridan:

‘It must, indeed, be confessed, that Mr. Sheridan’s Dictionary is greatly superior to every other that preceded it; and his method of conveying the sound of words, by spelling them as they are pronounced, is highly rational and useful. – But here sincerity obliges me to stop. The numerous instances I have given of impropriety, inconsistency, and want of acquaintance with the analogies of the Language, sufficiently show how imperfect I think his Dictionary is.’

A CRITICAL  
PRONOUNCING DICTIONARY,  
AND EXPOSITOR OF  
THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE:

IN WHICH, NOT ONLY THE MEANING OF EVERY WORD IS CLEARLY EXPLAINED,  
AND THE SOUND OF EVERY SYLLABLE DISTINCTLY SHOWN,  
BUT, WHERE WORDS ARE SUBJECT TO DIFFERENT PRONUNCIATIONS,  
THE AUTHORITIES OF OUR BEST PRONOUNCING DICTIONARIES ARE FULLY EXHIBITED,  
THE REASONS FOR EACH ARE AT LARGE DISPLAYED, AND THE  
PREFERABLE PRONUNCIATION IS POINTED OUT.

*To which are prefixed,*

PRINCIPLES OF ENGLISH PRONUNCIATION:

IN WHICH THE SOUNDS OF LETTERS, SYLLABLES, AND WORDS, ARE CRITICALLY  
INVESTIGATED, AND SYSTEMATICALLY ARRANGED;  
THE INFLUENCE OF THE GREEK AND LATIN ACCENT AND QUANTITY, ON THE ACCENT AND QUANTITY  
OF THE ENGLISH, IS THOROUGHLY EXAMINED, AND CLEARLY DEFINED;  
AND THE ANALOGIES OF THE LANGUAGE ARE SO FULLY SHOWN AS TO LAY THE FOUNDATION  
OF A CONSISTENT AND RATIONAL PRONUNCIATION.

LIKEWISE,

*Rules to be observed by the Natives of Scotland, Ireland, and London,  
for avoiding their respective peculiarities; and*  
DIRECTIONS TO FOREIGNERS, FOR ACQUIRING A KNOWLEDGE OF THE USE OF THIS DICTIONARY.

The whole interspersed with

OBSERVATIONS, ETYMOLOGICAL, CRITICAL, AND GRAMMATICAL.

BY JOHN WALKER,

AUTHOR OF ELEMENTS OF ELOCUTION, RHYMING DICTIONARY, &c. &c.

*Quare, si fieri potest, et verba omnia, et vox, hujus alumnorum urbis eleant: ut oratio Romana placere videatur, non civitate donata.—Quint.*

THE FIFTEENTH EDITION.

LONDON:

STEREOTYPED AND PRINTED BY A. WILSON, CAMDEN TOWN;  
FOR T. CADEL AND W. DAVIES; G. WILKIE; LONGMAN, HURST, REES, ORME, AND BROWN;  
B. AND R. CROSBY; G. AND S. ROBINSON; CRADOCK AND JOY; SHERWOOD,  
NEELY, AND JONES; AND WALKER, EDWARDS, AND REYNOLDS.

1815.

John Walker 1791

*A Critical  
Pronouncing  
Dictionary of the  
English Language*

London

***A Critical Pronouncing Dictionary,  
and Expositor of the English Language***

*in which not only the meaning of every word is clearly explained, and the sound of every syllable distinctly shown, but, where words are subject to different pronunciations, the authorities of our best pronouncing dictionaries are fully exhibited, the reasons for each are at large displayed and the preferable pronunciation is pointed out.*

*To which are prefixed,*

**PRINCIPLES OF ENGLISH PRONUNCIATION:**

*in which the sounds of letters, syllables, and words, are critically investigated, and systematically arranged; The influence of the Greek and Latin accent and quantity, on the accent and quantity of English, is thoroughly examined, and clearly defined, and the analogies of the language are so fully shown as to lay the foundation of a consistent and rational pronunciation*

*likewise,*

*Rules to be observed by the Natives of Scotland, Ireland, and London, for avoiding their respective peculiarities; and*

**DIRECTIONS TO FOREIGNERS, FOR ACQUIRING A KNOWLEDGE OF THE USE OF THIS DICTIONARY.**

# Walker's system of phonetic transcription

*An Analogical Table of the Consonants.*

Mute labials	{ sharp <i>p</i> , <i>pump</i> flat <i>b</i> , <i>bomb</i> }		labio-nasal liquid <i>m</i>	
Hissing labials	{ sharp <i>f</i> , <i>if</i> flat <i>v</i> , <i>of</i> }			
Mute dentals	{ sharp <i>t</i> , <i>tut</i> flat <i>d</i> , <i>dad</i> }	aspirated	{ <i>etch</i> , <i>edge</i> , or <i>j</i> }	dental-nasal liquid <i>n</i> .
Hissing dentals	{ sharp <i>s</i> , <i>say</i> flat <i>z</i> , <i>as</i> }		{ <i>esh</i> , <i>passion</i> <i>ezhe</i> , <i>vision</i> }	dental-nasal liquid <i>l</i> .
Lisping dentals	{ sharp <i>eth</i> , <i>death</i> flat <i>the</i> , <i>sythe</i> }			
Gutterals	{ sharp <i>k</i> , <i>kick</i> flat <i>g</i> , (hard) <i>gag</i> }		gutteral liquid <i>r</i> .	
Dento-gutteral or nasal <i>ng</i> , <i>hang</i> .				

Terms in Walker's *Dictionary* (left column) and their present-day equivalents (right column)

sink	delete
sharp	voiceless
flat	voiced
mute	stop
hissing	fricative
lisping	interdental fricative
guttural	velar
slender	raised (of vowels)

DUKE, dūke. f. (376).

One of the highest order of nobility in England.

☞ There is a slight deviation often heard in the pronunciation of this word, as if written *Dook*; but this borders on vulgarity; the true sound of the *u* must be carefully preserved, as if written *Dewk*. There is another impropriety in pronouncing this word, as if written *Jook*; this is not so vulgar as the former, and arises from an ignorance of the influence of accent.—See Principles, No. 462.

/dju:k/ versus /du:k/ versus /dʒu:k/



IMBECILE, <sup>2</sup>im-bēs'sil, or <sup>1</sup>im-bē-  
sēel'. a.

Weak, feeble, wanting strength of either  
mind or body.

☞ Dr. Johnson, Dr. Ash, Dr. Kenrick, and  
Entick, accent this word on the second syl-  
lable, as in the Latin *imbecilis*; but Mr. Scott  
and Mr. Sheridan on the last, as in the French  
*imbécille*. The latter is, in my opinion, the  
more fashionable, but the former more ana-  
logical. We have too many of these French  
founding words; and if the number cannot  
be diminished, they should, at least, not be  
suffered to increase. (112).

This word, says Dr. Johnson, is corruptly  
written *embezzle*. This corruption, how-  
ever, is too well established to be altered:  
and, as it is appropriated to a particular spe-  
cies of deficiency, the corruption is less to be  
regretted.

/im'be:si:l/

versus

/imbə'si:l/

## HORIZON, hŏ-rî'zôn. f.

The line that terminates the view.

☞ This word was, till of late years, universally pronounced, in prose, with the accent on the first syllable; and that this is most agreeable to English analogy cannot be doubted. But Poets have as constantly placed the accent on the second syllable, because this syllable has the accent in the Greek and Latin word; and this accentuation is now become so general as to render the former pronunciation vulgar.

/ˈhɒrɪzən/    versus    /həˈraɪzən/

To IMPUGN, ɪm-puːn'. v. a.

To attack, to assault.

¶ Notwithstanding the clear analogy there is for pronouncing this word in the manner it is marked, there is a repugnance at leaving out the *g*, which nothing but frequent use will take away. If *sign* were in as little use as *impugn* we should feel the same repugnance at pronouncing it in the manner we do. But as language is association, no wonder association should have such power over it. For the analogies that lead us to this pronunciation, see Principles, No. 385.

Mr. Sheridan, Mr. Nares, and Mr. Scott, pronounce the word as I have marked it; that is, with the *g* silent, and the *u* long; but Dr. Kenrick, Mr. Perry, and Buchanan, though they suppress the *g*, pronounce the *u* short. That this short sound is contrary to analogy cannot be doubted, when we take a view of the words of this termination; and the only plea for it is, the short sound of the vowels before *gm* in *phlegm*, *diaphragm*, *parapegm*, *apophthegm*, and *paradigm*, (389): but as the accent is not on any of these syllables, except *phlegm*, which is irregular, (389), it is no wonder the vowel should shorten, as it so frequently does in the numerous terminations in *ile*, *ine*, *ite*, &c. (147).

/ɪm'pju:n/

VERSUS

/ɪm'pʌn/

## The aftermath of Sheridan and Walker

Both were held in great esteem and their influence can be recognised in the revamping of the originals which occurred in the 50 years or so after their deaths, consider the following examples (one for each author):

Jones, Stephen 1798. *Sheridan Improved. A General Pronouncing and Explanatory Dictionary of the English Language*. 3rd edition. London: Vernor and Hood.

Smart, Benjamin H. 1836. *Walker Remodelled. A New Critical Pronouncing Dictionary of the English Language*. London: T. Cadell.

## The legacy of Sheridan and Walker

Did the strictures of Walker or Sheridan influence the later pronunciation of non-local British English? The answer to this question must be 'no'. In some cases Walker, as opposed to Sheridan, favoured a form which was later to become default in English, e.g. *merchant* for *marchant*. But this did not happen because of Walker's opinion on the matter.

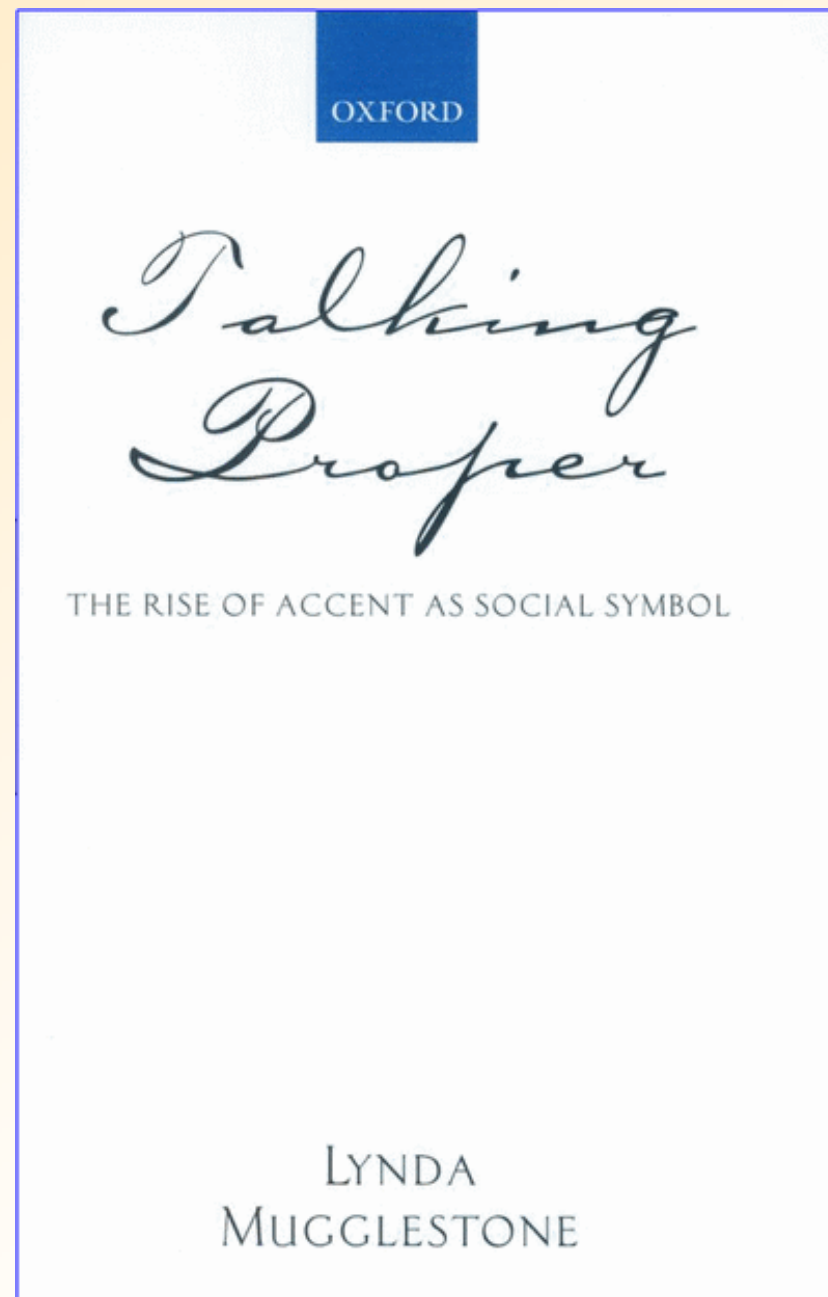
In many respects, Walker was swimming against the tide of language change. His insistence on maintaining regular patterns of pronunciation across the language (his 'analogy') and, above all, his view that the spoken word should be close to the written word, meant that he favoured archaic pronunciations. His view that syllable-final /r/ should be pronounced was already conservative in his day. In many of his statements he does, however, accept change although he might not have agreed with it.

The legacy of both Sheridan and Walker should be seen in more general terms. Even if their individual recommendations were not accepted by standard speakers of British English, both were responsible for furthering general notions of prescriptivism. And certainly both contributed in no small way to the perennial concern with pronunciation which characterises British society to this day.

# The English concern with pronunciation

Pronunciation in English is a yardstick of one's language. More than European countries, the English judge the standardness of someone's speech by its phonetics.

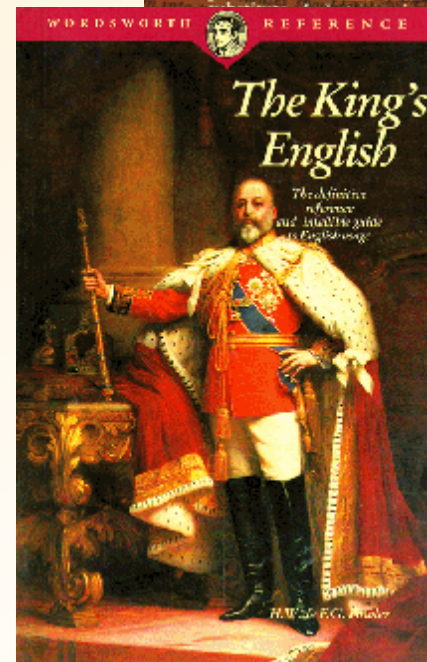
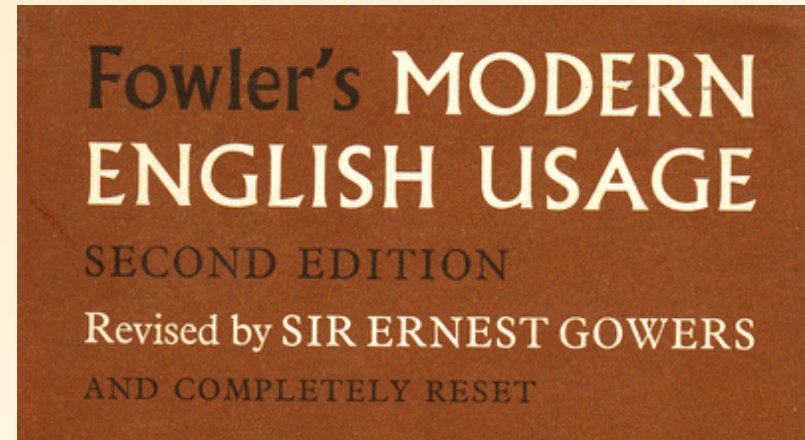
The ideal which arose during the 18th century and established itself in the 19th century was that one's speech was not to betray where one came from, i.e. regional accents were frowned upon.





# Self-appointed authorities on English

Henry Watson Fowler (1858-1933) was an English lexicographer whose principal work is *A Dictionary of Modern English Usage* (1926; later revised by Sir Ernest Gowers in 1965). This is a loosely structured commentary on English usage and style. Together with his brother he also wrote *The King's English* (1906).



breakthrough former 65 209 328 forward(s) legerdemain  
to use it forget the...  
ral me called it, for which another may be in scientific...  
us effect substituted to add precision of...  
many other reasons, but which is...  
present to the mind even behind the...  
ship, and...  
shiphood...  
if we call...  
is a ship...  
helped...  
Though...  
not help...  
ng: what...  
e of thos...  
then, th...  
em by th...  
villain...  
is at best...  
stand-...  
a notion...  
another...  
me better...  
reference...  
they will...  
ual name...  
name, or...  
it is not...  
approach...  
nothing...  
that they...  
purchase...  
the sense...  
my own...  
or home...  
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tion that...  
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and at...  
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of the dist...  
way between...  
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twice (or...  
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has a doubl...  
the help of...  
that the...  
is diff...  
the posses...  
will sh...  
of the...  
their more...  
out...  
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to...  
though he...  
of a some...  
industry...  
of a...  
into a mere...  
the dist...

# Issues in Standard English today



## Inside and outside the standard: What slipped through the prescriptivists' net

*I see what you mean; I seen him yesterday; I've seen those students.*

*I do my work every week; I done the work yesterday; I've done that task.*

This type of distribution leads to spurious objections to non-standard forms: two-form verbs involve fewer distinctions and are hence sloppy, lazy, inaccurate, etc. But are they? Just look as this:

*I hit the main road at eight every morning.*

*I hit the curb going around the curve.*

*I've hit that curb before.*

The same is true of other verbs like *bet*, *cast*, etc.

## Persistent non-standard features

- 1) *Them* as a demonstrative pronoun

*Them teachers are annoying.*

- 2) Second person plural personal pronouns

*You (plural) = ye, youse, yuns, y'all. Nowadays = you guys*

- 3) Negative concord

*We're not going to no party. I'm not giving no money to nobody.*

- 4) Unmarked adverbs

*He did the work real well.*

- 5) Double comparisons

*That's more worse than the first one.*

## *General characteristics of standard languages*

Standard forms of language maintain seemingly irrational features. These make the standard more difficult to acquire, less intuitive

The maintenance of the third personal singular inflection in the present-tense of verbs is just such a case. Dialects of English have either dropped this inflection (East Anglia, for instance) or they have re-analysed the ending and use it for a specific purpose, e.g. for an habitual – *I goes there every morning* - or have established correspondences between the inflections and the nature of the verb's subject (Northern Subject Rule).

Despite its own ideology of immutability, even the standard continues to develop. The gradual shift of verb forms from strong to weak is a case in point. *dive : dove : dived* has been more or less replaced by *dive : dived : dived* in present-day English. Another example is the continuous form with stative verbs, e.g. *I'm wanting to go there* for *I want to go there*.

# Conclusion

Standard English is an entity which developed over the past few centuries out of public usage in London and its surroundings. Increasingly, it became independent of place and typical of the educated middle classes.

The features which became part of the standard are not linguistically justified but the result of various factors, e.g. the personal preferences of well-known authors (in grammar) or general long-term developments of the sound system (in pronunciation).

Unfortunately, users of standard English came to see it as the preferred variety and became judgmental of those who spoke a non-standard variety. Here linguists would object and stress that all varieties of a language are of equal value and serve their communities as their own means of communication, irrespective of their relation to an existing standard.

# Literature on the development of modern English

# ENGLISH IN MODERN TIMES

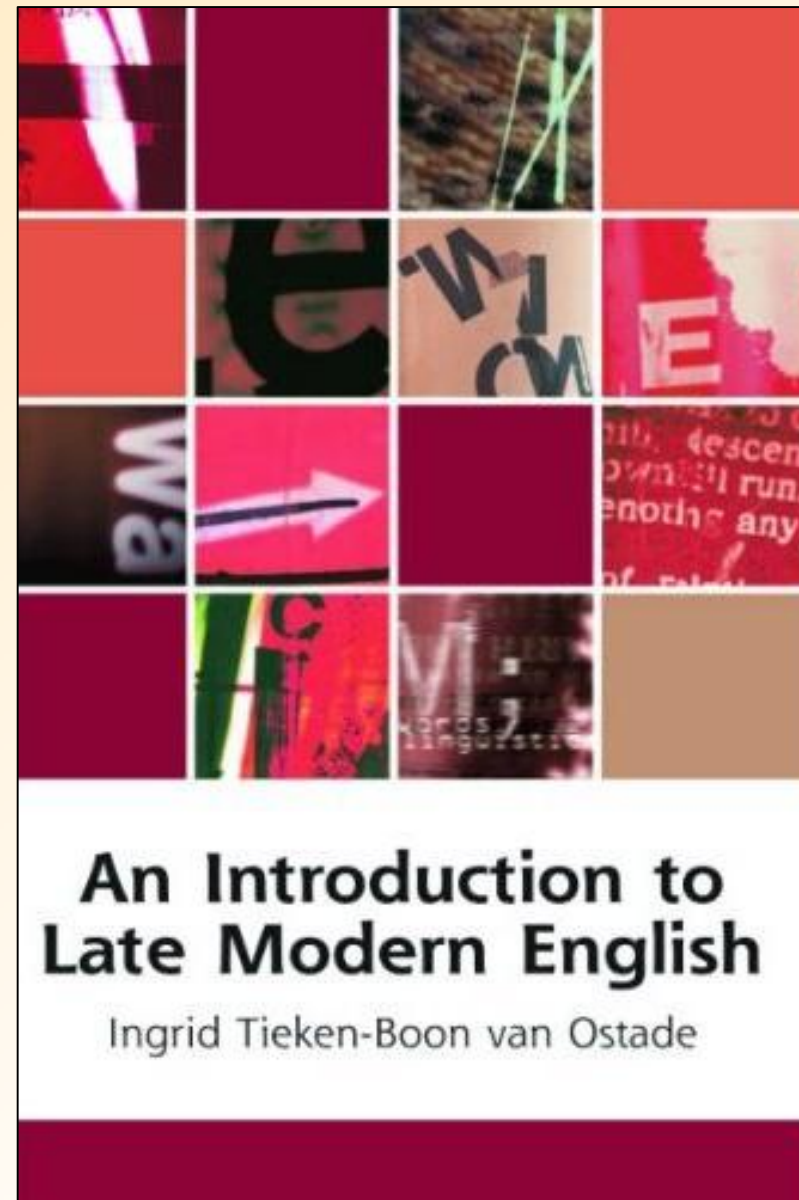
A standard work  
(published in  
2004) on the late  
modern period  
(1700-present)



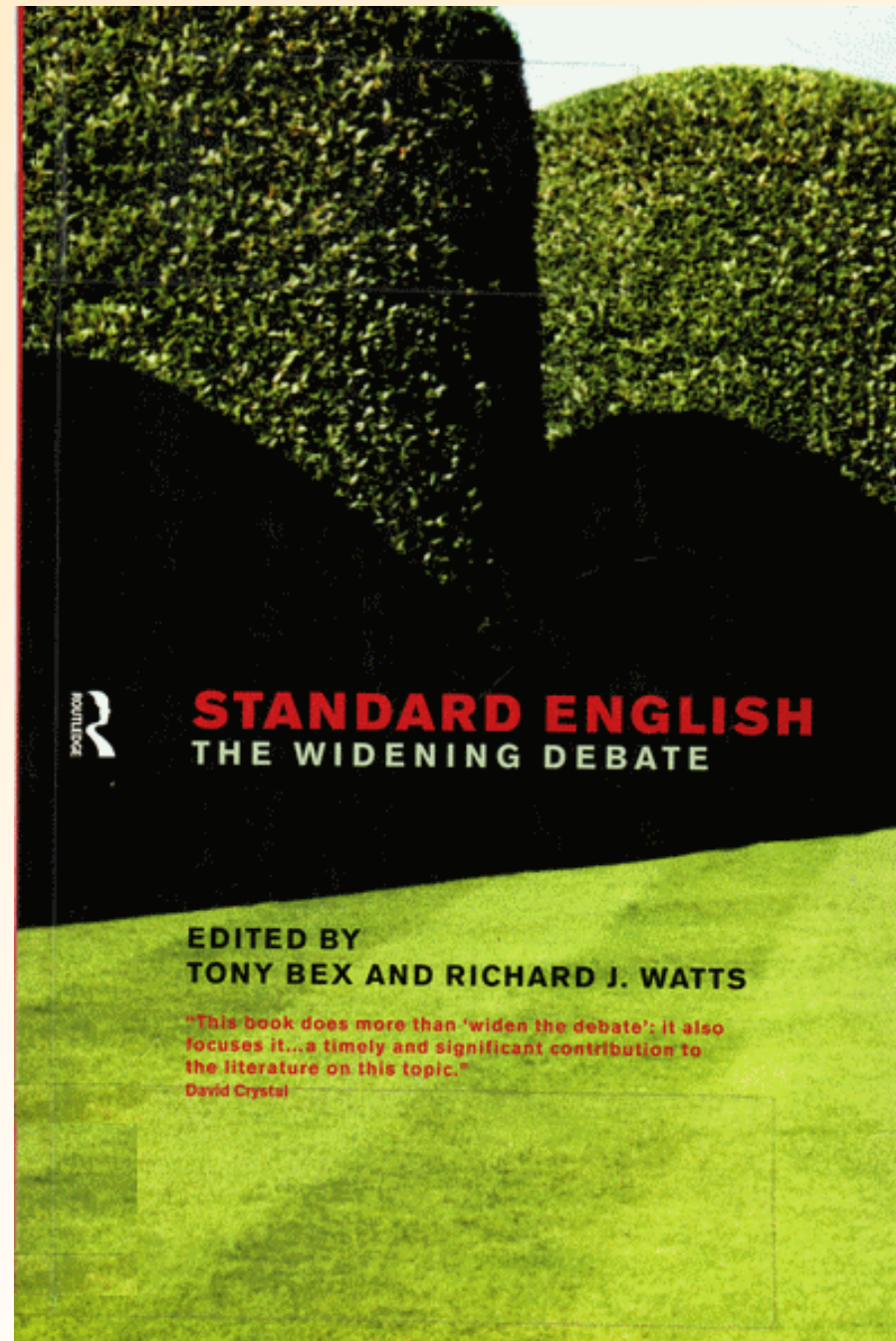
Joan C. Beal

A recent overview  
(published in May  
2009) by a leading  
expert on 18th  
century English.

Published by  
Edinburgh  
University Press.

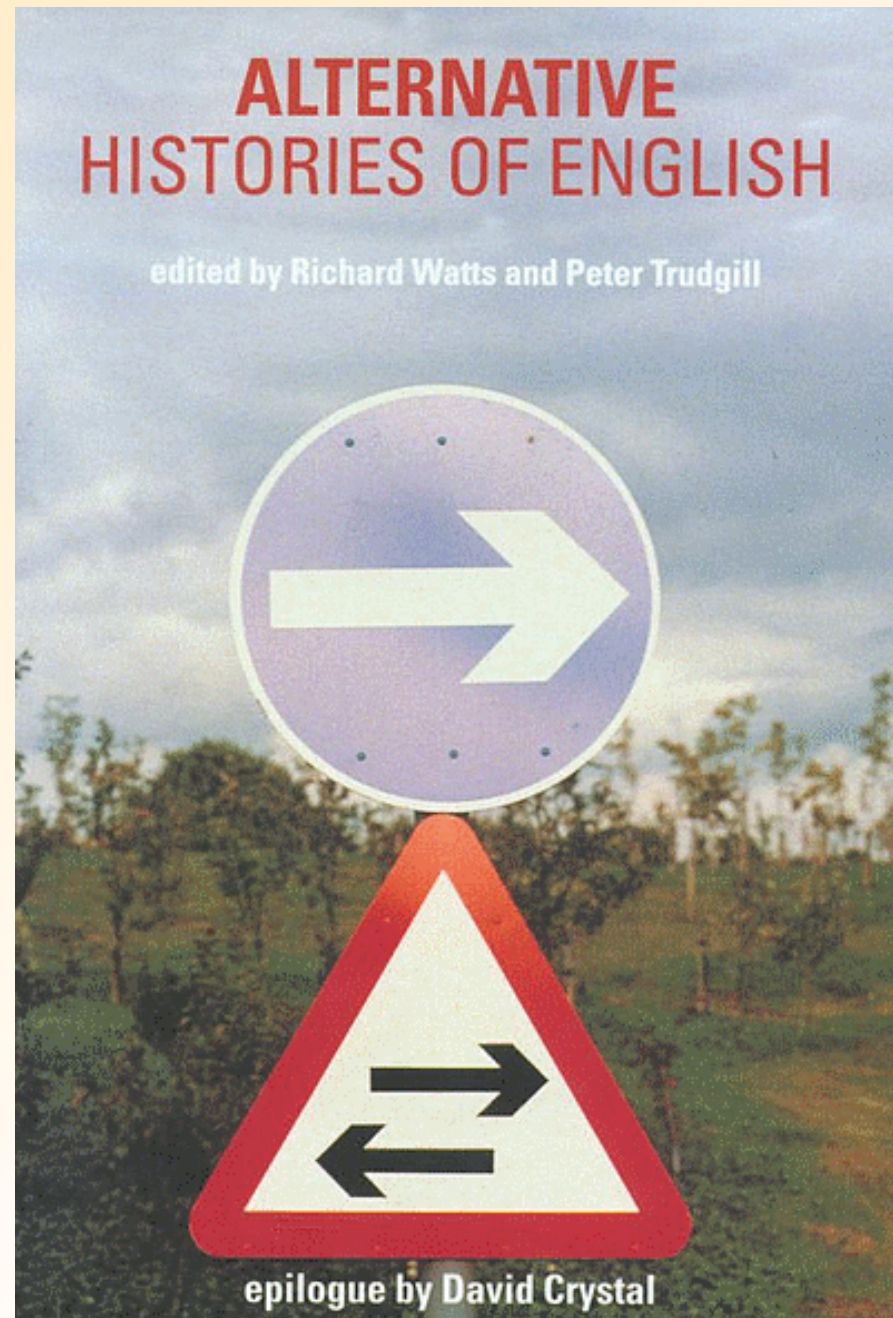


A more flexible view  
of how standard  
English is evolving  
(published in 1999)

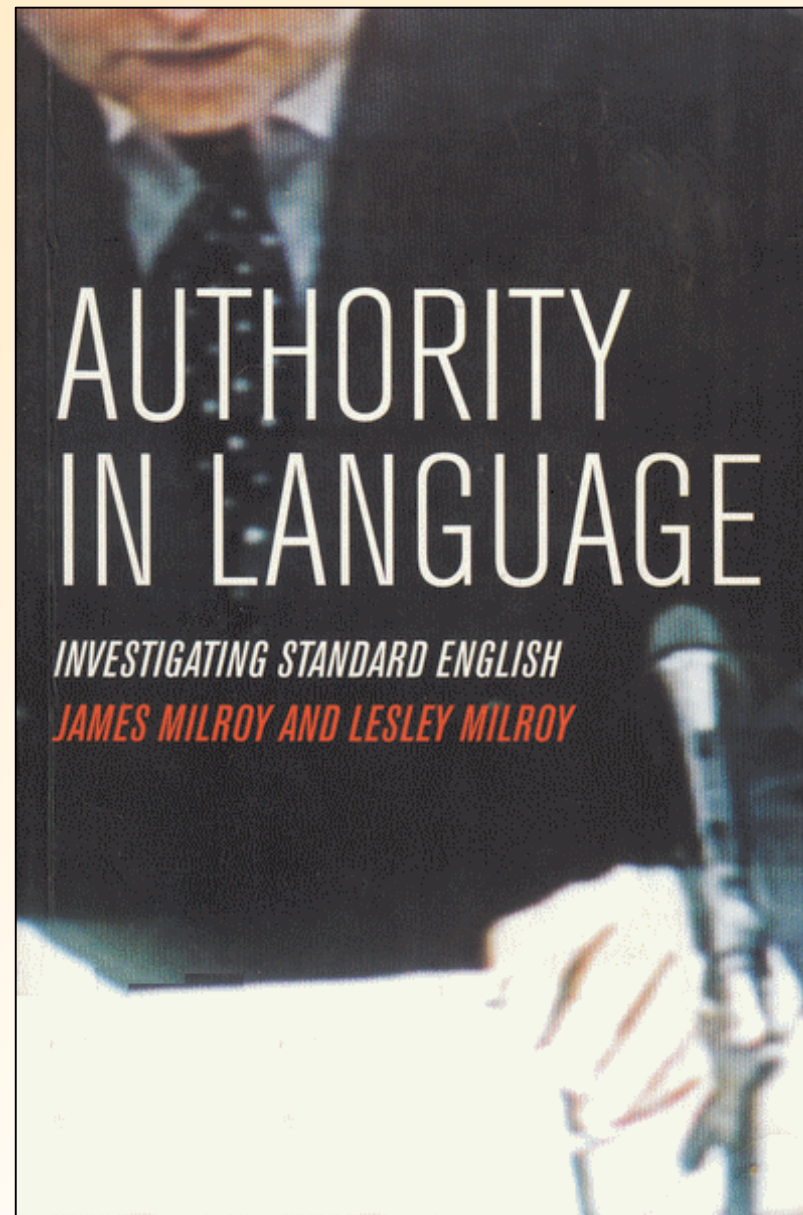




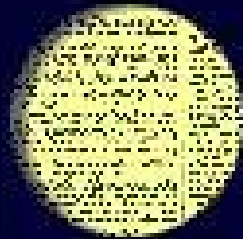
Outside the mainstream:  
the history of varieties of  
English apart from  
southern British English



A critical look at the way in which notions of standard language are used manipulatively and to exclude others.



Authority in printed form:  
major dictionaries of English  
(British and American)



# Oxford English Dictionary

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OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

Oxford English Dictionary

Home Options Entry History Search History Entry Bookmarks Search Bookmarks Find in Page Stop

Oxford English Dictionary

RESULTS ENTRY

**thou, pers. pron., 2nd sing.** SECOND EDITION

thorton, a.  
thortveitite  
thorty  
thoru, poru, thorough, thorw  
thos  
thos, pos  
Thoscan  
those, dem. pron. and a. (pl.)  
thost(e)  
tho't, thot  
thother  
**thou, pers. pron., 2nd sing.**  
thou, v.  
thou, n.  
thou, pou, though(t)  
thought  
though, adv. and conj.  
thoughtless, pagles, adv. or conj.  
thought<sup>1</sup>  
thought<sup>2</sup>, thought  
thought  
thoughted, a.  
thoughten, a.  
thoughtful, a.  
thoughtfully, adv.  
thoughtfulness  
thoughtiness

nom.

PRONUNCIATION SPELLINGS ETYMOLOGY QUOTATIONS DATE CHART

1. The pronoun by which a person (or thing) is addressed, in the nominative singular; the pronoun denoting the person (or thing) spoken to.

*Thou* and its cases *thee*, *thine*, *thy*, were in OE. used in ordinary speech; in ME. they were gradually superseded by the plural *ye*, *you*, *your*, *yours*, in addressing a superior and (later) an equal, but were long retained in addressing an inferior. Long retained by Quakers in addressing a single person, though now less general; still in various dialects used by parents to children, and familiarly between equals, esp. intimates; in other cases considered as rude. In general English used in addressing God or Christ, also in homiletic language, and in poetry, apostrophe, and elevated prose. For details of dialect use, see Wright, *Eng. Dial. Dict.*, *Thou* II, *Eng. Dial. Gram.* §404.

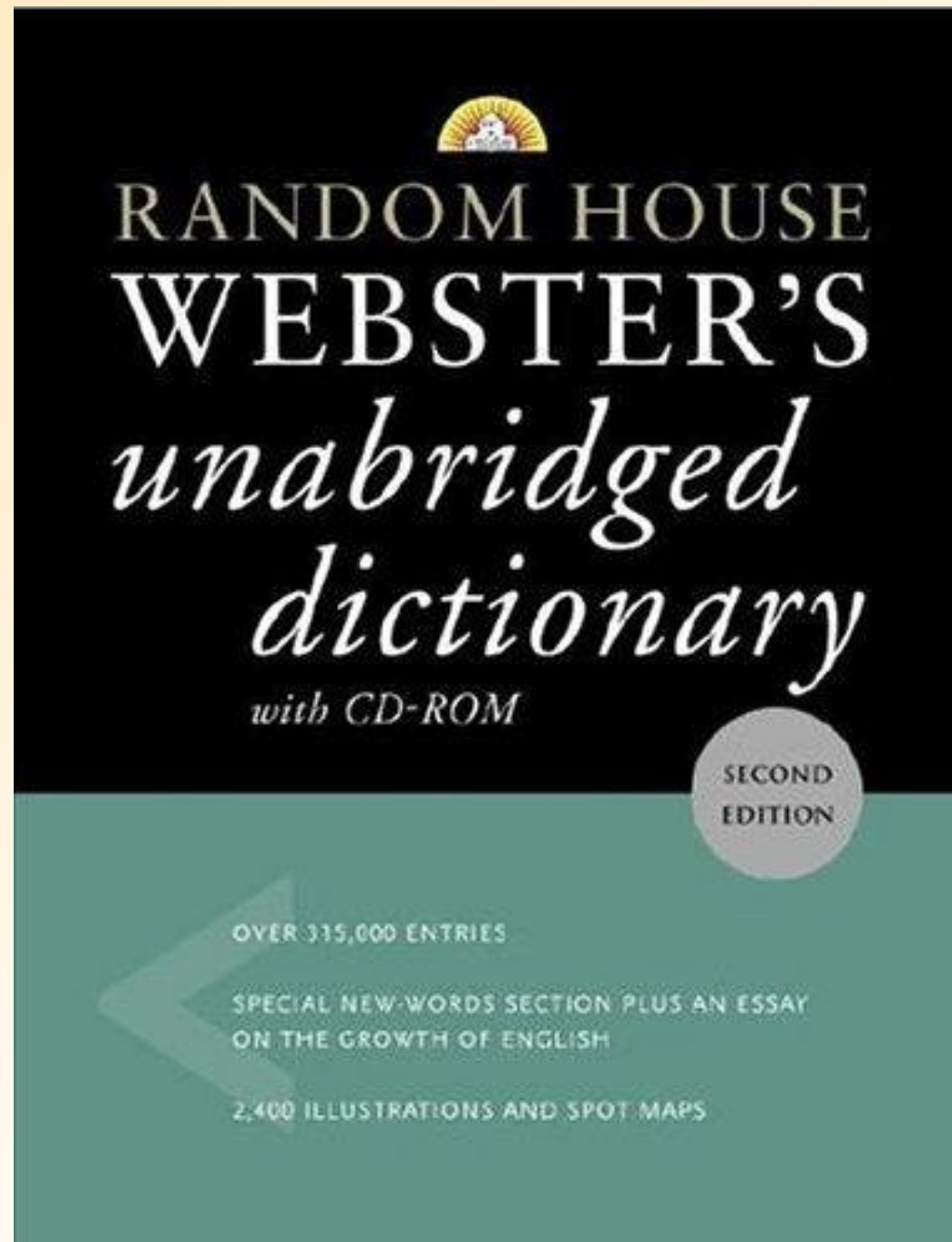
In ME. freq. combined with its verb when this precedes, the *p* being then absorbed in the preceding *t*, as *artow* = art thou, *hastow* = hast thou. The initial *p* also became *t* after *s*, *t*, or *d*, as *hauis tu* = hast thou, *pat tu*, and *tu*: see T 8.

*Beowulf* 507 Eart þu se Beowulf? c825 *Vesp. Psalter* ix. 15 Ðu uphest mec of ȝeatum deaðes. c1205 LAY. 690 Niðing þu ært al deað..Bote þu min lare do. *Ibid.* 2978 þeou [c1275 þou] ært leouere þene mi lif. a1225 *Ancr. R.* 240 þench ec hwat tu owust God, uor his god deden. a1240 *Ureisan* in *Cott. Hom.* 199 So þu dest and so þu schalt. c1250 *Gen. & Ex.* 361 For ðhu min bode-word haues broken, ðhu salt ben ut in sorȝe luken, In swinc ðu salt tilien ði mete. 1297 R. GLOUC. (Rolls) 6371 þou ne ssalt of þin lifode neuere carie noȝt. a1300 *Cursor M.* 19585 (Edin.) Hauis tu [v.rr. þu, þou] na parte..here. *Ibid.* 1253 (Gött.) In þat way sal yu [Cott. þou] find forsoth þi moȝer. *Ibid.* 8306 (Fairf.) Werroure artow [Cott. art þow] gode in fiȝt. c1391 CHAUCER *Astrol.* i. §13 Thanne hastow a brod Rewle. c1440 *Pallad. on Husb.* i. 42 The better may thowe with that water holde. 1535 COVERDALE *Ps.* lxiv. [lxv.] 1 Thou, O God, art prayed in Sion. 1592 SHAKES. *Rom. & Jul.* i. v. 9 Good thou, saue mee a piece of Marchpane. 1597 — 2 *Hen. IV*, ii. ii. 17 How many paire of Silk stockings yu haste. 1671 H. M. tr. *Erasm. Colloq.* 326 Why shouldest thou do so, seeing how thou was not far from thine own shore? 1715–20 POPE *Iliad* xii. 69 Oh thou! bold leader of the Trojan bands, And you, confederate chiefs from foreign lands! 1741 RICHARDSON *Pamela* II. 273, I dare say thou'lt set the good Work forward. a1835 MRS. HEMANS

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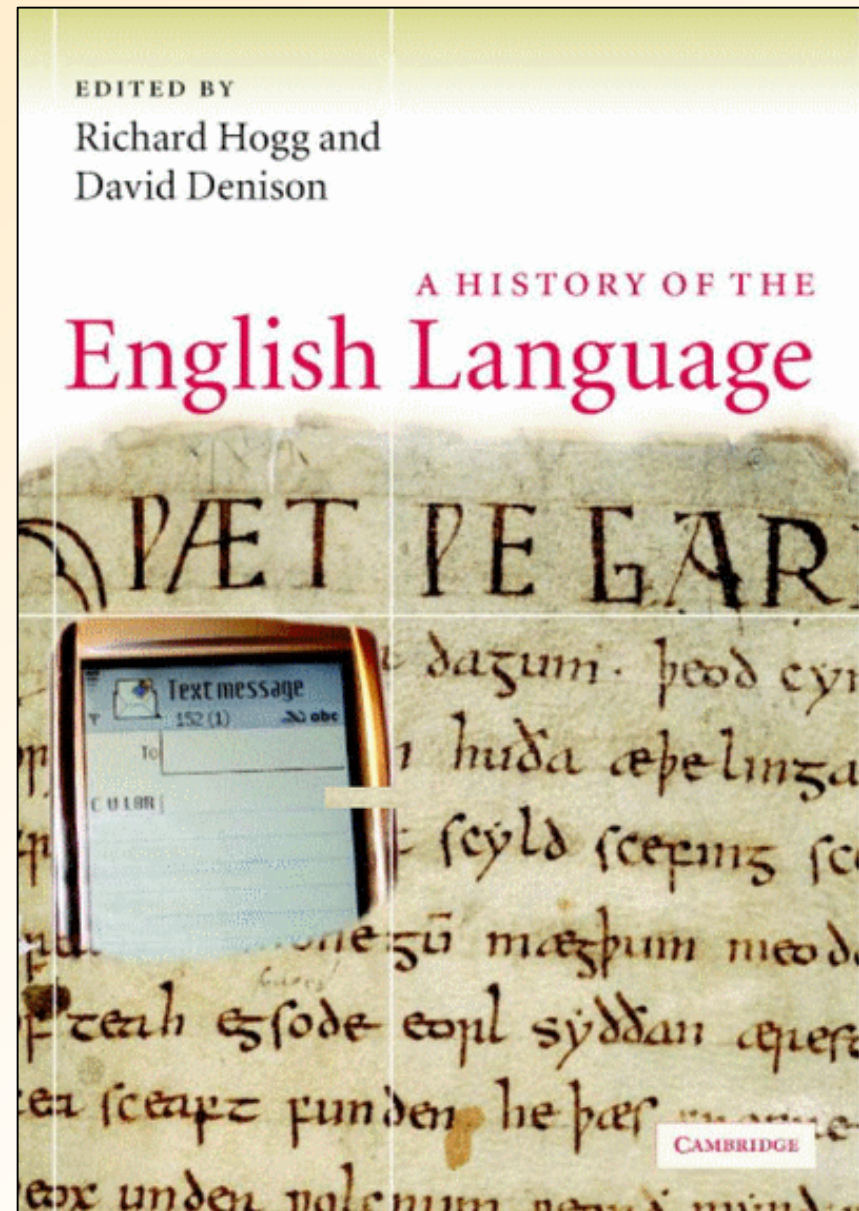
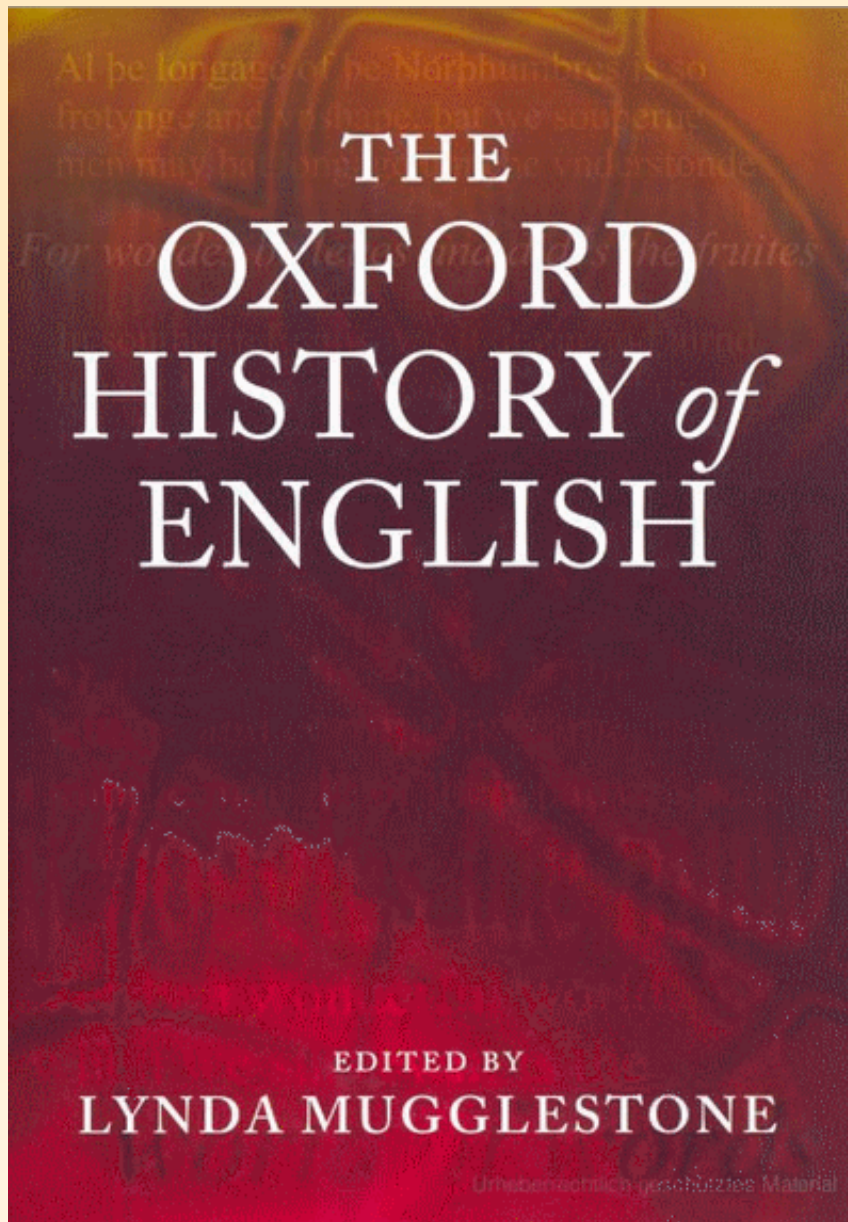
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**HOW TO**

## How to Write With Correct Grammar

By Heidi Noel, eHow Member

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Let's face it. Standard English can be a challenge to write whether you are new to the language or grew up in the U.S. Here are some commonly misused words and grammar rules to remember them by.

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**Instructions** **Difficulty:** Moderately Easy

**Step 1** Lay or Lie? This is one of the greatest correct grammar challenges whether in writing or speech. The general rule that fits a vast majority of uses for these words is: People lie. Objects lay. You say, "I am going to lie down." You lay a book down. The common prayer, "Now I lay me down to sleep..." is correct because the speaker is going to lay him/herself down like you would lay down an object. However, it is not common for us to say, "I'm going to lay myself down". Therefore, the correct word is "lie" when referring to ourselves or other people.

**Step 2** Its or it's? Many people use the apostrophe ( ' ) when they spell this word. Most often that is not the correct grammar. The only time you use "it's" is when you are writing the contraction for "it is". Otherwise, you spell, "its". "He said it's going to be a great day."

**Step 3** Your or You're? Most of the time I see people write "your" when they should have used "you're". To decide which one is the correct grammar, reread your sentence. If you are saying "you are", then you spell "you're". "You're my best friend" = "You are my best friend." "I am your friend" is correct because you are not saying, "I'm you are friend." Here are more examples: "Yours truly." "You're (You are) the best." "This is brought to you by your (not you are) local artists."


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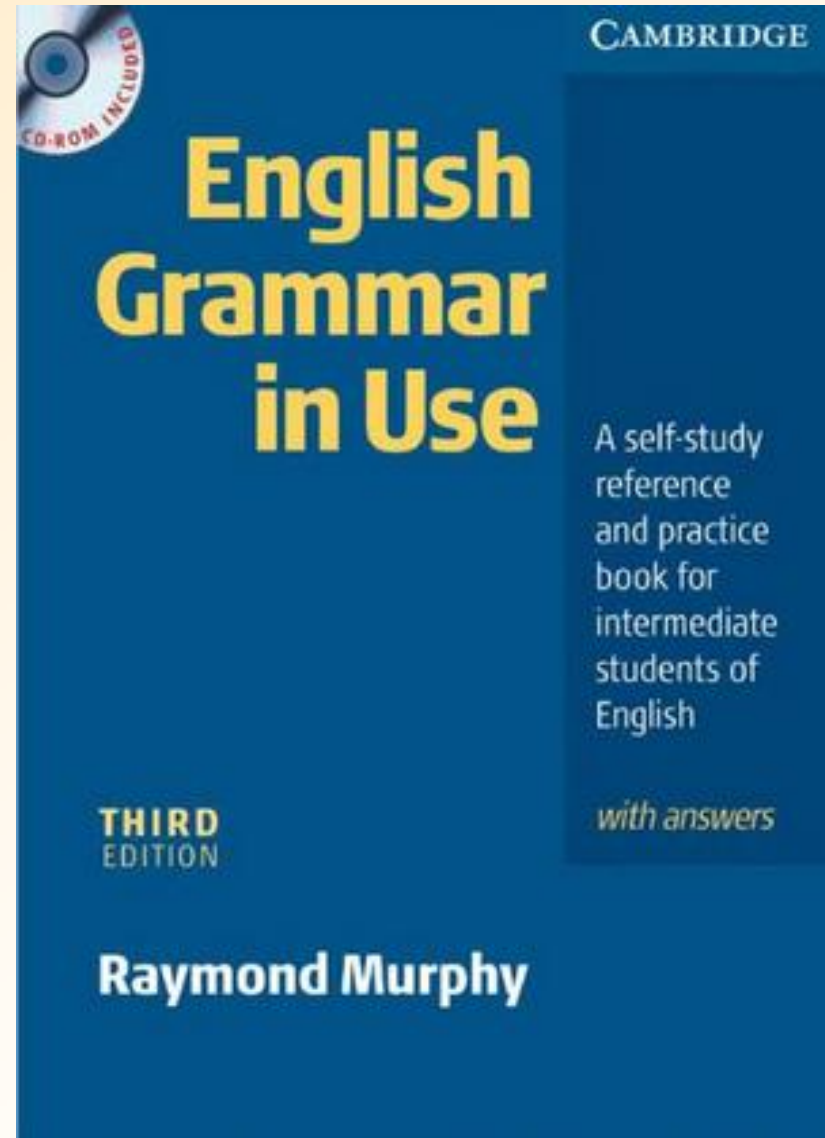
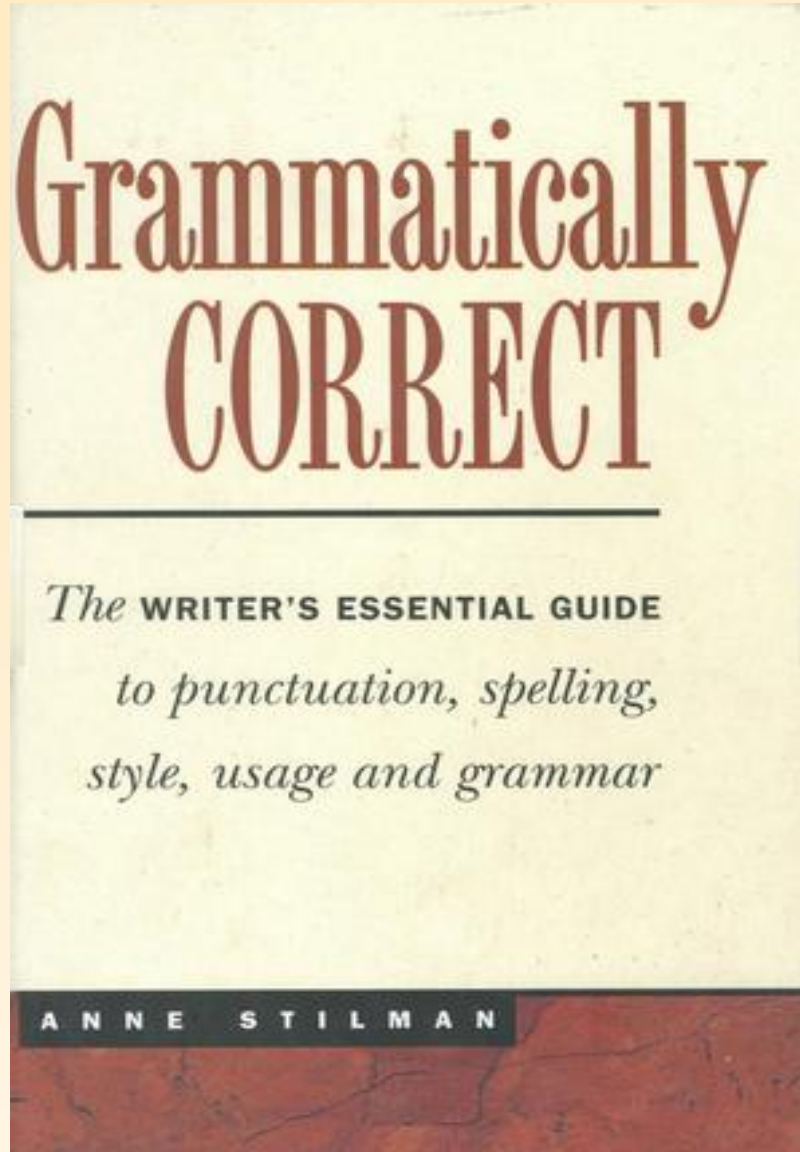
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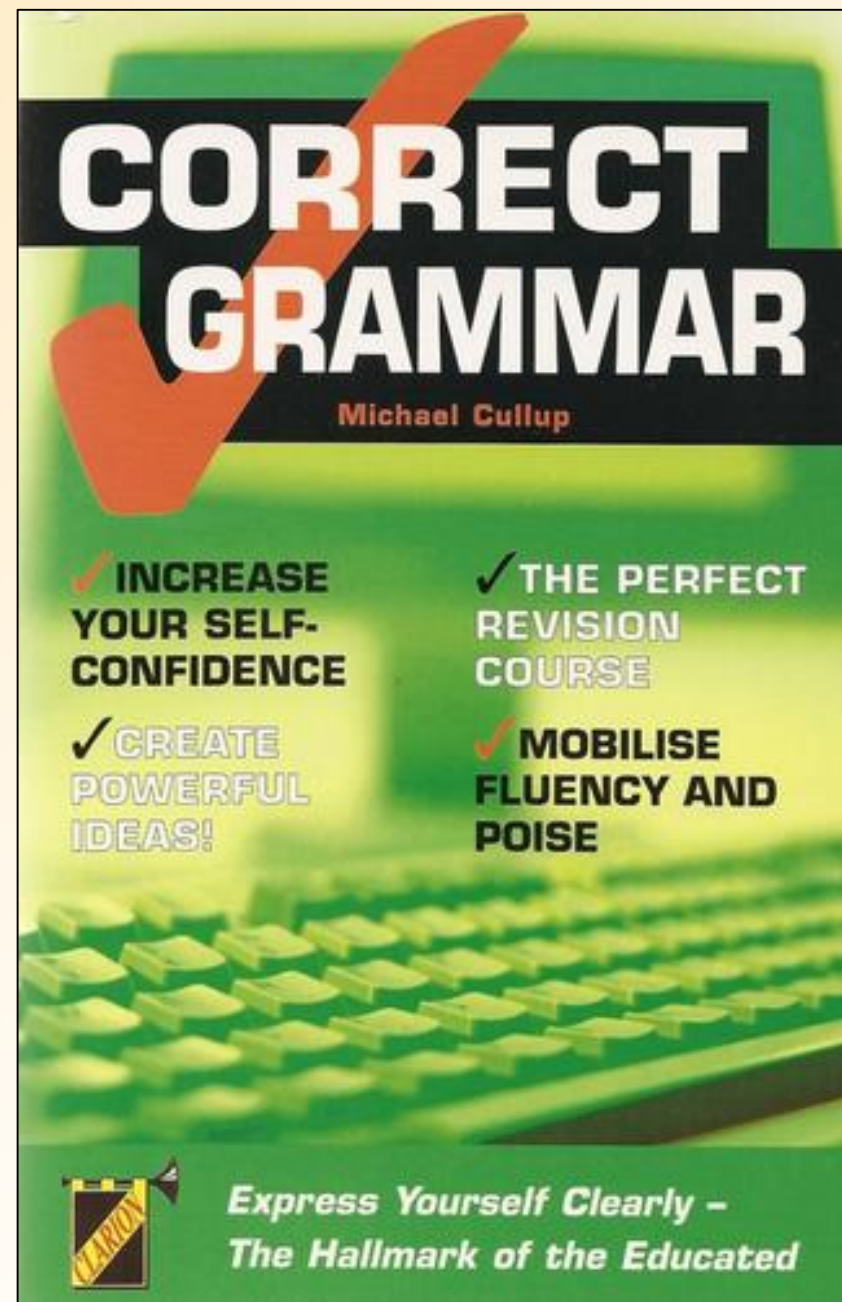


## Books on mastering / using grammar

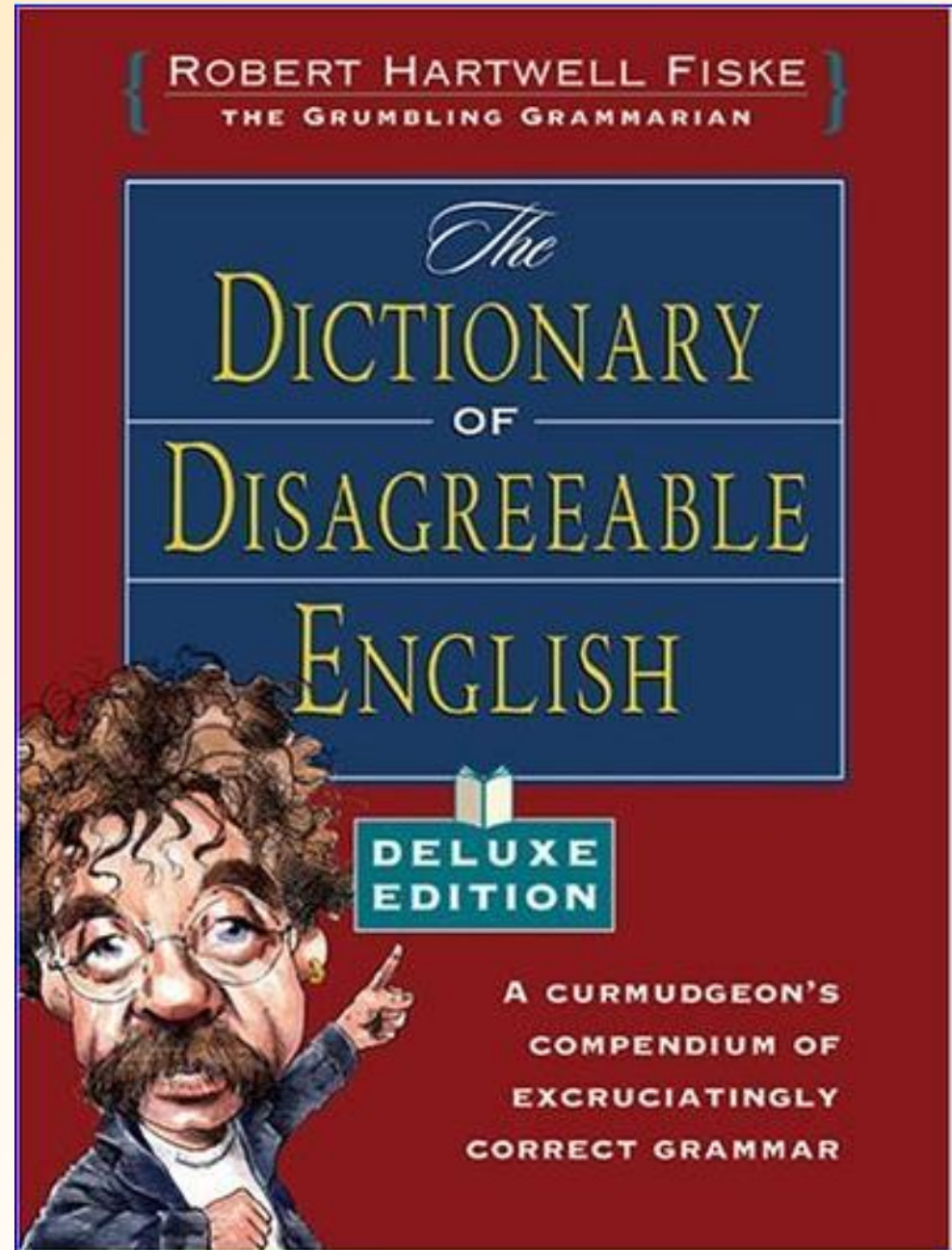




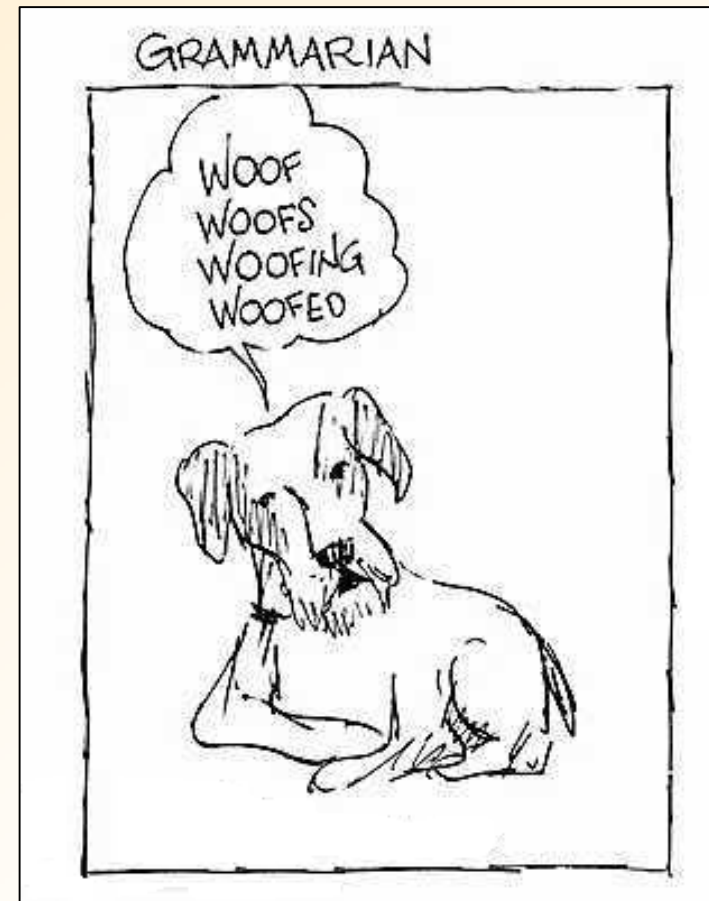
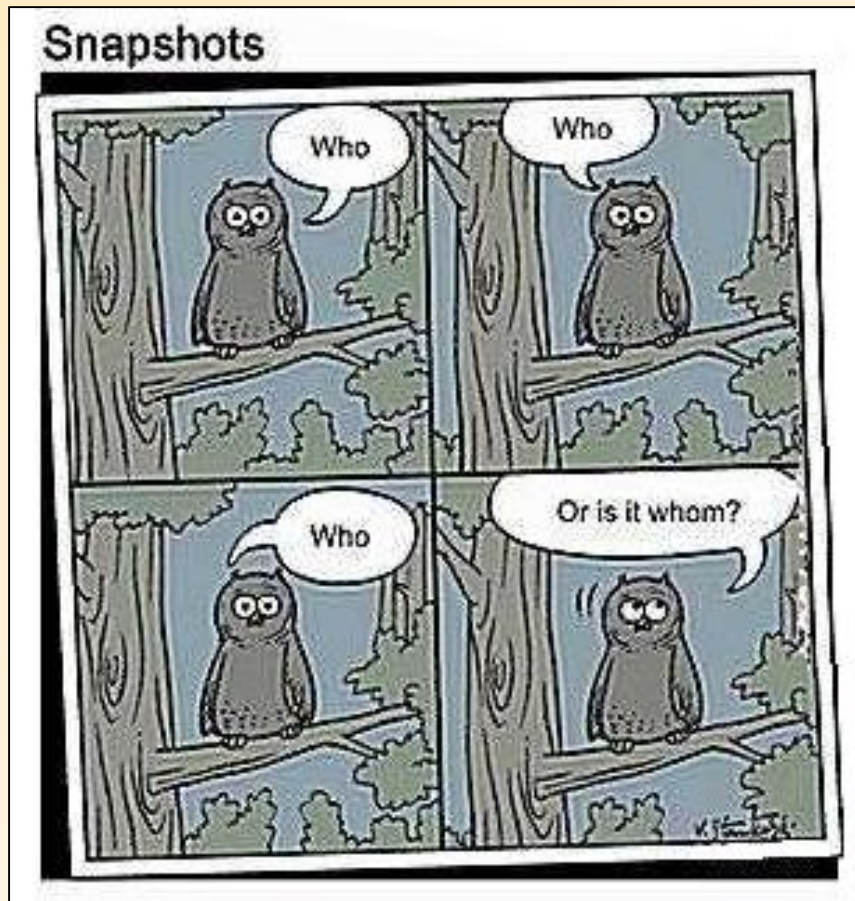
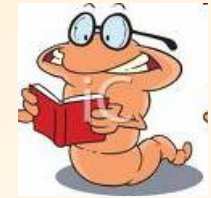
**Correct  
grammar and  
appearing  
'educated'**



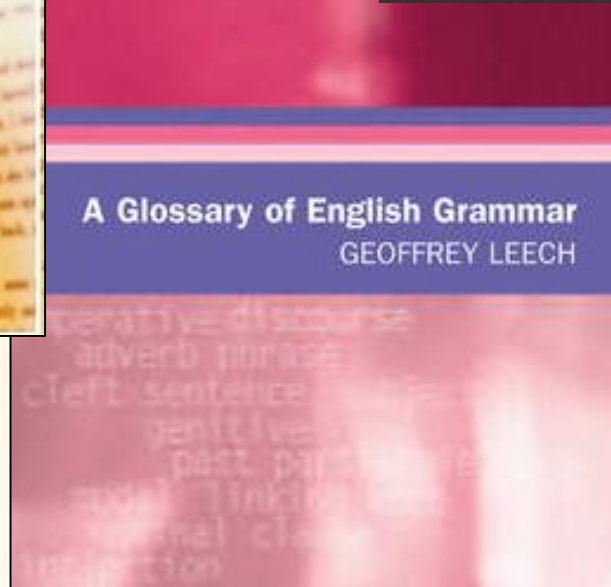
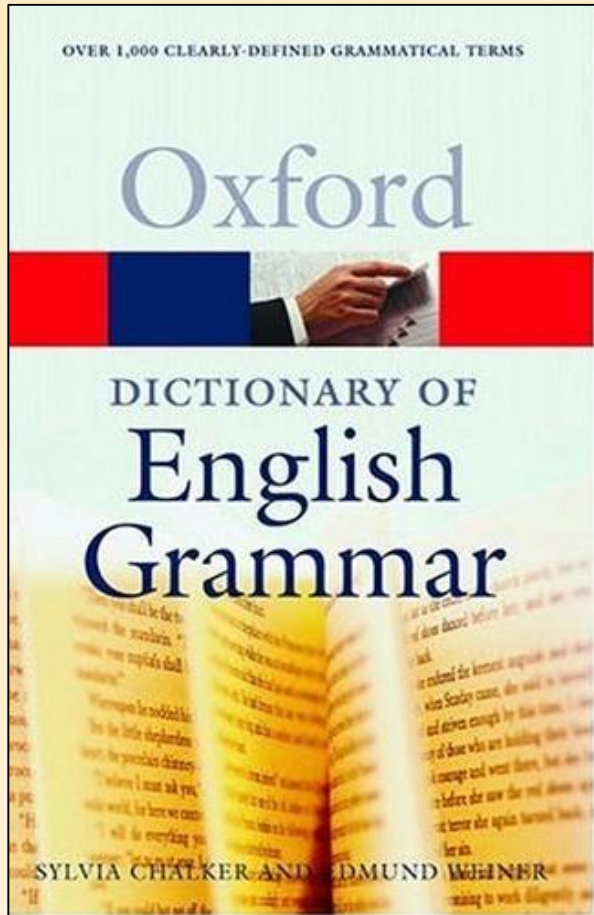
**Making  
fun of  
others'  
mistakes**



# Linguistic insecurity: What is the 'correct' form?



# Yes, grammar matters, but . . .



# What should the teachers do?

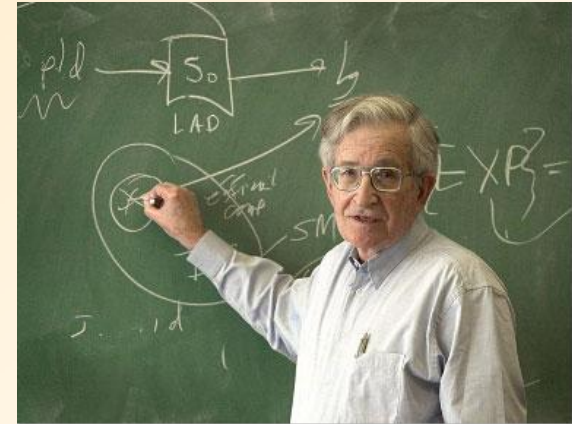
It depends on the context. If you are teaching English, especially in a foreign language context, then you must make sure that your students learn standard forms, hence the need for correction.

If there is tension between the vernacular of a student (his/her native dialect) and the standard then you should stress that the standard is just one form of language without any inherent claim to superiority over colloquial forms. But it is the form used publicly and hence when in a public context it is advisable to use at least a modified form of the standard to avoid censure by others.





## And what is the linguist's standpoint?



The standard is one form of language which by historical accident became that which is preferred in writing and in public usage. There is nothing better about the standard or worse about colloquial speech or dialects.

Be tolerant and put aside any prejudice you might feel about certain pronunciations, words or turns of phrase!



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Thank you for your attention.

Any questions?

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