Elocution before the Elocutionary Movement: Exploring Pronunciation and Orality in Early 18th-Century Grammars of English

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Abstract
This paper surveys a sample corpus of grammars of English published in Britain in the first half of the 18th century. It aims to ascertain to what extent and how issues related to elocution (a synonym for pronunciation but also verbal delivery, an aspect of public speaking) and orality were recorded and described by grammarians before the rise of the elocutionary movement (c. 1760). Findings show that descriptions of pronunciation still hinged on categories and models provided by 16th-century vernacular grammars of Latin. Nevertheless, certain prescriptive indications (a preference for polite accents, references to and criticism/stigmatisation of regional or social variation), the use of teaching methods to contextualise pronunciation (lists of homophones and homographs such as those included in spelling books), and recommendations concerning how to use voice and gesture for effective oral communication foreshadow some of the themes and attitudes typical of late 18th-century elocutionists.

Key-words: early 18th-century grammars of English, elocutionary movement, pronunciation, codification of English, prescriptivism.

1. Introduction

Oral communication and performance were the focus of the elocutionary movement, a strand within rhetoric which thrived in the second half of the 18th century in Britain and put particular emphasis on delivery (i.e. use of the voice and body when speaking in public) rather than content[1]. The movement gained currency owing to socio-historical factors, including typical Anglican and

[1] For a comprehensive overview of the elocutionary movement, cf. the classic study by Howell (1971). See also Mahon (2001), Zanola Macola (2002), George (2009), and Goring (2017).

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Methodist preaching practices. It focused first upon improving the delivery of orators on traditional public stages[2], but then evolved so as to comprise, with reformist objectives, speech practices other than public oratory as such. Among the issues addressed were the pronunciation of English in general, the idea of standard pronunciation (could spoken language be 'fixed'?), rules of speech for public and less public settings, and how reading aloud should be managed. Figures associated with the movement concerned themselves with language as a medium that had to be refined; they aimed to facilitate better communication in the linguistically diverse British nation, and also to specify standards of proper, polite eloquence in spoken English. Rhetoricians such as Hugh Blair, John Mason, Thomas Sheridan, John Henley, Michel Le Faucheur, James Burgh, Gilbert Austin, and John Walker spread their elocutionary ideas through public lectures and print culture (Goring 2017).

A variety of texts addressing elocutionary discourse, which include "concerns for pulpit oratory, oral performance and/or interpretation of literary works, theatrical performance, standards of linguistic correctness, prosody, and/or English language education" (Mahon 2001: 4), were published. During the second half of the 18th century there seemed to be growing focus on elocution as something that everyone should have been interested in for the purposes of self-improvement and the benefit of polite society (see Beal on Thomas Spence's *Grand Repository*, 1999, and on 18th-century *Spelling Reformers*, 2002); however, even prior to then numerous authors had addressed many central elocutionary concerns, although their contributions tended to be mainly confined to offering advice specific to particular professions – preachers, actors, or teachers of English grammar, especially for elementary education. Three groups of works exerted significant influence on elocutionary theory: guides to and essays on rhetorical delivery, pulpit oratory, and stage acting theory, and works on language (e.g. style and usage manuals, dictionaries, grammars, writing handbooks). The latter are particularly relevant from my perspective, given their role in the standardisation of the

[2] The 18th and 19th centuries saw studies of English oral delivery flourish all over Europe as speaking opportunities rapidly grew in Parliament, at the bar, in the pulpit, in the senate, in the theatre, and in polite conversation, leading to an increase in demand for appropriately expressed ideas in oral English.

English language; while they may describe usage, they also prescribe rules, this being one of the paramount goals of 18th-century elocutionists such as the Irish Thomas Sheridan and the Scottish John Walker.

Furthermore, recent research demonstrates that prescriptivism may not be confined to the second half of the 18th century (Beal and Sturiale 2012; Straaijer 2016), a period in which the sales of pronunciation dictionaries and other works addressing language issues, which were compiled with a view to imposing a standard model of pronunciation, reached unprecedented heights (Tieken-Boon van Ostade 2008). Increased production of texts providing guidance on the *correct* way to write and speak English met an increased demand for such guidance from the rising middle classes, who believed that, by acquiring *polite* language (besides manners and education), they would also gain access to *polite* society. Their desire for a façade of educated speech, coupled with a lack of confidence in their own variety of language, set the stage for the development of authoritative or prescriptive grammars and dictionaries. These contributed to conveying the views and approaches of elocutionists.

By surveying a sample corpus of grammars of English published in Britain in the first half of the 18th century, this study aims to ascertain how elocution and orality issues were recorded and described by grammarians between 1700 and the rise of the elocutionary movement (after 1760, according to Beal 2013). Some of the research questions posed are: 1) To what extent and how were pronunciation and speech practices presented in grammars? 2) How was pronunciation explained? 3) Did descriptions reflect the changes the English language was undergoing in the, roughly, 60-year time span under scrutiny? 4) Were there any data about voice, gesture, and other aspects connected to oral delivery? Answers to the above questions may help to shed more light on the complex codification of (spoken) English in a period which has only quite recently (i.e. in the last decade or so) begun to be investigated by historians of the English language dealing with phonology.

2. Corpus compilation

The corpus was collected through a search conducted by using the *ECEG – Eighteenth-century English Grammars* (2012) database. Hits returned 48 texts published in the first half of the 18th century out

of 323 issued as a whole. These were searched via a combination of the database's internal settings (i.e. 'subsidiary content', 'grammar divisions', and 'comments') and pre-selected keywords used to identify information on elocution and orality (Table 1)[3].

TABLE 1
Search keywords for corpus collection

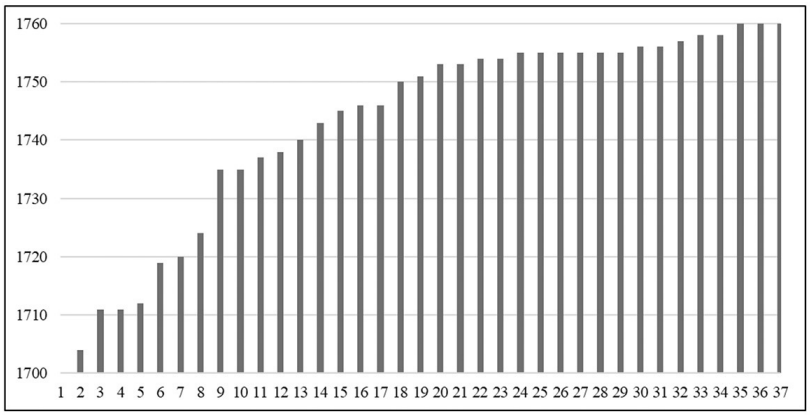
Subsidiary contents *Keywords*	No. of grammars	**Divisions of grammar** *Keywords*	No. of grammars	**Comments** *Keywords*	No. of grammars
elocution	8	orthoepy	1	pronunciation	18
prosody	8	prosody	18	voice	0
pronunciation	8			delivery	0
pron. exercises	0			gesture	0
				orthoepy/ orthoepia	0/1
	24		**19**		**19**

The search yielded 62 hits. After erasing duplicate sources, the corpus totals 37 texts out of 48 (77%), which is, *per se*, quantitatively relevant and confirms that Dobson (1957), in his classic, monumental study on modern English pronunciation, prematurely and erroneously dismissed the 18th century as an uninteresting period as far as pronunciation is concerned (Beal 2004). The corpus testifies to an increase in published texts, which skyrocketed between 1750 and 1760 (20 texts) (Fig. 1). However, as Beal (2013) points out, this quantitative result does not reflect an increased interest in pronunciation during the century, but rather an unprecedented growth in grammar publishing owing to the normative trend that was characteristic of the period (for more on this, see also Michael 1997: 41 and Locher 2008). Attention

[3] The corpus expands on Beal (2013) by adding 'prosody' in the grammar division category and four more keywords for text selection (see Table 1).

to matters of pronunciation does indeed appear to be constant throughout our corpus.

FIGURE 1
Texts extracted from ECEG by decade



Of these 37 records, one sample text for each decade was selected randomly among those available in the *ECCO – Eighteenth Century Collections Online* (2021) database, totalling six grammars, four of which are first extant editions, while two (Dilworth 1751 and Gough Jo./Gough J. 1760) are 13th and 2nd editions, respectively.

The six chosen texts are:

– Brown, Richard, 1707, *The English-school Reformed*.
– Maittaire, Michael, 1712, *The English Grammar*.
– Jones, Hugh, 1724, *An Accidence to the English Tongue*.
– Greenwood, James, 1737, *The Royal English Grammar*.
– Dilworth, Thomas, 1751, *A New Guide to the English Tongue*, 1st ed. 1740 [?].
– Gough, Jo./Gough, J., 1760, *A Practical Grammar of the English Tongue*, 1st ed. 1754.

They were analysed via *ECCO*'s internal search engine and close reading techniques. Both textual and paratextual materials were scrutinised.

3. Findings

3.1. The texts' structure

Research questions #1 (to what extent were elocution and orality issues reported in grammars published in the first half of the 18th century?) and #4 (were there any data about voice, gesture, and other aspects connected to oral delivery?) were addressed by carefully looking at the structure of the six grammars making up the corpus.

The divisions of grammar are as follows: Brown (London, 1707) is a spelling book containing a brief grammar in which only an *etymology* section is included; Maittaire (London, 1712) has *orthography*, *orthoepy*, *etymology*, *syntax*, *prosody*; Jones (London, 1724) has *letters*, *syllables*, *words*, *sentences*, and *discourse or speech*; Greenwood (London, 1737) has *orthography*, *etymology*, *syntax*; Dilworth (London, 1751) has *orthography*, *etymology*, *syntax*, *prosody*; and Gough Jo./Gough J. (Dublin, 1760) has *orthography*, *analogy*, *etymology*, *syntax*, and *prosody*.

Three authors place *orthoepy* within *orthography* (Jones, Greenwood, Dilworth). Only one (Gough Jo./Gough J.) declares that *orthoepy* is the subject of *prosody*, while also treating pronunciation within *orthography*. Maittaire dedicates a separate section to pronunciation. Generally, supra-segmental phonology (i.e. accent, tone/emphasis, and quantity) is tackled separately in *prosody* (Maittaire, Dilworth, Gough); Jones also deals with it in a section entitled *discourse or speech*, along with delivery in public speaking. Brown (1707) is a spelling book that deals almost entirely with phonology and pronunciation issues (homophones, homographs, etc.).

'Grammar' had a varying number of divisions in different texts but the pattern of *orthography, etymology, prosody*, and *syntax* dates back to the Latin Donato-Priscian grammaticographic tradition, which has been used since the Middle Ages (Michael 1987). Pronunciation was treated in *orthography*, which dealt with the letters of the alphabet and the sounds they represented, while *prosody* covered supra-segmental phonology (in particular, Priscian recommended a division into *litterae*, *syllable*, *dictio*, and *oratio*, which is reflected in Jones 1724. Cf. Ballaira 1989: 15). Half of our

texts conform to this tradition, which means that grammarians still regarded 'orthography' as a fundamental part of grammar.

Interestingly, whilst Greenwood collocates *Orthoepy* within the *Orthography* section, he seems to be aware of its weight and difference from the latter:

> That part which treats of *letters*, or of the convenient and proper *marks* or *sounds* for the expression of *words*; whether by writing, called *orthography*, or by speech, called *orthoepy*, which ought to have been reckoned as a part of grammar before orthography, since *speech* proceeds *writing*. (Greenwood 1737: 2, emphasis in the text)

Also worthy of notice is Jones (1724), the only grammar featuring a section devoted to *discourse or speeche*, in which delivery and public speaking matters are described along with prosodic aspects. Similar material is included under different headings in Maittaire (1712).

Quantitatively, Brown (1707) devotes 88/110 pages to pronunciation, which could be ascribed to its status as a spelling book; Maittaire (1712) 36/184 pages on pronunciation and elocution/delivery; Jones (1724) 37/69 pages on pronunciation and elocution/delivery; Greenwood (1737) 19/173; Dilworth (1751) 11/154; and Gough Jo./Gough J. (1760) 55/234.

TABLE 2
Space dedicated to pronunciation and delivery

Grammar	*% Pronunciation*	*% Delivery*
Brown (1707)	88/110 (80%)	
Maittaire (1712)	30/184 (16%)	6/184 (3%)
Jones (1724)	19/69 (28%)	18/69 (26%)
Greenwood (1737)	19/173 (11%)	
Dilworth (1751)	11/154 (7%)	
Gough Jo./Gough J. (1760)	55/234 (24%)	

Discarding Brown (1707), which, being a spelling book, is necessarily geared towards pronunciation issues, the average space

dedicated to phonology in all texts amounts to around 23% (more than 1/5). At least quantitatively, this proves that rather significant attention was paid to pronunciation and elocution/delivery in grammars published before 1760. Notes and rules on how to deliver a speech in public comprise 3% in Maittaire (1712) and 26% in Jones (1724). The latter, above all, appears to focus quite substantially upon such issues. The sections dealing with parts of speech and syntax, however, prevail throughout all texts, which testifies to the interest in issues of correct writing and reading style that remained paramount in spite of English grammar's growing independence from Latin.

The next paragraph will address the questions of how pronunciation and speech practices were described and explained (RQs #1, #2) and whether such descriptions reflected the changes the English language was undergoing in the period under scrutiny (RQ #3).

3.2. Description of pronunciation and prescriptive attitudes

Whilst differing slightly in structure, the texts share the same aims, as they were penned by schoolmasters working in either state or public schools/private institutions (see the texts' title pages; see also ECEG 2012 and ODNB 2021). They were primarily meant to teach young learners to write and "speak *truly* and *properly*" (Greenwood 1737: 3, emphasis added), in response to a market provided by those aspiring to social advancement that flourished after 1760 but had already begun to require tools for the improvement of reading and speaking skills in the first half of the century. It was deemed necessary to address the Latin-based school curriculum as well as schoolmasters' weak teaching skills and background (Jajdelska 2010). Becoming an effective reader and a good speaker was not only the logical aspiration of preachers, lawyers, and politicians, but "had also become an ability to be cultivated in the schoolroom, because the educated, and those who aspired to education and its rewards, were increasingly aware of the importance of speech" (Rodríguez-Álvarez 2016: 109). Prominence was given to all aspects related to delivery, pronunciation being one of the most significant concerns addressed.

A preliminary general reading of the texts in our corpus reveals typical 18th-century subjects such as the variability of pronunciation

failing to reflect spelling, but also the opposite concern about irregularities and intricacies in orthography. As Jones states:

> We don't always pronounce according to the letter, nor write according to the sound; for in some syllables we have letters deficient; sometimes we have letters superfluous and at other times we transpose letters. (Jones 1724: 15)

The objective that is most addressed is that pronunciation should reflect spelling as far as possible. Spelling should be fixed, while pronunciation should be ruled by referring to the best contemporary speakers[4]. As Jones and Greenwood underline:

> Pity 'tis, but that our alphabet was regulated after some such manner as this; so as to have no letter superfluous, or efficient; admitting but a single sound for each character; and a single character for each form of sound. (Jones 1724: 3)

> English grammar is the art of speaking *truly* and *properly* […] according to the *custom* and *use* of the best speakers [and writers]. (Greenwood 1737: 3, emphasis added)

Echoes of the debate on spelling reform unravel throughout the texts. Greenwood, for example, expresses his distress at unsuccessful attempts to amend orthography, admitting again that usage has prevailed over norm:

> Here I cannot dissemble my unwillingness to say any thing at all on this head; first, because of the *irregular* and *wrong* pronunciation of the letters and words, which if one should go about to amend, would be a business of great labour and trouble, as well as fruitless and unsuccessful. Many have been the endeavours of this kind, but it has been found impossible to stem the tide of prevailing *custom*. Secondly, because the multiplying of rules for the pronunciation, rather confounds than helps the learner: since that rule can be but of little service, that admits of such a vast number of exceptions, as most of the rules commonly laid down, generally do. (Greenwood 1737: 4)[5]

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[4] This view foreshadows Samuel Johnson's in the *Grammar of the English Tongue* appended to his *Dictionary* (1755: Preface): "For pronunciation, the best general rule is to consider those as the *most elegant speakers* who deviate least from the written words".

[5] Similarly, more than 15 years later, Dr Johnson levels criticism at the many

A closer look at observations on pronunciation offers information about the articulation of sounds and the correspondence between sound and spelling. All texts begin by describing vowels and consonants and go on to explain their articulation through a hyperonym-hyponym pattern (i.e. letters > vowels and consonants, etc.); rules for spelling/sound correspondence are provided for each letter. Both content and descriptive strategies recall 17th-century English grammarians such as Ben Jonson, who in turn drew upon Lily and Colet, authors of an extremely popular Latin grammar in the 16th century (*A Shorte Introduction of Grammar*, 1548) (Green 2009)[6]. So, the section on vowels in Brown (1707), for instance, is as follows:

Q. *What is a vowel?*
A. A vowel is a letter that has a function in itself.
Q. *How is this sound made?*
A. It is formed in the throat by a free and open emission of the breath.
Q *How many vowels are there?*
A. Five, *viz.* a, e, i, o, u. I suppose the reason of this order […] because of the gradual contraction of the mouth: a being the most open, and so the rest in their order, 'till we come to u, the narrowest of all.
Q. *What is the proper use of these vowels*?
A. To make syllables.
(Brown 1707: 2, italics in the text)

Whilst Brown's (1707) and Greenwood's (1737) question-and-answer structure[7] reduces and simplifies the descriptions for pedagogical

grammarians who devised the "long tables of words pronounced otherwise than they are written" and "the schemes offered for the emendation and settlement of […] orthography". Their main error, however, lays in their "endeavour […] to accommodate orthography better to the pronunciation, without considering that this is to measure by a shadow, to take that for a model or standard which is changing while they apply it" (Johnson 1755: Preface).

[6] In the preface, Gough Jo./Gough J. (1760) overtly mention John Wallis, the author of the influential *Grammatica Linguae Anglicanae* (1653), and attribute the "School precepts" section of their grammar ("In imitation of Lily's *Monita Pedagogica*", p. 113) to Lily.

[7] This pedagogical format was frequently employed in 18th-century English grammars, although it was already in use in the classical and medieval tradition, in both grammar and scientific writing (Michael 1987; Rodríguez Gil 2006: 339). As questions were already posed and answers given, neither teacher nor pupil would

reasons, their classification of letters and sounds falls into the same tradition as Maittaire (1712), Jones (1724), Dilworth (1751), and Gough Jo./Gough J. (1760), all presenting lengthier and more articulated technical explanations.

However, some examples excerpted from the texts suggest that, besides describing the correspondence between letters and sounds, the authors wished to relate linguistic norms to diastratic (social status) and diatopic (geographical origin) criteria. This shows that the prescriptive approach used and the tone set by late 18th-century elocutionists such as Sheridan and Walker may have already been present, at least in isolated voices – an issue which needs further investigation in the period under scrutiny. Indeed, in the description of consonants, Jones (1724: 10-11) argues that, if not corrected, speakers would produce "*disagreeable* tones [accents] of the common English" or "brogues [accents] of strangers" (emphasis added). These evaluative comments highlight a critical view of dialects and language variation potentially hindering mutual comprehension and intelligibility, as stated in the following remarks:

> For want of better knowledge, and more care, *almost every County in England has gotten a distinct dialect*, or several peculiar words, and *odious tones*, perfectly *ridiculous* to persons unaccustomed to hear such jargon: thus as the speech of a Yorkshire and Somersetshire downright countryman would be almost *unintelligible* to each other so would it be good diversion to a *polite Londoner* to hear a Dialogue between them. The Counties bordering upon Wales and Scotland, mixing the idioms and sounds of both languages, spoil both […]. As for tone, some counties not only change the sound of one vowel for the sound of another; but also drawl their sound either too long, or too flat; and others speak too quick, and sharp; or else use the *wrong sound* of the same vowel. (Jones 1724: 11-12, emphasis added)

Not only does Jones criticise social variation, but he also suggests a standard variety to imitate and refer to: "The […] *Londoners* may be esteemed the only people that speak *true English*" (Jones 1724: 15, emphasis added). Establishing the notion of 'correct', 'proper', and 'polite' language versus 'incorrect', 'improper', and 'impolite'

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be at a loss. In fact, teachers used them in the same way as spelling books, i.e. for rote learning.

language usage can be guessed from this and other passages of his grammar[8]. In the following excerpt, in particular, Jones is quite clear about which English needs to be fixed:

Out of this confusion of English may we collect 5 principal dialects and tones.
1. The Northern Dialect, which we may call Yorkshire.
2. The Southern, or Sussex speech.
3. The Eastern, or Suffolk speech.
4. The Western, which we may call Bristol language.
5. The proper, or London Language.
(Jones 1724: 13)

The process of selection in the example, that is, elevating one variety over others is evident. This practice also eventually helped bring about the stigmatisation of those speakers who did not speak the *proper* language (cf., e.g., Milroy 2000; Locher 2008)[9]. Similar comments are addressed in Brown (1707), in which "vulgar" and "erroneous" sounds are attributed to incorrect spelling:

There being such variety of *irregular pronunciations* in our English-Tongue […] I have annexed an alphabetical collection of words that are not sounded (exactly) according to their manner of writing. […] The best way […] is to propose every particular word […] not as they are writ, but as they are commonly spoke: by which means a young scholar will the better understand how to spell from *vulgar* and *erroneous* sounds. (Brown 1707: 76, emphasis added)

Furthermore, some phonological descriptions highlight the texts' compliance with the prescriptive (or proscriptive) directions found in late 18th-century writings. For instance, there seems to be no reduction of /hw/ to /w/, which was in fact condemned by elocutionists such as Walker (1791: 46)[10], and in Maittaire (1712), who

[8] For more on politeness and prescriptivism, see Fitzmaurice (1998), Watts (2000), and Locher (2006).
[9] Locher (2008: 135) refers to the practice which is exemplified here by Jones (1724) as the 'myth of superiority', namely the idea that a particular variety of English is better than all others.
[10] Wells (1982: 228) observes that the change in pronunciation of /hw/ to /w/ "seems to have started in the south of England in the Middle English period […] but for

states that "W, though placed before, yet seems to be pronounced after the h, as *who, why*", and goes on: "the harsh aspiration is seldom lost" (p. 17). Greenwood (1737) provides a similar explanation: "It likewise comes before the letter *h*, though it is really sounded after it; as in *when, what, which*, that are sounded *hwen, hwat, hwich* […]" (p. 17).

Moreover, the pronunciation of the digraph <gh> is /f/ in all grammars (only Brown 1707 does not tackle it), as recommended by elocutionists and is in today's Received Pronunciation:

- "after a diphthong in some words it has a sound *mixt of a guttural and a labial*; as *laugh cough rough*" (Maittaire 1712: 16);
- "*gh* has the sound of (f) in the end of a syllable, as *cough*" (Jones 1724: 10);
- "in some few words it is pronounced as double *ff*; as *cough, trough, tough, rough, laugh*, are sounded *coff, troff, tuff, ruff, laff*" (Greenwood 1737: 20);
- "sometimes at the end of a word it sound[s] like *f* as in *laugh* […]" (Dilwort 1751: 87);
- "at the end, if not mute, it sounds like f, as in *rough*, *laugh*" (Gough Jo./Gough J. 1760: 6) (emphasis in the texts).

Guidelines for the pronunciation of vowels, diphthongs, and consonants in different environments are set out in detail, with descriptions and abundant notes, in: Maittaire (1712), which, however, proves to be extremely conservative and dependent upon Latin (see Alston 1965, vol. 1); in Gough Jo./Gough J. (1760); Jones (1724), devising a phonetic scheme of its own, in which 'proper' and 'improper' (i.e. not reflecting spelling) sounds are given for each sample word provided; and, in Brown (1707), Greenwood (1737), and Dilworth (1751), guidelines take the form of question-and-answer grammars. The former provides a list of homophones

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a long time it remained a vulgarism; educated speech retained /hw/. The plain [w] pronunciation became current in educated speech in the course of the eighteenth century, and was usual by 1800". This is corroborated by Dobson, who comes to the conclusion that /w/ had been rather unusual in mainstream RP for two centuries (1957: §414). Walker condemns it, noting that "it tends greatly to weaken and impoverish the pronunciation, as well as sometimes to confound words of a very different meaning" (1791: 46). However, in the course of the 19th century /w/ became the norm (see Crystal 2005: 466).

differing in meaning and spelling, the latter lists words arranged according to their syllables and stress. Also, Gough Jo./Gough J. (1760) resort to long lists of ambiguous words (i.e. homophones and homographs) arranged according to the number of syllables in order to teach students to spell, read, and speak correctly. In this respect, the validity of such a method is explained thoroughly:

> We esteem the properest method of treating of these ambiguities, will be to exhibit proper lists of words to spell; for the nature of our language, and the usage of writers in it, are such, as admit not of rules in some of these cases, but such as are liable to many exceptions and which would therefore rather perplex than assist the learner: yet we hope to make such remarks as may help the student to solve of these ambiguities. (Gough Jo./Gough J. 1760: 14)

Although descriptions of pronunciation still hinged on the categories and models provided by 16th-century vernacular grammars of Latin, such use of teaching strategies (e.g. long lists of homophones and homographs) to contextualise pronunciation in different environments, along with prescriptive indications (e.g. a preference for polite accents, references to and criticism/stigmatisation of regional or social variation), echoes the themes, attitude and language of late 18th-century elocutionists.

In the next paragraph, data retrieved from the corpus about voice, gesture, and other aspects connected to oral delivery will be analysed (see RQ #4).

3.3. Elocution and delivery

Only two grammars dedicate space to public speaking proper; Maittaire (1712) and Jones (1724) comprise a section on elocution and delivery, while the other texts in the corpus do not even mention it. The former entitles the section "Elocution or pronunciation" (Maittaire 1712: 238). He refers to Quintilian as "the observations of so great a man might become useful to every English speaker" (Maittaire 1712: 238) and distinguishes between 'pronunciation' and 'action', 'voice' and 'gesture'. This division is reminiscent of elocution guides, a fairly well-established textual genre in the print market by 1750 (Rodríguez-Álvarez 2016: 108).

Maittaire quotes an often-retold anecdote in the history of rhetoric concerning Demosthenes, the celebrated Athenian orator, and his response when questioned about his craft: "[…] by giving the first, second, third and every place in the art of speaking to pronunciation, [he] judged it to be not only the chief but almost the only part in oratory" (p. 239). Considerations include voice quantity (e.g. great or small) and quality (e.g. clear or thick, etc.), as well as how to improve its good qualities. Maittaire insists that "the voice must pronounce the words *clearly*, and the sentences *distinctly*" (p. 240). He offers advice for breathing correctly when speaking, stating that "a true pronunciation is ever suited to what we speak", as "nothing can be worse than a tone or cant" (p. 240). The voice will adapt to the orator's aims ("grave in persuading, short in fear, strong in exhortation", p. 240). As for gestures, the face, hands, and eyes must reflect and accompany the speaker's great variety of motions and change depending upon the subject and type of audience.

Jones (1724) is the only grammar including an *ad hoc* division for "English discourse or speech" (p. 41), in which problems concerning composition and rhetoric are addressed. A paragraph is dedicated to "delivery", dealing with "quantity, accent, and emphasis" (p. 51). Like Maittaire, Jones focuses upon such elements as "clarity, grace and distinction" (Jones 1724: *passim*), and on how to use one's voice depending on the situation and public, but he also criticises some pronunciation habits, as he does in the sections on orthoepy and orthography. For example, dialectal accents are stigmatised: "the speaker must have a clear and distinct pronunciation, and should give every word and syllable its *proper* sound and deliver it […] without any *tone* or *dialectal brogue*" (Jones 1724: 51). The following excerpt, in particular, shows that a moral distinction is evidently made between people who speak politely and 'with propriety' and those who do not:

> We should aim at an elegant and fluent style; gliding like a smooth river, and not running violently like a rapid torrent. Our language affords us choice of words, and variety of expression; in which we should imitate the *learned* and *polite*, the *correct* and *pure*, without jingling terms, harsh or obsolete, *vulgar* or *unbecoming* words, ungrateful to the ear, difficult in sound, or offensive to modesty, good manners, or good sense. (Jones 1724: 62, emphasis added).

Such observations testify to the effort on the part of two out of six grammarians in the corpus to prescribe a set of simple rules for the improvement of their young students' oral performance. This shows there was a common interest in orality and speaking performance in both the private and public spheres. The directions and references to classroom speaking and pronouncing activities attest to the emergence of such an interest earlier in the century. Schoolteachers evidently began to be aware of the importance that these skills could have in their students' prospective professions[11].

4. Conclusion

The role that grammaticographic sources may play not only in tracing the history of how a language has been ruled and codified over the centuries, but also how it has changed and developed in its structure and workings, is now widely acknowledged (Yañez-Bouza 2016). The analysis conducted on six sample texts makes an interesting contribution to ongoing debates concerning language prescriptivism, elocution, and orality by demonstrating that these are by no means confined to the late 18th century. Rather, the investigation has shown that, prior to this period, some grammars and grammar authors (at least the six analysed) contributed to the regulation of linguistic behaviour in spoken English. By comparing two limited sets of grammars, one published in the first and the other in the second half of the 18th century, Beal (2013) demonstrates that elocutionists exerted an influence on the latter. However, contrary to my findings, she also states that no prescriptive intentions were observed in the first group of texts. This may be due to the paucity of materials she selected for analysis. Indeed, by widening and varying the corpus, there emerge instances of prescriptive approaches stigmatising, or at least criticising, social and regional variations, along with signs of grammaticographers' proficiency in recording language changes and devising methods for teaching pronunciation to students and

[11] Rodríguez-Álvarez (2016: 126) argues that grammarians/schoolmasters and elocutionists used the same sources to compose their directions for reading and their elocution guides, a fact that may explain their similarities. However, grammar directions on elocution, delivery and pronunciation did not stem, strictly speaking, from elocution guides, but are rather a parallel product directed at a younger audience.

prospective public speakers. Finally, whilst on the whole relying on Latin grammar categories and models, these six grammars of English pinpoint and represent changes in 18th-century spoken English and subsequent attempts to tackle and rule on them. All this makes it desirable to continue to research this type of material, especially in a period in which electronic corpora like the ECEG database (2012) and digital tools facilitate such a task.

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