Joseph Priestley, Grammarian

Late Modern English normativism and usage

in a sociohistorical context
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Robin Straaijer, Amsterdam, December 2010
1. Introduction

1.1. Getting started
In this study I will investigate the grammar and language of the eighteenth-century English polymath Joseph Priestley (1733–1804). Priestley’s name may not immediately invoke thoughts of grammar or language. Though he is primarily known as a scientist, his accomplishments are manifold. This middle-class dissenting minister, natural philosopher, theologian, reformer and radical contributed to advances in electricity, chemistry, medicine, history, bible criticism, educational and political reform. He described the functions of blood and green vegetable matter in the oxygen–carbon dioxide cycle, and how to make soda water, and his main claim to fame is the discovery of oxygen.

The main premise of this book is that Priestley is one of the main codifiers of the English language and that as a grammarian he had a profound influence on the standardisation of English in the eighteenth century. This makes both his English grammar and his own language of interest to linguists, as they may show the implied linguistic norms he adopted in the process of codification. What makes this study stand out in the way of studies on Joseph Priestley in general is that it is the first published monograph that deals with Priestley as a grammarian or language expert, rather than as a scientist, theological, dissenter or radical.

1.1.1. Joseph Priestley as an object of study
Being one of the great polymaths of the eighteenth century, like his mentor Benjamin Franklin (1706–1790), Priestley features prominently in historiographies and popular histories covering a variety of topics, chemistry, industry, philosophy, politics and religion, some of which are specifically dedicated to his
contributions in these fields. However, Priestley’s name is not just a familiar one in the historiographies of these disciplines. It resurfaces again and again in the historiography of the English language. His place as one of the eighteenth-century codifying grammarians is illustrated by his recurrence in histories of English language and grammars, such as Leonard (1929) and Baugh & Cable (2002). In his own time as well, Priestley was already an important figure in the field of English grammar. The contemporary prominence of his most important work of grammar, *The Rudiments of English Grammar* (1761), can be illustrated by, for instance, its occurrence in eighteenth-century English library and sale catalogues. Auer (2008a: 72) found that the two grammars most frequently listed in such catalogues were Priestley’s and that of the most authoritative grammarian of the period, Robert Lowth (1710–1787). We also find the names Priestley and Lowth frequently coupled in laudatory fashion in contemporary grammars. One of these is John Ash’s (1724–1779) *Easiest Introduction to Dr. Lowth’s English Grammar* (1766), a reprint of Ash’s grammar, first published in 1760:

> [T]he Editor [John Ryland] is certain, that if this little Book was prudently used, by Schoolmasters and Governesses of Ladies Boarding-Schools, they would find their Scholars improve with greater Expedition, and be soon prepared to learn with Understanding and Pleasure, those higher and more excellent Grammars with which we are now favoured. He means Dr. Joseph Priestley’s English grammar, 12mo, which should be read and taught after this, and then a youth should be made acquainted with the Beauties and Blemishes, the Defects and Perfections of our finest English Writers, by reading with Attention and frequent Repetition, the best Grammar ever written in our Language, by one of the most learned and most amiable of Men, Dr. Robert Lowth (Ash 1766: viii–ix).

Lowth. Another reference may be found in the anonymously published *Rudiments of Constructive Etymology and Syntax* (1795), the author of which refers to Lowth by his title as bishop of London in the preface: “[w]hat has hitherto been done in this science, by the late Bishop of London, Dr. Priestley, &c. does honour to their literary and critical abilities” (anonymous 1795: x). As one of the key players in the eighteenth-century normative tradition, Priestley’s

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name was often coupled with those of Lowth and the famous lexicographer Samuel Johnson (1709–1784), who had prefixed a grammar to his *Dictionary of the English Language* (1755). A contemporary example comes from one of the other main codifying grammarians of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the Quaker grammarian Lindley Murray (1745–1826), who wrote that "[f]or the assertion, that there are in English but two cases of nouns, and three of pronouns, we have the authority of Doctors Lowth, Johnson, Priestley, &c. names which are sufficient to decide this point" (Murray 1795: 28).

But Priestley’s favourable comparison with Lowth was not limited to grammar books. The following quotation is from an article in the *Morning Post and Daily Advertiser* reporting on the progress of Herbert Croft’s (1751–1816) proposed but never published new edition of Johnson’s *Dictionary*. Croft not only puts Priestley on the same level as Lowth, but sets them apart from other grammarians:

> The propriety of such an undertaking, **Bishop Lowth** was some little judge of, and so is Dr. Priestley, our two principal grammarians. Both the former and the latter gave their sanction to Mr. Croft’s MSS. &c. more than two years ago, if praise and approbation are any sanction (Morning Post and Daily Advertiser, 20 February 1788).

The recognition of Priestley’s importance is likewise not limited to contemporary sources. According to Görlach (2001: 247f) for instance, Priestley’s “grammar is perhaps the most influential, largely usage-based schoolbook of his times”.

Another reason why Priestley is a particularly interesting subject for a study of this kind is that he considered to be one of the few descriptivists in the predominantly prescriptive eighteenth century. The following remark is illustrative of this: “Priestley is undoubtedly the first writer in English, and apparently the only one in the eighteenth century, to take a reasonably consistent view of usage” (Leonard 1929: 142). Similarly, Baugh & Cable say that of “all the grammarians of this period only Priestley seems to have doubted the propriety of ex cathedra utterances and to have been truly humble before the facts of usage” (2002: 278).
This view of Priestley has not always been generally accepted, however. Priestley is also counted among the founders of English prescriptivism (Bryan 1923). During the second half of the twentieth century scholars such as Sugg (1964), Elledge (1967) and also Michael (1970) sought to bring more nuance into the received view of the eighteenth-century grammarians. Even more recent studies, such as Hodson (2006) and a one of my own (Straaijer 2009), have endeavoured to show a more balanced view to Priestley’s position with regard to these two extremes of descriptivist and prescriptivist approaches to grammar-writing. In that light, this study will lead to an even more detailed picture of Priestley’s reputation as a descriptivist. Priestley’s apparent unique status in the “age of prescriptivism” (Dossena 2004: 196) makes him an interesting subject for a study in the sociolinguistic historiography of the standardisation of English. Priestley’s portrayal as a liberal foil for the authoritarian Lowth will therefore also be examined.

1.1.2. Research questions

In the main investigation of this study on Priestley’s grammar and usage I will try to answer the following questions, which – in the absence any hierarchy of importance in them – I put in the order in which I will discuss them:

- What were the sources for Priestley’s most important grammar book, The Rudiments of English Grammar?
- How influential was Priestley as a codifier of the English language in the eighteenth century?
- What was the norm inherent in Priestley’s grammar and where did it come from?
- How descriptive or prescriptive was Priestley’s grammar compared to other grammarians of the time?
- How does Priestley’s own usage compare to his grammatical norms?
- Was Priestley a descriptivist?
These questions are linguistic as well as metalinguistic in nature. Therefore, in addition to investigating Priestley's own usage, I will also investigate his attitudes about language norms and how these are signalled through linguistic metalanguage.

1.2. Theory and methodology
I will start this section with a brief account regarding the field of historical sociolinguistics, which is the main theoretical and methodological framework of this study. Then, I will discuss the subject of language standardisation. Since Priestley is considered to be a codifier of the English language, the process of the standardisation of the English language in the eighteenth century is always present, at least in the background, in the discussions and analyses in this study. In the last part of this section, I will give a summary of the approach and data I use.

1.2.1. Historical sociolinguistics
Language is a social phenomenon and therefore it is obvious that a historical investigation into a language takes into account the social history of the culture it belongs to. Historical sociolinguistics is a relatively young academic discipline: the more or less equivalent term, sociohistorical linguistics, was introduced by Romaine (1982: x), who stated the nature and purpose of this discipline as follows:

There have, however, been few attempts to cross-fertilize historical linguistics with sociolinguistics in order to ‘use the past to explain the present’ [...] to develop a methodological and theoretical framework for a field of research I refer to as ‘socio-historical linguistics’. The main goal of such a discipline would be to investigate and provide an account of the forms/uses in which variation may manifest itself in a given community over time, and of how particular functions, uses and kinds of variation develop within particular languages, speech communities, social groups, networks and individuals (Romaine 1982: x).

There seems to be no real consensus on whether the terms ‘sociohistorical linguistics’ and ‘historical sociolinguistics’ refer to different disciplines or whether they merely indicate a difference in focus. Indeed, they are often used
interchangeably. What historical sociolinguists do seem to agree on is that historical sociolinguistics is necessarily a cross-disciplinary or multidisciplinary endeavour. Romaine mentions that sociolinguistics is viewed as "a multidisciplinary field, which includes not only sociology and linguistics, but also social anthropology, education, poetics, folklore and psychology" (Romaine 1982: 5). To all this, historical sociolinguistics adds a historical dimension, folding into it historical sub-disciplines, as well as historical linguistics, philology and even bibliography. As a discipline, historical sociolinguistics consequently seems to define itself by inclusion, rather than by exclusion. This study is primary linguistic, rather than sociological or historical, and neither closer in character to sociolinguistics than to historical linguistics, nor vice versa. In this study, I will use the term historical sociolinguistics since it is appropriate and appears to have gained the wider currency of the two in recent years, as with the publication of *Historical Sociolinguistics* (Nevalainen & Raumolin-Brunberg 2003).

Some thirty years ago, Romaine could still observe that "there has been no explicit consideration of how one might attempt a sociolinguistic study of a written language" (Romaine 1982: 15). She posed the challenge that "this is the test I maintain a socio-historical linguistic theory must face. Studies of the written language will reveal not only patterning which is characteristic of the language itself, regardless of medium, but also that which may be peculiar to the medium itself" (Romaine 1982: 18). Since then, numerous studies have been putting historical sociolinguistic theories to that test with respect, for instance, to Late Modern English.

Historical sociolinguistics, like its modern counterpart, is a data-driven discipline. The main difference, of course, is the nature of the data. Whereas

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2 This lack of consensus is also evident from the title of the journal *Historical Sociolinguistics and Sociohistorical Linguistics* [http://www.hum.leidenuniv.nl/hsl_shl/].

modern sociolinguistics typically uses spoken data, for studies of historical periods before the existence of audio recording devices, the data is necessarily written. Additionally, historical sociolinguists have to make do with the texts that have survived, which means that the amount of data is fixed and finite and that there may be unbridgeable gaps in the data that is available. It also means that there often is a requirement for "extensive philological work [...] before a linguistic analysis can begin" (Görlach 2001: 2).

The quest for historical data has in recent years led to the creation of an ever increasing number of electronic corpora, as well as to their increasing prominence in historical sociolinguistic research. The historical scope of these corpora varies, both in terms of time and in terms of text types. Some of them focus on a specific time, such as the Corpus of Nineteenth Century English (CONCE), or on a specific text type, such as the Corpus of Early English Correspondence (CEEC) and its extension into the eighteenth century (CEECE), whereas others, such as A Corpus of Historical English Registers (ARCHER) and the 400+ million word Corpus of Historical American English (COHA) aim to encompass a longer historical period as well as a large range of text types. In addition, many researchers create their own mini-corpora, which are usually much smaller in size but highly focussed in composition. In this study, I will also make use of such a corpus. The use of private documents as data – particularly letters both in print and manuscript – written by ordinary people is an important innovation in historical sociolinguistics. These so-called “ego documents” are used, for instance, for the description of language history ‘from below’ (see Elspaß et al. 2007), which is a history of language from the point of view of common usage rather than from that of institutionally implemented norms, and from the perspective of ordinary writers rather than highly literate ones. This study also uses such documents, in the form of personal manuscript letters, in order to describe the usage of one of the codifiers of the English language: Joseph Priestley.
1.2.2. Standardisation

Two sociolinguistic models have been put forward to describe the processes involved in the standardisation of languages, one by Haugen in the 1960s and another by Milroy & Milroy in the 1980s. The model Haugen proposed explains how a dialect becomes a (standard) language. Haugen’s model distinguishes four aspects in the standardisation process: selection of the norm, codification of this norm, elaboration of function, and acceptance by the community. Codification and elaboration are primarily concerned with the language, whereas selection and acceptance occur primarily in society (Haugen 1966: 933). The model for language standardisation proposed in the 1980s by Milroy & Milroy subsumes Haugen’s four aspects for the most part, but does not explicitly make the distinction between language and society. For this study, I adopt the later model of Milroy & Milroy, which seems to fit better for the description of development of the English language (see also Nevalainen & Tieken-Boon van Ostade 2006: 273–274).

The Milroys’ model describes language standardisation in six stages: 1) selection of a variety as the standard, 2) acceptance by influential people, 3) geographical diffusion, 4) elaboration of function, 5) codification, and 6) prescription. The first three stages establish the standard, whereas the last three stages are ways in which the standard is maintained (Milroy & Milroy 1999: 22–23). I should note that in general, according to Milroy & Milroy, these stages are not necessarily sequential and that standardisation of different parts of the language – lexis, spelling, syntax – occur at different rates. The stages of standardisation also follow different temporal paths for the spoken and written modes (see also Nevalainen 2003). However, this study only deals with written language, which is also what Priestley – as most grammarians in the eighteenth century – was primarily concerned with as a codifier. In the eighteenth century, Late Modern English finds itself in the final codification and prescription stages of the Milroys’ model and it is these last two stages with which I am mostly concerned with regard to Priestley. Their coexistence is clearly discernible in the attitudes and developments concerning the English language in the
eighteenth century, as will become clear in the discussions in the following chapters.

The stages of standardisation each have different time-scales, of which the prescription stage appears to be the longest. Almost two hundred and fifty years after Priestley published his codifying grammar, we still find ourselves in the prescription stage (see Tieken-Boon van Ostade 2010a: 121). Indeed, the prescription stage may be endless and a fixed standard may never be reached. Milroy & Milroy argue therefore that “it seems appropriate to speak more abstractly of standardisation as an ideology, and a standard language as an idea in the mind rather than a reality – a set of abstract norms to which actual usage may conform to a greater or lesser degree” (Milroy & Milroy 1999: 19).

Priestley got involved in the business of grammar-writing during the onset of the prescription stage of the standardisation of the English language. From the following quotation from the first edition of this *Rudiments of English Grammar*, it seems as though he was aware of the fact that English had passed what we now call the diffusion and elaboration stages of the standardisation process:

> It is *writing* that fixes, and gives stability to a language [...] And when a language is so much read, written, and diffused in books through the bulk of the nation that speaks it as the English, in its present state, it would be absolutely miraculous were it to receive any considerable alteration (Priestley 1761a: 60–61).

Priestley’s use of the word “fixes”, often found in eighteenth-century texts in relation to the belief as to the development of the English language, can be seen as a reference to the codification stage of language standardisation.

### 1.2.3. Approach & data

It is difficult to summarise in a few words the approach I have taken in this study. It is broadly historical sociolinguistic, and the study of Priestley’s grammar and usage is realised by a combination of qualitative as well as quantitative

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4 The enduring popularity of *Fowler’s Modern English Usage* (Burchfield 1996) for instance, as well as the huge commercial success of books such as *Eats, Shoots and Leaves* (Truss 2003) show that prescriptivism is alive and kicking today. Tieken-Boon van Ostade (2009a) and Beal (2009) provide a more complete discussion of prescriptivism from the beginning of the eighteenth century to the present day.
approaches. I have purposefully chosen to incorporate a wide range of theories and methodologies in my approach to ensure a varied perspective on the materials used in this study, as well as to illustrate the multidisciplinary nature of this kind of historical sociolinguistic investigation. Both qualitative and quantitative approaches include biographical, bibliographical, philological, text-analytical and historical linguistic investigations. The present study is concerned with a small number of text types, i.e. school grammars, courses of lectures and personal letters. The quantitative approach will be based in corpus linguistics. To this end I created a set of corpora of the first and second editions of the grammars of Priestley and Lowth, as well as a corpus of Priestley’s private letters, the Joseph Priestley Letter Corpus (JPLC). It was my aim to use original sources as much as possible. The availability of electronic media such as Eighteenth-Century Collections Online (ECCO) has somewhat diminished the need for the “extensive philological work” Görlich mentioned (2001: 2). It is now often possible to even choose which version or edition of the text we want to work with, and bibliographical information regarding the original text is often readily available. The editions of Priestley’s grammars and lectures used in this study were all found in ECCO. The letters used in this study were collected in manuscript and transcribed and corrected manually. Like the texts of the grammars, these transcriptions were converted into a machine-readable corpus.

1.3. Eighteenth-century England

At this point I should give a brief overview of the sociohistorical background against which we need to see Priestley and his work. Although the eighteenth century is often characterised as a period marked by a search for stability, it would be a mistake to assume that it was an uneventful one. The Enlightenment, the early beginnings of the Industrial Revolution in Britain, and the acceleration of advances in science all made for a century characterised by a sense of energy, upheaval, progress, dynamism and increasing diversity. Borsay describes it as follows:
There was no one cultural system that embraced the kaleidoscopic character of eighteenth-century Britain [...] Yet there was a group of core beliefs that permeated the fabric of life throughout the British Isles, and exerted a powerful impact over its cultural identity and development (Borsay 2002: 183).

In the following sections I will briefly discuss some aspects of this "kaleidoscopic character" of the period: the Enlightenment, the culture of improvement and education, and the importance of personal letters. Because Priestley was one of the great thinkers of the Enlightenment, this important period in English history is inextricably connected with his life and work.

1.3.1. The Enlightenment

Borsay argues that the British Enlightenment was not a monolithic phenomenon, but a coming together of economical, social, political and religious factors. He describes the Enlightenment as being made up of "a series of phenomena – commercial expansion, urbanisation, the Scientific Revolution, Protestant theology, and an expanding middle order – fused together to create a dynamic new idea" (Borsay 2002: 184). Priestley is an important figure in this, since he was not merely living through these phenomena; he was personally involved in shaping this "dynamic new idea". The geographical mobility he experienced during his personal and professional life, for instance, is a story of urbanisation in miniature. He started from the village of his birth and the small market towns of his first ministries, via the small provincial towns of Warrington and Leeds, to the rapidly expanding, newly-industrialized city of Birmingham, and ended up in the capitals of the Old and New Worlds: London and Philadelphia.

This upward mobility in terms of geographical importance, is illustrative of another feature of eighteenth-century society: the idea of progress. This idea "reached its apogee of influence among English and Scottish thinkers (such as Richard Price, Joseph Priestley, Lord Kames, David Hume, and Adam Smith) between the 1730s and 1780s, and [...] could be easily implanted into the improvement package" (Borsay 2002: 185). Priestley saw the possibility of progress in everything he did. As one of the most important scientists in Britain
and indeed in the world – Priestley was at the vanguard of the eighteenth-century Scientific Revolution. As Borsay puts it,

[the great intellectual breakthroughs [...] were essentially a seventeenth-century phenomenon. The eighteenth century’s contribution was to popularize those ideas, and begin their implementation in a new scientific methodology of experimentation, that in the field of chemistry, for example, led to Joseph Priestley’s discovery of oxygen (Borsay 2002: 187).

The fact that he was working within a disappearing paradigm in chemistry is immaterial here, as it does not follow that this was also the case in his many other fields of interest. On the contrary, his contributions to electricity, theology and education were decidedly advancing those fields. Even in chemistry it was Priestley’s criticism that helped his chemical rival Antoine Lavoisier (1743–1794) plug some of the holes in his oxygen theory.5 The eighteenth century also saw the birth of the Industrial Revolution in Britain and Priestley’s role in this, primarily as a scientist, was notable. Borsay argues that science was an occupation of the leisureed classes, and that it was of consequence in everyday life, stating that “the practical lagged behind the cultural, with science being an intellectual, and for most people simply a fashionable pastime, with few workaday implications” (Borsay 2002: 187). This was not so in Priestley’s case, for his career as a scientist was strongly connected to the burgeoning industry. The Lunar Society of Birmingham brought scientists like Priestley, Erasmus Darwin (1731–1802), William Small (1734–1775), William Withering (1741–1799) and James Keir (1735–1820) together with men of commerce and industry like John Baskerville (1706–1775), Matthew Boulton (1728–1809), James Watt (1736–1819), Samuel Galton (1753–1832) and Josiah Wedgwood (1730–1795).6 In the Lunar Society, these men formed mutually beneficial relationships between science and industry. For example, Priestley would analyse rock and ore samples for Wedgwood, who

5 Jackson (2005) describes the rivalry between Priestley and Lavoisier in establishing a dominant theory of chemistry.

6 The Lunar Society of Birmingham had several more members and the society, its members, and its importance in the rise of industrialism are the subject of two full-length monographs, Schofield (1963) and Uglow (2003).
in turn provided Priestley with earthenware retorts for his chemical experiments. Priestley also sought practical applications for scientific discoveries in small ways, such as the proposed use of carbonated water as an antiscorbutic agent, and the use of rubber as an eraser of pencil marks.

In addition to his key role in the scientific revolution of the eighteenth century, Priestley was also the main driving force behind the rise of Unitarianism in Britain and America, effectively establishing Unitarianism as a protestant denomination in the United States (Schofield 2004: 236). His attacks on traditional theology brought him social prominence, but also notoriety, as noted by Porter:

The most prickly intellectual challenges to the foundations of belief were to come not from atheists but from heretics on the inside. The most notorious Georgian materialist was not some flash philosophe but the Bible fundamentalist and millennialist Joseph Priestley (Porter 1991: 169).

The rise of eighteenth-century religious dissent was bound to the rise of the middle classes, and to the rise of industry. Porter cites a contemporary comment by a certain John White: “[t]he main body of Dissenters are mostly found in cities & great towns among the trading part of the people […] & their ministers are chiefly of the middle rank of men, having neither poverty nor riches” (Porter 1991: 179–180). The burgeoning town of Birmingham is a good example of the presence of Dissenters in the newly rising industrial centres. Several of the members of the Lunar Society, for instance, came from Dissenting backgrounds (see Uglow 2003: xiv), for example Priestley was a Unitarian and the arms manufacturer Samuel Galton was a Quaker.

Societies such as the scientifically and industrially-oriented Lunar Society, as well as more socially oriented ones such as those that arose to lobby for the abolition of slavery, played an important part in eighteenth-century society. These societies were instrumental in effecting social change, more so than the government, as argued by Borsay:

[By] large cultural reform was pursued much more effectively outside the formal mechanisms of the state. The key vehicle, from an organisational point of view, for disseminating improvement was the club and society. [...] The
networking potential of these organisations [...] was formidable. It was in the close human contact that they fostered – supported by complex bonding rituals and the gregarious ambience of the coffee house, inn, and alehouse – and in the regular debates and discussions that they engaged upon, that notions of sociability and improvement leapt the divide between theory and reality (Borsay 2002: 191–192).

Priestley was actively involved in several such clubs, both metropolitan and provincial, formal and informal. He was a member of, among others, the Royal Society of London, the coffee house club of "Honest Whigs", founded by Benjamin Franklin (Johnson 2008: 17), and the abovementioned Lunar Society of Birmingham. He was also a member of societies lobbying for the repeal of the Test Act, the abolition of slavery, and American independence.

1.3.2. Improvement & education

The rise of the middling ranks was fuelled by the beginnings of the Industrial Revolution, bringing with it an increase in the wealth and social mobility of the middle class, put in Marxist terms. The possibility for advancement along the social ladder created a need in those of the middling ranks to be able to act like those above them in order to be accepted into polite society. Watts puts it as follows:

The ideology of politeness in eighteenth-century Britain created a social revolution. For the members of the middle classes, who were rapidly becoming more affluent, more mobile and more self-confident, being "incorporated" into polite society was the goal of their social aspirations (Watts 2002: 167).

This not only meant dressing and behaving like those in polite society, but also writing and speaking like them: politely and correctly (see also Fitzmaurice 1998: 311). Indeed, polite and correct use of language were seen as two sides of the same coin, as articulated by Görlach:

The correlation between social status ("rank") and speech in the 18th century came to be more closely connected with grammatical correctness and situational appropriateness than ever before. An age that believed, more or less, in stability and order, began to demand correctness on all linguistic levels [...] However, it is important to state that the controversies found in the linguistic discussions of the time plainly reflect divergences or disputed point within educated usage – plainly lower class features were not considered worth discussing (Görlach 2001: 54–55).
Not surprisingly, many grammarians and other language commentators hailed from the middling ranks – exceptions such as William Cobbett (1763–1835) notwithstanding⁷ – and some were social climbers themselves, such as Robert Lowth (see Tieken-Boon van Ostade 2011: 253). Watts mentions that “in the 18th century, creative writers, literary critics, grammarians and other writers on language were involved in constructing the emergent standard language as a natural feature of polite society” (Watts 2007: 502).

The growing social and political self-confidence of the middle classes, and the opportunity for social advancement, was coupled to a ‘linguistic insecurity’ in Labovian terms, as socially aspiring people from the middle classes became aware that “some linguistic variants are ‘better’ or more prestigious than others” with the consequence that “[i]n the eighteenth century, this same insecurity would create a demand for prescriptive guides to ‘correct’ usage. Indeed, a number of grammarians deliberately play on these anxieties” (Beal 2004: 94). In the mid-eighteenth century, a market opened up for all kinds of instructional tools for the acquisition of polite language. Consequently, “[t]he trade in cheap improving works – teach-yourself books, pocket imprints of the classics, instruction manuals […], dictionaries, primers for handwriting, accounts and foreign languages – expanded beyond recognition” (Porter 1991: 160). The actor and elocutionist Richard Sheridan (1719?–1788) made a fair addition to his income out of elocution lessons for newly-moneyed middle-class ‘gentlemen’, by instructing them in polite speech. With respect to grammar books, we find a noticeable rise in the number of such books published in the second half of the eighteenth century (see also Tieken-Boon van Ostade 2008a: 104–106).

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⁷ Cobbett came from a lower class background as a farmer’s son and worked his way up the social ladder to become an MP (ODNB, s.v. ‘William Cobbett’). He wrote his grammar for the youth of the lower ranks, as indicated by the subtitle Especially for the Use of Soldiers, Sailors, Apprentices, and Plough-boys (Cobbett 1819), in order for them to be able to emancipate themselves (see also Aarts 1986).

⁸ The quotations from this work throughout this book were taken from a prepublished version. Consequently, there were not yet any page numbers to refer to.
In a society that was growing more and more complex by the effects of the Enlightenment, urbanisation, advances in science, and the Industrial Revolution, the printed word gained in importance. As Borsay argues, “it is difficult to imagine most formal clubs operating, without some textual input. Print was in fact fundamental to the formulation, evolution, and dissemination of an improving culture” (Borsay 2002: 193). Priestley was very much aware of this; he was not only an important author, but also a very prolific one. In his lifetime, he published over a hundred and fifty books, pamphlets and articles (see also ODNB, s.v. Joseph Priestley), and his letters are filled with references to his activities in publishing. Hand in hand with the growing importance of print came of course the growing importance of literacy and education in general. As Borsay argues “[e]ducation was [...] a fundamental tool of improvement”, claiming that “[t]he acquisition of reading and writing was a socially selective process” (2002: 194). More and more, that education occurred in the English vernacular rather than in Latin, since “[w]hilst a classical education continued to be seen as the mark of a ‘gentleman’ for many years, the teaching of English was advocated as part of a more practical curriculum” (Beal 2004: 103). This change in education created a need for English grammars, written in English to instruct those students taking part in these more practical curricula, typically youth from the middle classes, who were designed for a life in trade. Priestley was an active force in this development. He not only advocated and designed a curriculum in his Essay on a Course of Liberal Education for Civil and Active Life (Priestley 1765), and taught a liberal curriculum at Warrington Academy from 1761 to 1767, but also wrote an English grammar that could be used in preparation for such a curriculum.

1.3.3. Letters

According to Görlich “[p]rivate letters became a major text type in the 18th century”. “The number of private as well as business letters rose conspicuously”, he continues, and “epistolary style was cultivated as an expression of good writing and of adherence to established conventions” (Görlich 2001: 211). The
increase in letter writing could only happen as a result of improvements in Britain's infrastructure in the eighteenth century. Although coastal ships still carried people, freight and letters to and from various parts of the country, improvements in infrastructure were made by the digging of canals and the building of roads, or turnpikes:

Turnpike-building, by local private enterprise, started around London in Stuart times. [...] By 1750, however, the trunk roads connecting London to such major cities as Manchester, Bristol, Birmingham, York and Dover had all been turnpiked. [...] Another spin-off was the setting-up of a reliable and swift (but not cheap) mail delivery (Porter 191–192).

The Penny Post, a cheap postal system introduced in London in 1682, had reduced the cost of sending letters within the metropolis. The system was implemented nation-wide in 1840, causing a "real revolution in written communication" (Beal 2004: 9). Nevertheless, letter-writing became an important part of society in all of eighteenth-century Britain as letters contained more everyday topics (see Watt 1957: 189) rather than just being used for business communication. The same linguistic insecurity that made the middle classes take elocution lessons from Sheridan also prompted them to invest in letter-writing manuals such as the Complete Letter-Writer: or, New and Polite English Secretary (anonymous 1756), as well as grammar books, which consequently focussed on providing rules and guidelines for written, rather than spoken English.

1.4. Eighteenth-century English

Given the linguistic nature of this study, it is appropriate to give some idea of the linguistic framework in which it operates. I will start with a very brief survey of the literature in historical linguistics related to this study. Despite the view of the eighteenth century as linguistically uneventful, changes occurred on every level of the language: lexis, spelling, orthography, punctuation, pronunciation, morphology and syntax, as is evident from the various chapters on these subjects discussed in Laas (1999). Görlach provides a good overview of the many features that changed during the century as well, but also states that
in his view “[t]he scholarly description of 18th-century syntax is quite incomplete” (Görlach 2001: 106). The eighteenth-century was indeed the stage across which several syntactic features passed on their way into or out of standard English: the decline of the inflectional subjunctive (see Auer 2009), the functional spread of the progressive as shown by the rise of the passive progressive towards the end of the century (Görlach 2001: 121–122, Kranich 2009), the change from be to have as the main auxiliary with the past participles of mutative intransitive verbs (see Rydén & Brorström 1987, Kytö 1997), as well as other changes. Görlach’s complaint regarding the study into eighteenth-century syntax echoes Beal’s regarding eighteenth century phonology. Beal concluded that “where interest in shown in the eighteenth century, phonology is neglected, and where interest is shown in the history of English phonology, the eighteenth century is neglected” (Beal 1999: 13). An overview of eighteenth-century developments phonology is given in Beal (2004: 124–165).

Although the eighteenth century has by no means been completely neglected in the main histories of the English language such as Strang (1970), Romaine (1998), Lass (1999) and Baugh & Cable (2002), there are, according to Görlach, two main reasons why it may still not yet have received the attention it deserves:

First, the period is too close to PDE to show striking differences from it [...]; this makes it less interesting for those who associate the concept of historical linguistics with major structural changes [...] Second [...] modern trends are biased against prescriptivism and correctness [...] so that the period has been less attractive to most modern scholars (Görlach 2001: 8).

In the years following Görlach’s comment, however, we find several new histories of English, i.e. Watts & Trudgill (2002), and Hogg & Denison (2006), as well as two text books aimed at students and specifically dedicated to the Late Modern English period, Beal (2004) and Tieken-Boon van Ostade (2009b). In addition, a fruitful series of international conferences on Late Modern English, of which the fourth instalment was just recently held in Sheffield, has produced
three volumes of proceedings dedicated to the English language in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.9

A more historiographic description of the history of English grammar writing in the eighteenth century is given in Chapter 5, which focuses specifically on the treatment that Priestley has received in these works. For most of the twentieth century the view was widely held, explicitly or implicitly, that prescriptivism dominated eighteenth-century grammar-writing and that it was therefore an uninteresting period for linguists, as mentioned above. At the beginning of the twenty-first century things began to change, with fresh approaches to the subject matter. As Beal noted, “[o]nly very recently have a number of scholars [...] challenged this monolithic view of eighteenth-century grammars, turning to the original texts and viewing them and their authors in the social and intellectual context of their time” (Beal 2004: 90). Lately, the role of individual grammarians has received closer attention in a collection dedicated to the eighteenth-century grammarians and their work (Tieken-Boon van Ostade 2008b) as well as in monographs on Robert Lowth (Tieken-Boon van Ostade 2011) and Lindley Murray (Fens-de Zeeuw, in prep.) and one on John Ash and eighteenth-century grammars for children (Navest, in prep.). This study continues and expands on this work by taking a comprehensive look at the language and grammatical and linguistic work of Joseph Priestley.

1.5. Outline

The investigations in this study can be grouped into several parts. The first part is biographical, and the second focuses on Priestley’s Rudiments of English Grammar. The third part investigates the philosophical aspects of Priestley’s grammars and his descriptivism/prescriptivism, while the last part deals with Priestley’s usage. I will start with a biographical chapter, which examines the role that Priestley’s grammatical words played in his life. As such, it fills a

9 These proceedings have been published as Dossena & Jones (2003), Perez-Guerra et al. (2007) and Tieken-Boon van Ostade & Van der Wurff (2009).
hiaius in the variety of Priestley biographies in existence today, which have tended to focus on the scientific or theological aspects of his life. Chapters 3 and 4 deal with Priestley’s grammar book, *The Rudiments of English Grammar*. In both chapters, I use a bibliographical approach within a historical socio-linguistic framework. In chapter 3, ‘The *Rudiments of English Grammar* 1761–1798’, I will look at the publication history of this work, its genesis, identifying its sources and examining its ‘lifecycle’ as an eighteenth-century work of English grammar. The results from the investigation in this chapter will add to the bibliographies of Priestley’s grammar (Alston 1965, Crook 1966). In chapter 4, ‘The Influence of *The Rudiments of English Grammar*’, I will present an assessment of the actual impact that Priestley’s *Rudiments of English Grammar* may have had on the English language and its users by investigating the range of its dissemination and its popularity.

What connects chapters 5 and 6 is that in both of them I investigate Priestley’s attitude to language and grammar as well as various aspects of the (linguistic) philosophies behind his grammatical works. Again, the focus is on the first and second editions of *The Rudiments of English Grammar* (1761a, 1768a), but Priestley’s *Course of Lectures on the Theory of Language and Universal Grammar* (1762) and his *Course of Lectures on Oratory and Criticism* (1777a) will be discussed as well. Chapter 5, ‘Priestley’s Philosophy of Language and Grammar’, deals with Priestley’s ideas on the subjects of language and grammar, placing them into a historical-philosophical context. Chapter 6, ‘The Norm of Correctness’, investigates Priestley as a language expert, as well as his ideas on the correctness of language use in order to determine his role as both a prescriptive and descriptive grammarian in what has been termed ‘the age of prescriptivism’. I will also briefly discuss Priestley’s self-awareness as a codifier of the English language.

In chapter 7, ‘The Grammars of Priestley and Lowth Compared’, I compare Priestley’s *Rudiments of English Grammar* with what is generally seen as the most authoritative, famous and influential eighteenth-century English grammar, namely Lowth’s *Short Introduction to English Grammar* (1762). In a
quantitative, corpus-based approach I will illustrate the relative prescriptive-ness and descriptiveness of these two grammars. This chapter adds to the current debate regarding the iconic status of these two important eighteenth-century grammarians.

The last part of the book deals with Priestley’s usage and consists of two chapters. In chapter 8, ‘The Joseph Priestley Letter Corpus’, I describe the construction of the corpus of manuscript letters written by Priestley, which will form the basis of the analysis of Priestley’s usage. Chapter 9 contains the actual analysis of Priestley’s usage. In it, I will focus on several syntactic features, such as Priestley’s use of the auxiliary be or have with the past participles of mutative intransitive verbs, his use of the inflectional subjunctive, and his placement of prepositions in fronted or stranded position. Priestley’s usage is compared to the discussion of these features in his grammar, as well as to more general usage, as described in earlier studies.

The last chapter summarises and discusses the findings of the ones that came before, draws conclusions as to the questions posed in this chapter, and looks ahead to possible further questions or topics of study that this study has brought forth.

1.6. Sources and examples

To conclude this chapter, I wish to comment on some of the frequently used sources for this study. The life dates of historical figures mentioned in this study were primarily taken from the online edition of the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography (ODNB). Most of the grammars and other eighteenth-century works used in this study were taken from Eighteenth Century Collections Online (ECCO), which is indispensable for any serious study of original eighteenth-century materials. Seventeenth-century works were found in Early English Books Online (EEBO) and many of the nineteenth-century works cited in chapters 2, 3 and 4, such as Rutt’s edition of Priestley’s letters (1831, 1832), were found on Google Books. Another useful source were eighteenth-century newspapers available from the 17th and 18th Century Burney Collection.
In the passages from the various Late Modern English publications and Priestley's letters that serve as examples throughout this book, I have retained the original features of the manuscripts as much as possible. This means that line endings were usually not preserved, and neither was the use of long spaces, long-s, and other special orthography (see also chapter 8). However, underlining, italics, crossings and interlineations were preserved and represented in the quotations. Wherever I found it necessary to emphasise a word or phrase, I have done so in boldface type.
2. Joseph Priestley, Grammarian

2.1. Introduction
Many biographies and memoirs of Priestley already exist and to write another
one necessarily constitutes a repetition of existing material. In addition, writing
a biography of Joseph Priestley would mean writing at least three biographies
at the same time: one about Priestley the dissenter-theologian, one about
Priestley the scientist, and one about Priestley the political philosopher and
activist. Nevertheless, in this chapter I will give yet another account of
Priestley’s life and work, focussing on him as a language expert rather than as a
scientist, philosopher, dissenting minister or theologian. First, I will give a
concise survey of existing biographies of Priestley (section 2.2). This survey is
intended to illustrate the attention Priestley has received as a scientist,
theologian and philosopher, though not as a grammarian. After that, I will turn
to the use of Priestley’s letters as a biographical source, discussing the
limitations of the most extensive published edition of his correspondence
(section 2.3). The bulk of this chapter (section 2.4) is concerned with Priestley’s
life as a grammarian, based primarily of his private letters. I will conclude with
a short summary (section 2.5).

2.2. A new biography?
The first biography of Priestley was probably The Life of Joseph Priestley (Cory
1804), published in the year of his death. It was followed two years later by the
Memoirs of the Rev. Dr. Joseph Priestley (Priestley & Priestley 1806), which were
started by Priestley himself and finished by his son Joseph Priestley Jr. (1768–

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1 Since the term linguist is anachronistic and misleading in a discussion of eighteenth-century
works on language, I adopt the term “language expert” from Chapman (2008: 21), who included
Priestley in his study on the linguistic expertise of the eighteenth-century grammarians. Jones
(2006: 5–9) uses the term “language commentator” for the pre-linguist era, but particularly in the
case of Priestley I do not think that “expert” is too strong a term. That Priestley was indeed an
eighteenth-century language expert will be argued in chapter 6.
1833). Later in the nineteenth century, a twenty-eight page long sketch of Priestley appeared as an appendix to John Aikin’s (1747–1822) memoir (Aikin & Aikin 1824), whose father Priestley had replaced as tutor of languages and belles-lettres at Warrington Academy. Also, entries on Priestley were included in the *Illustrations of the Literary History of the Eighteenth Century* (Nicholson 1828: 418–423), in the *Gallery of Portraits: with Memoirs* (Malkin 1835: 57–64), in the *Pictorial History of England During the Reign of George the Third* (Craik & MacFarlane 1842: 581) and in the *Christian Reformer, Or, Unitarian Magazine and Review* (Yates 1860: 534–546). A biographical note of Priestley was written by his great-granddaughter, the writer and women’s rights activist Bessie Rayner Belloc (1829–1925), and included in her book *In A Walled Garden* (Belloc 1895: 26–94). Outside the Anglophone world, a short memoir of Priestley, translated from the English, appeared in a Dutch miscellany on letters, arts and science entitled *Algemeene Vaderlandse Letteroeften* (anonymous 1807).

Most of the many twentieth-century biographical pieces written about Priestley have focussed on one aspect of his life, usually either science or religion. *Joseph Priestley: Adventurer in Science and Champion of Truth* (Gibbs 1965) is an example of the former, whilst *Joseph Priestley: a Comet in the System* (Clark 1990) is an example of the latter. The original entry on Priestley in the *Dictionary of National Biography (DNB)* by Gordon & Hartog (1896) is perhaps the most striking example of this division of Priestley’s life. Possibly in an attempt to be comprehensive, it was jointly written by respectively a Unitarian historian and a chemist (Rivers & Wykes 2008: 2). Other examples, though not strictly speaking biographies, are *Dr. Joseph Priestley, John Wilkinson and the French Revolution* (Chaloner 1954), *The Priestley Riots of 1791* (Rose 1960), *Joseph Priestley, the Millennium, and the French Revolution* (Garrett 1973) and *Priestley in London* (Griffith 1983). This is only a small selection of many scholarly articles on specific aspects of Priestley’s life and work. Both *The Lunar Society of Birmingham* (Schofield 1963) and *The Lunar Men* (Uglow 2003) deal with Priestley in the context of the Lunar Society. There are also several full-length monographs of this type. *A World on Fire* (Jackson 2005) chronicles the
chemical rivalry between Priestley and the French chemist Antoine Lavoisier. Two further works, *Priestley in America: 1794–1804* (Smith 1920) and *Revolutionary in Exile* (Graham 1995), being respectively published in the beginning and end of the last century, focus on Priestley’s life after his emigration to the United States of America in 1794.

In the second half of the twentieth and in the beginning of the twenty-first century, biographies taking a more comprehensive view of Priestley’s life and/or work started to appear. An early one of these is *A Life of Joseph Priestley* (Holt 1970). More recent publications that take on a broader view of Priestley’s accomplishments are *Joseph Priestley: Scientist, Philosopher, and Theologian* (Rivers & Wykes 2008), which looks at Priestley as a theologian, historian and political philosopher, and *The Invention of Air* (Johnson 2008), a popular monograph on Priestley as a scientist and on the influence of his political ideas on Thomas Jefferson (1743–1826) around the time of his election to the presidency of the United States of America. Probably the most authoritative of these is the millennium-straddling two-volume biography *The Enlightenment of Joseph Priestley* and *The Enlightened Joseph Priestley* (Schofield 1997 & 2004), which has established itself as the standard work on Priestley’s life.

It is only quite recently that Priestley has received close attention as a grammarian and language expert. The first was probably in an unpublished PhD dissertation by Strasheim (1970), which unfortunately I was unable to consult. Swiggers (1994) discusses Priestley’s *Lectures on the History of Language and Universal Grammar* (Priestley 1762), whilst Alexander (2008) discusses Priestley’s grammatical ideas in the light of his millenialist viewpoints, also focussing mainly on the *Lectures on the History of Language and Universal Grammar*. Hodson (2006 & 2008) discusses Priestley as a grammarian, and focuses on his *Rudiments of English Grammar* within a framework of historical sociolinguistics. This study falls within roughly the same approach and focuses Priestley’s private letters as well as on his *Rudiments of English Grammar*. It is Priestley’s private letters that I will discuss in the following section.
2.3. Priestley’s letters

The present study is principally concerned with language, and Priestley’s language in particular. Because it is assumed that letters more directly show Priestley’s own language than other kinds of texts, his private letters are the primary data for this study, in addition to his grammars.

2.3.1. Published editions

A part of Priestley’s correspondence was published in the first quarter of the nineteenth century in *The Theological and Miscellaneous Works of Joseph Priestley* (Rutt 1817–1832), a monumental twenty-five volume edition of Priestley’s published works, including *The Rudiments of English Grammar*. The first two volumes of this series were dedicated to his correspondence, interspersed with selections from the *Memoir* (Rutt 1831, 1832). I do make use of these books in this chapter, but as Rutt’s edition is textually unreliable, as noted by Hodson (2008), preference is given to letters available in manuscript. The textual unreliability of Rutt’s volumes for this chapter lies not so much in what is included in the letters, but rather in the silent omissions that are revealed when the published edition is compared to the manuscripts (see also Rivers & Wykes 2008: 18). Partial collections of Priestley’s letters were also published in the nineteenth century by Bolton (1969, reprint of 1892) and in the twentieth century by Schofield (1966).

Schofield mentions that the remaining legacy of Priestley’s correspondence counts “nearly five hundred extant letters” (Schofield 1997: 5). For this study, I have collected over five hundred manuscript letters, which – with some overlap in the collections mentioned – brings the total up to well over eight hundred. Many of these letters are used in this study in one way or another, and many of them have never been published. Despite this great number, these letters apparently constitute only a small remaining fraction after “the destruction by Dr. Priestley himself of the great bulk of his correspondence” (Belloc 1895: 28).

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2 Rutt cites no sources, so I could not determine which edition of the *Memoirs* was used for this collection.
In this work I use the original manuscript letters as much as possible, though published editions of Priestley’s letters – such as those by Rutt – are used when the manuscripts are no longer in existence, or if copies of them were not available, keeping in mind that the published letters may not be complete. Also, like Rutt for instance, early editors may have silently interfered with the language, punctuation and of layout of the original letters. The collection and method of transcription of the manuscripts are discussed more fully in chapter 8.

2.3.2. Rutt’s edition of Priestley’s letters

In this section I will show in what ways Rutt edited Priestley’s letters for his published edition. I will illustrate his omissions and changes and how this affects the way we need to look at and use the letters in Rutt’s edition of Priestley’s letters. The main problem with Rutt’s editing is that it was done silently. There are no comments in the prefaces or introductions to the individual volumes on what kind of editing has been done and there are no notes or any other comments with the individual letters that indicate whether something has been changed or removed. Most of the changes made by Rutt have been documented by Simon Mills in his online annotated edition of Priestley’s letters to Theophilus Lindsey (1723–1808) for the period 1769–1794 (Mills 2008). I will make grateful use of his work in order to provide some examples of the kind of silent editing that Rutt did for his edition of Priestley’s letters.

It would take up too much space to enumerate all the changes in all the letters, but as an indication of them, I will show the omissions in Rutt’s edition of Priestley’s letters for a twelve-month period during the years 1789 and 1790. Where I have found it necessary to include some of the context in which these passages occurred in Priestley’s original letters, I have used italics. The following passage was omitted from a letter dated 4 May 1789, concerning William Frend’s (1757–1841) plan to publish a completely new translation of the entire Bible:
(1) I think the fifth article will answer your ideas, if it be expressed as follows—without any notes, except as few as possible, relating to the version, or the phraseology. Mr Frend, I fear, has undertaken more than he will easily execute, but we must assist him. I shall soon begin to do a little, and notwithstanding my other engagements, shall appropriate part of every day to this new work (Mills 2008: 42; cf. Rutt 1832: 21–23).³

This new translation was a also a scheme of Priestley himself, to which he would return some ten years later when living in America. The passage in (2) was omitted from a letter dated 22 July 1789, which deals with a dispute over an inheritance between Priestley’s son-in-law William Finch and his cousin John Finch:

(2) If you see Mr Lee, give my particular respects [to him, //a]nd M[a] [Lee//] and consult him about the propriety [of] and [practicability of dedicating to him the new edition of my volumes of Experiments. Please to say nothing about Mr Finch’s affair, except, if you please, to Mr Lee in confidence. We cannot tell what turn the thing may take yet. With every good wish, and respects to Mr Blackburne, & Frank, I am, yours & Mrs Lindsey’s, most affectionately, J Priestley (Mills 2008: 44; cf. Rutt 1832: 26–27).⁴

 Priestley may have specifically mentioned his friend John Lee (1733–1793) here, a lawyer and politician in order to obtain some legal advice. “Mr Blackburne” probably refers to Lindsey’s father-in-law, the clergyman Francis Blackburne (1705–1787).

Several paragraphs were omitted from the published version of the following letter, dated 14 August 1789. The omissions have reduced the length of the letter to about half that of the original:

(3) I rejoice in the account of your safe return to London, and that you and Mrs Lindsey are so much better for your journey, and I reflect with particular pleasure on the benefit I derived from it, to your stay with us was not so long as I could have wished.

We have now nearly printed one volume of the History. It will be 520 or 530 pages, and I have just sketched a Dedication and a Preface, of which I shall send you copies before they are struck off. They are neither of them long, I have also completely finished all but the last period. In reading Mr Gibbon, I

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³ For the sake of easier reading of shorter fragments such as these I have omitted paragraphing from Mills’s transcriptions in them, whilst they have been retained in longer fragments for the same reason. The numbers after the publication year refer to the numbers given to the letter in his online publication (Mills 2008).

⁴ Mills uses the notation // ... // to indicate interlinearisations, and [...] to indicate uncertain transcriptions.
have found so extravagant and curious an exaggeration of the magnanimity of
Athenasius’s conduct, that I think it will make a good article for the Gentle-
man’s Magazine; and in Mr Russell’s packet for Monday evening, I propose to
send it you. It will surprise [sic] you much. He really writes more from his
imagination than from authorities. I have seriously animadverted on his
account of the conversion of Constantine.

I have nearly completed the arrangement of the new edition of my
philosophical works, and a friend of Mr Keir, will mention the affair of the
Dedication to Mr Fox. There is time enough for it. I am sorry tho that you did not
see Mr Lee on the subject.

Mr John Finch still persists in keeping the house, notwithstanding a very
serious remonstrance from an indifferent person of the best character in
Dudley. Mr Wm Finch leaves him to himself; but seems desirous that I would
write to him. If I do I shall send you a copy of the letter. Perhaps Mr Shore
would have them most influence with him.

I thank //you// for your various articles of news collected on your journey,
and hope your will soon find some thing worth sending from London.

We have not yet heard that Wm has left Paris. When we heard last, he was
very well, and much interested in the great [ce]n[e before him.

I admire Mr Jones; and expect no great things from Stanhope.

I am glad Mr Turner will assist in our translation. I have not seen Mr
Belsham, but hope he will assist me in my department; but when I have rid 2 my
hands of what is now upon them, I shall stick close to it.

My wife continues much better, and desires her best remembrances, with
mine, to you both, yours most affectionately J Priestley (Mills 2008: 45; cf. Rutt
1832: 28).

Indeed, the omitted passages are collectively so large that they constitute
almost an entire letter by themselves. The "great scene" that Priestley’s son
William was so interested in was of course the early beginning of the French
Revolution. Mills identifies “Mr Shore” as Samuel Shore (1738–1828) and “Mr
Jones” and “Stanhope” tentatively as the dissenting minister Richard Jones
(1727/8–1800) and the politician Charles Stanhope (1753–1816). The letter
also refers to the reformer William Russell (1740–1818), the historian Edward
Gibbon (1737–1794), the chemist James Keir and the dissenting minister
William Turner (1714–1794). "Mr Belsham" refers to the Unitarian minister
Thomas Belsham (1750–1829), who succeeded Priestley as minister at the
Gravel Pit Chapel in Hackney, and I suspect that "Mr Fox" refers to the politician
Charles James Fox (1749–1806).

From a letter dated 10 November 1789 the following lines were omitted.
The first of them refers to the disgraced minister Joseph White (bap. 1746, d.
1814):
(4) I have just read *Gabriel’s Facts*. Before I had, I could not have believed the story. He can never hold up his head again. But I hear that he is a man so low, and debauched, that he has probably but little sense of shame. My wife is gone to Heath to stay a few weeks. I shall go over now and then. I hope she will now do very well (Mills 2008: 53; cf. Rutt 1832: 40–41).

In the latter part of the omitted passage, we see that Priestley’s wife Mary Priestley (1742–1796) would now and then stay with their daughter Sarah Finch (1763–1803), who lived at Heath. From a letter dated 10 December 1789 two substantial passages were omitted. I will give them separately, starting with the first, which is essentially the entire opening paragraph of the letter, the first sentence excepted:

(5) *I am very much revived by your letter.* The thing that strikes me least \[\text{is}\] the \[\text{is}\] recurrence of the same words too soon. If you will mark some of the most striking \[\text{ faults}\] of this kind, or any other, I will cancel a few leaves for the purpose of correcting them. One that you have printed out I am determined upon. The next week I hope to send you the remainder of the work, and it \[\text{may}\] remain a month before publication (Mills 2008: 58; cf. Rutt 1832: 49).³

It is difficult to say what this first of the omitted passages exactly refers to. It may be one of Priestley’s own publications or that of one of his and Lindsey’s friends:

(6) As to the [?-] on the throne he will be at his [?-] wit’s ends, but as quiet as a child, never fear.

We were much alarmed on friday. They sent a chaise for my wife to Heath, the child being dangerously ill, the disorder in the head, after having, to all appearance, recovered very well from the small pox. A letter having miscarried, I heard nothing till I sent on purpose, and the servant is just now returned, bringing an account that the child is perfectly recovered, and my wife is to be at home the [text missing], at which I rejoice not a little. For I do not much relish being alone.

Mr Fread’s piece on baptism is a poor business indeed, and does not at all affect your ideas, or mine.

*As you think my shoulders pretty broad, and used to bear a good deal, you load me with every thing* (Mills 2008: 58; cf. Rutt 1832: 50).

The second passage refers to the illness of one of Priestley’s grandchildren, by his daughter Sarah. The following passage was omitted by Rutt from the end of the published version of a letter dated 6 April 1790:

³ Mills uses the notation ?- to indicate illegible parts in the original manuscript of the letters.
(7) Mr Beldam has written to me on the subject of Mr W. I really do not know what to say, as to advise. Perhaps his particular temper may not much affect his colleagues, and any airs he may give himself may be disposed, and passed by without notice. Many, I believe, will blame the manager for refusing him. But we shall talk this over when I see you (Mills 2008: 69; cf. Rutt 1832: 62).

After this paragraph, the letter ends with the end formula and Priestley’s signature. According to Mills, “Mr W.” in the passage refers to the controversial biblical scholar Gilbert Wakefield (1756–1801).

Several paragraphs were omitted from the published version of a letter dated 6 July 1790. The omissions in this letter deal with the deaths of the Baptist minister Robert Robinson (1735–1790) and the revolutionary politician Silas Deane (1737–1789):

(8) I now send the reprint and additional leaf, with which the family is satisfied. In my opinion it was better, and more for the honour of Mr Robinson, before.

Here I receive yours of yesterday. The virulence with which the orthodox pursue their enemies is, indeed, extraordinary. You and I have had our share, but every thing turns out favourably to truth in the end. It is much to be regretted that Mr M’Gill was not more firm, especially if the general assembly would have supported him. However, if this be understood, it may serve to make others more courageous.

Mr Robinson certainly died a natural death, but not so, I believe, Mr S. Deane. Mr Wm. Wilkinson says he always talked of taking laudanum in extremity, and doubts not but he did it. He had the greatest aversion to going to America with less honour than he left it; and tho he had nothing to fear, he was poor, and would have been overlooked. He had lived a very licentious life at Paris. But Mr Wilkinson says he spent almost all he was worth to purchase arms for the Americans, and was never afraid.

I am sorry to perceive the two brothers are not likely to agree, and will probably decide their differences by law. Mr J. W. tells of sending his son into France to make some inquiries concerning his brother’s conduct there. These things are very unpleasant, and will probably be materially hurtful to us.

I am sorry to hear of the death of Mr Palmer, and the paralytic affection of Mr Jones. He was a valuable man, and an Unitarian. I saw him first at Cambridge, when I lived in Suffolk. He must be about seventy (Mills 2008: 78; cf. Rutt 1832: 72–73).

I suspect that the reference to the suspected suicide – which was considered a grave sin – was cut from this letter to protect Deane, but perhaps Priestley’s failure to openly condemn it also played a role. The latter part of the passage refers to a conflict between Priestley’s brothers-in-law, “Iron” John Wilkinson
(1728–1808) and his brother William Wilkinson (1744–1808). The following passage was omitted from a letter dated 16 July 1790:

(9) Mr Parr has a bad opinion of Dr Pors[on] both as immoral, and an unbeliever, and I could perceive that her husband did not say any thing to lead me to think otherwise of him, tho’ he was not pre//re//sent when she spoke of him. Had he been a conscientious christian, he would have been a great acquisition. Dr Parr considers him as the first Grecian in this country (Mills 2008: 80; cf. Rutt 1832: 74).

"Dr Parr" refers to the schoolmaster Samuel Parr (1747–1825), and according to Mills, the other man referred to is Richard Porson (1759–1808). Finally, the following two passages were omitted from a letter dated 22 July 1790:

(10) I rejoice exceedingly in the near prospect of seeing you and Mr Lindsey here. I have no greater satisfaction in this life than in my interviews with you. The time of your coming will every way suit us. My wife will not chuse to spend more than a week at Matlock, and so that she will be here the day before you arrive. That week will also suit Mr Belkham better than any other to be in Birmingham. If you see Mr Dodson, tell him it will by no means do to reprint either Bayney or Bp Newcome, as we must keep much nearer to the phraseology of the present version than they do. We must content ourselves with departing from it only for the sake of some real improvement. I have now gone once thro the Psalms and Proverbs, and I will undertake //Daniel and// the minor prophets if he will do Jeremiah and Ezekiel. Or, as I have more than six months before me, and I am determined to make this my principal business, I can very well do the whole, or if you think so, you need not say any thing to him, or tell his that I shall undertake it, if he has not leisure, 2 or that he may take what he pleases, and leave me the rest. I fear some quaintness in his style, and we must avoid every thing of that kind, or we shall be laughed at (Mills 2008: 81; cf. Rutt 1832: 75).

It seems that, generally speaking, Rutt’s omissions usually appear to be restricted to one part or paragraph of a letter, the opening line(s) or the postscript of a letter. It seems that what is omitted often refers to a third party, so the omission may have been done to protect the privacy of the persons mentioned, such as Priestley’s wife Mary.

Sometimes, Rutt changed words when he seems to have thought that Priestley’s use was erroneous. An example is the following, from a letter to Theophilus Lindsey from 9 March 1789, where Rutt inserted “would” as an auxiliary:
(11) I shall not forget the engagements you mention, and I wish you would make any others that you particularly wish (Rutt 1832: 108).

Here Rutt supplied a word that he evidently found Priestley had forgotten. Mills restored the original text, as in (12):

(12) I shall not forget the engagements you mention, and I wish you make any others that you particularly wish (Mills 2008: 40).

Rutt also corrected what may indeed have been obvious mistakes on Priestley’s part, such as in the following example, from a letter to Theophilus Lindsey, dated 22 July 1789:

(13) The time you and Mrs Lindsey passed at Birmingham appears now as a pleasant dream (Rutt 1832: 26).

According to Mills, and which my reading of the manuscript text confirms, the original letter reads:

(14) You time you and M’s Lindsey passed at Birmingham appears now as a pleasant dream (Mills 2008: 44).

These alterations all make sense. They were probably made to make the text easier to read and often do not materially change the nature or meaning of the text. Incidentally they also cover Priestley’s modesty, protect his reputation, and hide his fallibility as a writer. Such changes are, however, no longer acceptable in a modern edition.

In a letter to the printer of the Birmingham Gazette, Priestley shows his stance with regard to privacy in letters. It is possible that this was a reason for Rutt’s editorial interventions in the published edition of the letters:

To have private letters (which are often improper to be seen by one’s nearest friends) exposed to every impertinent eye, is one of the most painful circumstances in my situation. I hope, therefore, that even enemies, who have any regard to their character, will send any letter of mine that may fall into their hands, sealed up, to those who will convey them to me with the least expense. There are dishonourable, as well as honourable, methods of annoying an adversary (Rutt 1832: 132).

These remarks might be an indication that statements and remarks in his letters can be taken at face value, provided we know that they have not been altered. As far as I can ascertain, the words of Priestley’s letters that have been
transcribed, have for the most part been done so accurately, but the omissions in them are too numerous and considerable to be ignored. It should be obvious, even from this short exploration, that the published editions of these letters are not a very reliable source for the content – or style – of Priestley’s letters. They are certainly not a reliable source for an analysis of Priestley’s language.

2.3.3. Priestley's letters in manuscript
The use of manuscripts in the study of letters is important for several reasons. Firstly, the manuscript letter, or rather the copy thereof, represents not merely a text, but an actual physical object that exists in the real world. The object possesses physical properties that we may call paratextual features (Dury 2006: 199–201) which are not conveyed by the text on it. These properties are obviously not reproduced in published editions of letters, and they may even be indiscernible in microfilm versions or photocopies. These physical properties include texture and colour of paper and ink, and the presence or absence of stamps, wax seals and folds, the latter three of which are usually the best indications of whether a letter has actually been sent or whether one is dealing with an unsent copy or draft version. Secondly, some of the non-physical, textual aspects of manuscript letters are usually not reproduced in published editions either. These may include the script used, hyphenation, the style and neatness of the handwriting, the size of margins, in-line indents, page endings and layout in general, as well as directions or addresses, and annotations by the recipient of the letter. Many of these aspects are more informative to philologists and historical sociolinguists than they are to historians, who are generally only concerned with the content of manuscripts and sometimes perhaps with their physical properties. Finally, the use of manuscripts can connect the researcher more closely to the person who wrote the letter. The

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6 I use the term “manuscript” to refer to (a copy of) the item itself, regardless of the medium on which it appears, as well as to the text in its holograph form. It will usually be clear from the context to which I am referring.
importance for the use of manuscripts in linguistic research is explored further in chapter 8.

However, like all historical materials, the use of manuscripts for an analysis of this kind has an undeniable limitation: they need to exist. The period of Priestley’s life with regard to his work as a grammarian starts and ends with the *Rudiments of English Grammar*, from its composition at Nantwich in 1758 or 1759 to the publication of the last known edition in 1798. Unfortunately, as far as I have been able to determine, Priestley’s earliest surviving letters date from 1762, the year following the publication of the first edition of the *Rudiments of English Grammar*. Hence, the letters give us no immediate information as to Priestley’s activities or thoughts during the time that he was composing and printing the original text of the *Rudiments of English Grammar*.

### 2.4. Joseph Priestley and The *Rudiments of English Grammar*

In the years after the publication of the considerably revised and expanded second edition of the *Rudiments of English Grammar* in 1768 up until his death in 1804, Priestley concerned himself mainly with his other interests. These included theology, politics, his lifelong fascination with all aspects of natural philosophy, especially chemistry, and his calling as a dissenting minister, to himself the most important thing of all. After 1768, Priestley moved around England with his growing family. First from Leeds, as minister of the Mill Hill congregation to Calne, as librarian to the earl of Shelburne. Then to Birmingham as minister at the New Meeting, and after the Birmingham riots to London, where he taught chemistry and ministered to his congregation. Finally in 1794, the Priestleys emigrated to America, where Dr. Joseph Priestley spent his remaining years in Pennsylvania. During all of these years, his letters deal with his political, theological and scientific publications, but not with language or grammar. To show the place and importance of the *Rudiments of English Grammar* in Priestley’s life it is worthwhile to discuss something of Priestley’s life from just before the publication of the first edition *Rudiments of English Grammar* until his final years in America. Using existing biographies, Priestley’s
memoirs and his letters as sources, this little biography also focuses on the role of grammar and language in Priestley’s life and to establish the idea of the grammarian Joseph Priestley, rather than the chemist of the theologian.

2.4.1. Nantwich 1758–1761
The earlier episodes of Priestley’s life are interesting enough, and are discussed in the first three chapters of Schofield (1997) among others. But I will not repeat them here, because I wish to start my discussion of Priestley’s career as a grammarian with the book with which it began and ended: The Rudiments of English Grammar (1761a). It is usually assumed that Priestley made his first claim to fame with the History and Present State of Electricity (1767), the preliminary work of which, together with his Chart of Biography (1765a), earned him an election into the Royal Society of London on 12 June 1766 (see also Priestley 1806: 52 and Johnson 2008: 31). Priestley’s sponsors included famous scientists of the time such as the electricians Benjamin Franklin and John Canton (bap. 1718–1772), and the mathematician Richard Price (1723–1791). However, it is fair to say that it was the Rudiments of English Grammar that really marks the launch of Priestley’s early career – and not just as a grammarian. Priestley’s The Rudiments of English Grammar (1761a) and The Scripture Doctrine of Remission (1761b) were both published in 1761. These are the earliest publications listed in the Bibliography of Joseph Priestley (Crook 1966).

The earliest advertisement found for the Rudiments of English Grammar is from the London Evening Post of Tuesday 9 March 1762, retrieved from the 17th and 18th Century Burney Collection Newspapers:

This day were publish’d, Price 1s. 6d. The Rudiments of English Grammar; Adapted to the Use of Schools. With Observations on Style. By Joseph Priestley. Printed for R. Griffiths, opposite Somerset House in the Strand.

The importance of the Chart of Biography should not be underestimated. In this work, Priestley introduced a new way of visually representing historical timelines that is still used to this day. See also Cartographies of Time (Rosenberg 2010).
From this it seems as though it was not published until 1762 rather than in 1761. However, it should be realised that the expression “This day was publish'd” in newspapers of the time should not be taken literally since advertisements ran for several weeks without changing. For instance, advertisements for the second edition of the *Rudiments of English grammar* in the St. James's Chronicle or British Evening Post start with the phrase “This day was published” for the period of a month – between 7 May 1768 and 7 June 1768. In addition, in the preface to the second edition Priestley mentions that his grammar was first published “about a month” (Priestley 1768a: xxiii) before Robert Lowth's *Short Introduction to English Grammar* (1762). We can conclude therefore that it was likely to have been published late in 1761 and is therefore probably the second work of Priestley's that was ever published.

The questions of how and where the *Rudiments of English Grammar* was composed and published can be fairly satisfactorily answered by a bibliographical study, which is done in chapter 3. Here, I will try to answer the question *why* it was published, which is somewhat more difficult to answer and will require some speculation based on the available data. A question related to that of why Priestley's grammar was published is why it was written in the first place, and this question is actually relatively easy to answer. Priestley composed the *Rudiments of English Grammar* while running a school for boys and girls at Nantwich in the county of Cheshire with the specific goal of using it in his classes. He made an explicit note of this in his *Memoirs*: “[f]or the use of my school, I then wrote an English Grammar, on a new plan, leaving out all such technical terms as were borrowed from other languages, and had no corresponding modifications in ours, as the future tense, &c.” (Priestley 1806: 44). This was probably sometime in 1758 or 1759. Whether he actually ever used the grammar cannot be ascertained, but I find it unlikely that Priestley would go to the trouble of composing it, only not to use it afterwards. He certainly may have used parts or preliminary versions of it. Priestley's remark in a letter to his friend Caleb Rotheram (1738–1796) seems to support the conclusion that he nevertheless did not use the *Rudiments of English Grammar*
at Warrington Academy (see also Hodson 2008: 177): "My English Grammar was not ready time enough for me to make trial of it. It has been out of print two or three years" (letter to Caleb Rotheram, 18 May 1766). The practice of schoolmasters writing their own grammar books and subsequently publishing them was not at all uncommon. Examples are *A Key to the Art of Letters* (Lane 1700) and *The General Principles of Grammar* (Cullyer 1735). The authors are explicitly identified as schoolmasters on the title pages of these works. It is quite possible, however, that Priestley, did not write his grammar with publication in mind.

### 2.4.2. Warrington 1762–1767

The year that the *Rudiments of English Grammar* was published was also the year that Priestley was invited by the Dissenting academy at Warrington – also in Cheshire, about fifty kilometres north of Nantwich – to become the new tutor of languages and belles-lettres. At that time, the academy at Warrington had already become an institution of considerable reputation within the Dissenting community. I do not think that it was a coincidence that the publication of the *Rudiments of English Grammar* and Priestley’s engagement occurred that very same year. Priestley had already been suggested for the post of tutor of languages and belles-lettres at Warrington Academy in 1758 (Schofield 1994: 74) when he was still ministering to his congregation at Nantwich. At that time the post had been given to John Aikin (1713–1780), but when Aikin became tutor of Divinity (see Priestley 1806: 45), the eyes of the trustees of the academy turned to Priestley once more. Schofield notes that the trustees of the academy had specific ideas about who to engage as tutors when the academy was founded. He writes that "[a]fter consideration of nominations by trustees and subscribers [...] a selection of tutors had been made, each of whom would attract financial, theological, and intellectual support for the academy" (Schofield 1997: 88-89). Apparently the trustees of the academy saw in Priestley a fitting candidate. Naturally, the publication of a work of grammar by an established London publisher would be a proper testament to the scholarship
and authority required of and befitting a tutor of languages and belles-lettres at one of the most prestigious Dissenting Academies in England.

The first edition of the *Rudiments of English Grammar* was published by Ralph Griffiths (1720?–1803), publisher of the *Monthly Review* and a close friend of Josiah Wedgwood (*ODNB*, s.v. 'Ralph Griffiths'), to whom Priestley had been introduced while at Nantwich (Schofield 1997: 85). It is possible that it was Wedgwood who served as an intermediary between Griffiths and Priestley, or alternatively between Griffiths and the Academy. Warrington Academy, through Thomas Bentley (1731–1780), one of the founder trustees and Wedgwood’s later partner, certainly proved to be important for another of Priestley’s future connections, the dissenter bookseller Joseph Johnson. Braithwaite argues that “[i]t was most likely via Thomas Bentley […] that Johnson was brought in touch with staff at Warrington, most notably its talented author of languages and belles-lettres, Joseph Priestley” (2003: 8).

It should be kept in mind that although today we know Priestley primarily as a scientist and theologian, at that time he had no such reputation yet. It is quite possible that in his position as tutor at what was after all a well-known academy, Priestley was supposed to become more publicly visible. The publication of a work of grammar might be the least thing expected from the tutor of languages and belles-lettres, but it seems that the publication of such a work was not the only thing that the trustees of the Academy had in mind for their new tutor. During the early and mid 1760s, the academy was struggling financially and had trouble attracting new students. A letter Priestley wrote on 19 May 1762 to John Seddon (1724–1770), the academy’s librarian and his successor as tutor of languages and belles-lettres (*ODNB*, s.v. 'John Seddon), illustrates this:

I hope that, before you leave London, you will not forget to engage some person to collect the subscriptions regularly […] Do you hear of any students for us? Mr. Wits […] is the eighth we have lost since I came, and we may expect to lose more than that number at the vacation (Aspland 1854: 629).
What the academy needed was a boost in its public profile, and according to Schofield, Priestley was the chosen poster-boy, so to speak:

Academy trustees were not unappreciative of [...] the public-relations treasure they had found in their young tutor. In 1764 they set about to reward him – and to get the fullest advantage from his penchant for scholarship (Schofield 1997: 118).

It seems no coincidence, therefore, that it was during this time that a doctorate was obtained for him by those who had an interest in the welfare of the academy. Priestley, being educated at the Dissenting Academy at Daventry, certainly had the necessary credentials, and consequently Hugh, Lord Willoughby of Parham (1713–1765), president of the trustees of Warrington Academy, prepared the recommendation while Thomas Percival (1740–1804), the son of one of the trustees, endorsed it to his friend William Robertson (1721–1793), who was the principal of Edinburgh University (Schofield 1997: 118–119). A Scottish university was chosen because, as a Dissenter, Priestley was barred from obtaining a degree from one of the English universities, Oxford or Cambridge, which were only open to members of the Anglican Church. Consequently, on 4 December 1764, Priestley received an LLD from Edinburgh University. He earned the degree partly on merit of his Chart of Biography (Priestley 1765a) and the accompanying Description of a Chart of Biography (Priestley 1765b), which were to be published the next year. Priestley had originally composed the chart and the description as teaching-aids for his lectures on history (ODNB, s.v. ‘Joseph Priestley’), and a specimen had been printed a year earlier in 1764.

That the degree conferred upon Priestley was not one from a faculty of arts or philosophy but from the law faculty may mean that this very fact was more important for the purposes of the Academy than the reason it was conferred to begin with. The publication of an English grammar, followed by a degree from a prestigious university and the publication of a long pamphlet on educational reform, the Essay on a Course of Liberal Education for Civil and Active Life (Priestley 1765c), could do much to raise Priestley’s public profile as an
educator. This would reflect positively on the Academy and could potentially increase its enrolment numbers. In other words, it is likely that the publication of the *Rudiments of English Grammar* was part of a long-term political strategy by Warrington Academy to boost its prestige in order to ensure its survival. The possibility is supported by the fact that Priestley appears to have had no strong personal motivation to compose and publish works about grammar or language. He probably wrote his grammar merely with a practical object in view: to have a text to use in his own school in Nantwich. At Warrington, Priestley was appointed to languages and belles-lettres, although he really wanted the position of tutor of mathematics and natural philosophy. Even in his memoirs, Priestley admits that he had no particular love for the study of language:

Though at the time of my removal to Warrington I had no particular fondness of the studies relating to my profession then, I applied to them with great assiduity; and besides composing courses of *Lectures on the theory of Language*, and on *Oratory and Criticism*, on which my predecessor had lectured, I introduced lectures on *history and general policy*, on the *laws and constitutions of England*, and on the *history of England* (Priestley 1806: 47).

In fact, in addition to involving himself in the teaching of history and politics, Priestley also assisted Matthew Turner (d. 1789?), the tutor of chemistry at Warrington, with his demonstrations, which started his lifelong interest in science (Jackson 2005: 58). It seems that after his removal from Warrington Academy – thereby ending the obligation he had to the trustees – and the subsequent publication of the second edition of his *Rudiments of English Grammar* (Priestley 1768a) he no longer took much interest in language or grammar. His *Lectures on Oratory and Criticism* (Priestley 1777a) were not published until much later in his career and his *Lectures on the Theory of Language and Universal Grammar* (Priestley 1762) were not published during his lifetime at all. This seems to confirm that the decision to publish a school grammar did not proceed from a natural enthusiasm for the subject, but rather out of practical and pragmatic requirements of both Priestley himself and those in his immediate environment.
That Priestley's mind was on different things than grammar in the mid to late 1760s can also be deduced from his letters of that period. In a many of his letters Priestley wrote about what he was doing, what he was writing and how the publication of his works was proceeding. This may also explain why it took a relatively long time for the second edition of his grammar to appear. The letters from the two years right before the publication of the second edition of the *Rudiments of English Grammar* show this. They contain surprisingly few references to that work, whilst they are filled with references to his electrical experiments instead.

### 2.4.3. Leeds 1767-1772

In my view, Swigger correctly notes that Priestley was not "a scholar specifically interested in language study" (1994: 37). It seems that writing the tracts on grammar, rhetoric and universal language were Priestley's way of fulfilling his obligation as tutor of languages and belles-lettres at Warrington Academy, for which purpose he composed them to begin with. The projected publication of the work on oratory and criticism at a later stage mirror his plan of publishing overviews of different subjects of natural philosophy and the methodical nature of this enterprise. In his *Memoirs* Priestley writes of a plan for a larger treatise on language:

> [B]eing tutor in the languages and Belles Lettres, I gave particular attention to the English language, and intended to have composed a large treatise on the structure and present state of it. But dropping this scheme in another situation, I lately gave such parts of my collection as I had made no use of to Mr Herbert Croft of Oxford, on his communicating to me his design of compiling a Dictionary and Grammar of our language (Priestley 1806: 44–45).

This "larger treatise" was indeed never published, although parts of it were used for the second edition of the *Rudiments of English Grammar*, as mentioned in the Preface of that work (Priestley 1768a: v-vi). It appears that Croft's dictionary was never published either, although Priestley does mention him in a later letter regarding a matter unrelated to language:

> A new antagonist has announced himself and almost as unexpectedly as Mr Badcock it is Mr H. Croft the compiler of the new Dictionary of the English
language, who has often called upon me, and written to me on that subject, and to whom I gave a quantity of materials which I had [collected] for a larger work on the structure and present state of our language, when I was at Warrington (letter to Theophilus Lindsey, 18 November 1789).

In her article on Priestley’s descriptivism, Hodson argues that a comparison of the first and second editions of the *Rudiments of English Grammar* reveals “a writer who was deeply engaged [...] with the important linguistic issues of his day” (Hodson 2006: 58) and although I do not disagree with her assessment, I think she describes Priestley when he was on the cusp of a radical decline in his interest in grammar. The second edition of the *Rudiments of English Grammar* was published early in 1768, not long after Priestley had resigned his position from Warrington Academy in 1767 in order to take up ministerial duties for the Mill Hill congregation in Leeds in his native county of Yorkshire, just twelve kilometres from his place of birth in Birstall. As it took about a year for a finished work to be printed and published (see Suarez 2000: 135–137) and as this move was accompanied by a renewed surge of extremely fruitful scientific experiments, I would argue that the considerable revision and expansion of his grammar was Priestley’s final act in his capacity of a Warrington Academy tutor.

Another reason for Priestley not to pursue the subject of grammar writing further could have been the publication of another very popular English grammar soon after his own. Lowth’s *Short Introduction to English Grammar* (1762) proved to be so popular and influential that it soon became the yardstick against which other grammars would be measured for many years to come (see Percy 2008: 134–137). Hence, when asked for advice on how to set up a school by his former fellow-student from Daventry, Caleb Rotheram, Priestley seems to imply that his own may perhaps not be the best grammar to use, writing that “[i]t has been out of print two or three years, and I shall not consent to its being reprinted. Lowth’s is much better” (letter to Caleb Rotheram, 18 May 1766).

The publication of Lowth’s *Short Introduction to English Grammar* was shown to be more of a bookseller’s project of Robert Dodsley (1704–1764) than
a personal need of Lowth’s to have his grammar published (Tieken-Boon van Ostade 2000a: 21). A similar story can be constructed for the second edition of the *Rudiments of English Grammar*. Priestley abandoned the plan for a large work on language when he left Warrington Academy in 1767 and became a minister in Leeds. There, his interest in grammar and language was replaced by that in electricity and pneumatic chemistry. In addition to his ministerial duties, Priestley devoted himself to a second edition of his *History and Present State of Electricity* (1769c), for which he corresponded regularly with the famous London electricians Benjamin Franklin and John Canton. It seems that, on the whole, working on the *Rudiments of English Grammar* was not a very welcome interruption to his electrical and theological compositions, but that his bookseller Joseph Johnson (1738–1809) had pushed him into revising his earlier work. In 1767, Priestley wrote to his colleague in electrical matters, John Canton:

> You must not expect much more from me till I see you. I have long been teized by Mr Johnson to dispatch an English grammar, about which we have made an agreement, and the materials of which have been ready some years, and I have promised to carry 2222 it finished to London (letter to John Canton, 17 November 1767).

It is not unlikely that Joseph Johnson did this in order to capture a piece of the growing market for grammar books in the 1760s (see Tieken-Boon van Ostade 2008a) and since “Priestley’s name had [...] become a selling point” (Tieken-Boon van Ostade 2008a: 109), a second edition would be good for business.

Johnson and Priestley were most likely introduced to each other by Wedgwood’s partner Thomas Bentley, and Johnson had published Priestley’s *Essay on a Course of Liberal Education* (Priestley 1765c) which brought both men into the public eye (Braithwaite 2003: 8–9). The publishing history of the *Rudiments of English Grammar* will be discussed at greater length in chapter 3. In addition, Priestley had “gone on to very different problems”, as Schofield notes (1997: 99), adding that Priestley’s was not the most popular of grammars. This is true when Priestley’s grammar is compared to Lowth’s *Short Introduction to English Grammar* and Lindley Murray’s later immensely popular *English Grammar*
(1795), which Schofield does. However, from such a comparison alone, it would be premature to conclude that the *Rudiments of English Grammar* was un-popular or unimportant in the 1760s and 1770s. In fact, I will show in chapter 4, that Priestley's grammar was much more popular and influential than Schofield has assumed.

One of the contributing factors for Priestley's shifting focus may be more mundane, but nevertheless biographically a very important one. The year 1769 marks an important one in Priestley's personal life: Priestley started the *Theological Repository* (1769–1771, 1784–1788). He had been able to secure the clergyman Theophilus Lindsey, an Anglican rector at Catterick in Yorkshire (ODNB, s.v. 'Theophilus Lindsey') as one of the magazine's contributors. In 1773, Lindsey would cause a great stir in the religious community by resigning from the Anglican Church and becoming the most important and visible proponents of protestant dissent in England, together with Richard Price and Priestley. Priestley's fast-growing friendship with Lindsey seems to have been an important factor in his decision to spend more time on the *Theological Repository* and less on science. Between the two of these, language and grammar were nowhere in sight, which is suggested by following quotation from Priestley's correspondence: "I have materials for a good part of another paper on Air, but [...] Philosophy is now only an occasional subject with me" (letter to Theophilus Lindsey, 28 February 1770). Whereas Priestley's correspondence before 1770 is dominated by letters to the London electricians, of the seventeen letters I have from 1770, as many as eleven are concerned with the *Theological Repository*. However, Priestley's fascination with science had not abated, nor would it ever. His correspondence for 1771 tells a different story than that of the year before: of the eighteen letters, only seven are concerned with the *Theological Repository*. A more detailed quantitative analysis of the letters written between 1767 and 1772 is given in chapter 8.
2.4.4. Calne 1773–1780

Early in the summer of 1772, Priestley was contemplating becoming the librarian and literary companion of William Petty (1737–1805), the second earl of Shelburne and later first marquis of Lansdowne. Priestley’s increased family and the costs of printing the Repository were beginning to become a drain on his finances and he could well use the income of £250 a year which the connection with Petty would bring, against the £100 he received as minister of Mill Hill Chapel in Leeds. Richard Price, a mutual friend, was the intermediary through whom Petty made the offer. As Priestley related to his friend Theophilus Lindsey, “Lord Shelburne has made repeated proposals to me by Dr Price, and last week in person, to be his librarian, and superintend the education of his sons” (letter to Theophilus Lindsey, June or July 1772). For a while, Priestley hesitated about accepting the offer, as can be seen in his letters to Price from that time, but in the end he decided to take the post and by the second half of 1773 he had finished moving house to Calne near Shelburne’s residence of Bowood. Soon he was back to making experiments on gases, which would eventually earn him the prestigious Copley Medal of the Royal Society.⁹ That these experiments took up much of his time is illustrated by the fact that on 6 April 1775 he wrote the following to William Turner:

> At present I am chiefly intent on my experiments [...] I now do not intend to make a supplement to my late treatise on Air, but defer publication till the next winter, when, in all probability, I shall have materials for another volume. I have now discovered an air five or six times as good as common air (Rutt 1831: 267–268).

This letter actually refers to one of Priestley’s great discoveries: the gas mentioned here is what he called ‘dephlogisticated air’ or what in the terminology of the new system of chemistry of Antoine Lavoisier was to be called ‘oxygen’. Indeed, this period was a very busy one in which Priestley made

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⁹ In addition to daughter Sarah, who had been born at Warrington, Mary Priestley had been delivered of two sons, Joseph Jr. (Jos) and William, in Leeds.

¹⁰ The Copley Medal was the Royal Society’s highest honour and the Britain’s most prestigious scientific award at the time (Encyclopedia Britannica online edition, ‘Royal Society’). Johnson (2008: 5, 83) writes that earning the medal can be seen as the eighteenth-century equivalent of winning the Nobel Prize.
several major discoveries, including that of blood as a carrier of respiratory gases in the body. As he wrote Caleb Rotheram on 9 February 1776: “I [...] am now intent upon several courses of experiments which are very promising [...] I have lately sent to the Royal Society an account of a set of experiments to ascertain the use of the blood in respiration” (Rutt 1831: 288). Possibly his most interesting discovery was the production of oxygen out of various kinds of impure air by green plants, which he communicated to Benjamin Franklin and others: “I have confirmed, explained, and extended by former observations on the purification of the atmosphere by means of vegetation; having first discovered that the green matter I treat of in my last volume is a vegetable substance” (letter to Benjamin Franklin, 27 September 1779). It was Franklin, recognising the magnitude of this discovery, who thought of a global system of plants and animals recycling oxygen and carbon dioxide in an endless cycle (see Johnson 2008: 80-81). At Calne, Priestley’s scientific endeavours were also temporarily interrupted by a return to the subject of language with the publication of the Course of Lectures on Oratory and Criticism.

I have mentioned that the publication of Priestley’s school grammar may have been more practically than ideologically motivated. In the case of the publication of another of Priestley’s works on language, the Course of Lectures on Oratory and Criticism, there was also a clear practical reason for its publication. For a short period in the fall of 1776, in the position as Shelburne’s librarian, Priestley had to involve himself directly in the education of Shelburne’s son, to whom the work was eventually dedicated. On 6 October 1776, he wrote the following to Joshua Toulmin: “My ‘Lectures on Oratory and Criticism’ are half through the press” (Rutt 1831: 294). The Course of Lectures on Oratory and Criticism had probably been on Priestley’s literary back burner for a while and the circumstances offered him the time, a good reason and probably the necessary resources to finish the work and get it published without much inconvenience.

To return to the question of Priestley’s involvement in his own grammar, there is another reason why I think that after the second edition Priestley was
pretty much done with it. In chapter 3, I will argue that the subsequent editions that were published up to 1780 are not significantly different from the 1768 edition. Consequently, it is quite possible that Priestley was only minimally involved in their publication, leaving the reprinting to the publisher, his bookseller Joseph Johnson. In fact, as soon as the early 1780s Priestley was ready to hand over the *Rudiments of English Grammar* entirely to one of his friends, the Unitarian schoolmaster Joseph Bretland (1742–1819). In 1777, the year in which Priestley’s last publication on language, the *Course of Lectures on Oratory and Criticism*, was published, Bretland – who seems to have been a fervent supporter of Priestley’s publications on the subject – already suggested improvements for a second edition. Priestley answered that he did not think it worth the trouble, writing the following to Bretland:

I am glad that my “Lectures on Criticism” gave you any pleasure; but, though I much approve of your hints for an improved edition, I fear I shall hardly be able to give the attention to it that will be necessary to execute them. Besides, I do not imagine that there will be much demand for the work, so as to require a new edition, at least soon (Rutt 1831: 307).

According to Schofield this work was more or less pre-empted by the publication of George Campbell’s (1719–1796) *Philosophy of Rhetoric* (1776) a year earlier, which was based on the same principles. He argues that

*Oratory and Criticism* was less generally influential than the *Rudiments*, as the delay in its publication let George Campbell’s *Philosophy of Rhetoric* take precedence in basing rhetoric on human nature, but it is still regarded as one of the classics of modern rhetoric (*ODNB*, s.v. ‘Joseph Priestley’).

However, it appears that Campbell’s book was the more popular of the two. It is possible that Priestley was aware of this and decided not to bother with an official second edition of the *Lectures on Oratory and Criticism*, although a pirated edition was published in Dublin in 1781.

Priestley also continued working on the *Theological Repository*, writing articles and corresponding with contributors. He spent the winter in London, often visiting Benjamin Franklin and Theophilus Lindsey, the latter of whom had moved to London where Priestley and his friends were helping him to establish a Unitarian chapel. Priestley appears to have been well aware that his
theology was becoming more radical while at the same time his pronouncement of it was becoming more vocal. As he put it in a letter to Joseph Bretland:

“I have desired Mr. Johnson to send you two volumes that I have just published, a work which I expect will rather shock and offend many of my friends; but I have some idea that it will not much stagger you” (letter to Joseph Bretland, 28 December 1777 – Rutt 1831: 302). The volumes he refers to in this letter are most likely the Disquisitions Relating to Matter and Spirit (Priestley 1777b) and The Doctrine of Philosophical Necessity Illustrated (Priestley 1777c). These two works brought Priestley to the forefront of the public debate on theological materialism.

Not surprisingly, with Shelburne being a political figure, Priestley’s time with his patron marked an increase in his own political activities, particularly his involvement in seeking emancipation for Dissenters. As Schofield (2004: 141–143) suggests, Priestley’s political activities most likely contributed to the eventual dissolution of the connection between himself and Shelburne. Priestley realised that the earl, aspiring a return to political life, may have begun to see his association with him as a liability in that respect:

I was much affected with your very friendly letter, and the advice which accompanied it. This I should have followed if it had depended upon myself. But not long after I retired Lord Shelburne told Dr Price, that I was of no use to him, and that he wished to [fit] me in an academy which he talked of establishing in Ireland (letter to Benjamin Franklin, 24 December 1780).

In the fall of 1780, Priestley amicably parted ways with Shelburne, receiving the annuity of £150 promised him when he entered into Shelburne’s service.

2.4.5. Birmingham 1780–1791

Leaving Calne at Michaelmas 1780, the Priestleys were settled at Fair Hill just outside the vibrant and rapidly growing industrial town of Birmingham in November. Priestley gave his motives for going to Birmingham in the following passage from a letter to Radcliffe Scholefield (fl. 1791), dated 1 June 1780:

My brother-in-law, Mr. Wilkinson, is here, and going to Birmingham, and presses me to go with him. [...] Besides, my connexion with Lord Shelburne is now dissolved [...] and as I intended to reside in some cheaper place than Calne,
and [...] I think Birmingham will be near enough [...] A convenient and cheap house, in the skirts of the town, would be a great motive (Rutt 1831: 335).

Priestley was welcomed by both the scientists and industrialists gathered together in the Lunar Society in Birmingham, as well as by the town’s community of Dissenters, who invited him to become senior minister of the New Meeting. This optimism with which these new circumstances inspired Priestley is evident from his correspondence with Franklin:

Here, by the help of my friends, I have built a laboratory, and I am about to enter on a larger field of experiments than ever [...] I have been here, I have received an invitation to a congregation of Dissenters in Birmingham, which I shall accept of. On the whole, I have a prospect of being agreeably settled (letter to Benjamin Franklin, 21 December 1780).

The Lunar Society of Birmingham functioned as a self-founded think tank, with scientists and industrialists cooperating to their mutual benefit. Priestley quickly became one of the central members of this informal organisation and the principle members with whom he had most contact were the industrialist Matthew Boulton and his partner James Watt, the master potter Josiah Wedgwood, the chemist James Keir and the Quaker arms manufacturer Samuel Galton. It probably constituted the most intellectually stimulating group of people among whom Priestley ever found himself and Priestley’s appreciation of this is illustrated by the following remark in a letter written after his flight to America to one of its members, physician William Withering: “More than ever do I not regret the loss of the lunar society where I spent so many happy hours, and for which I found no substitute even in London” (letter to William Withering, 27 October 1795). Another friend Priestley made in Birmingham was the merchant and reformer William Russell, who became a fellow sufferer in the Birmingham riots and eventually also fled England, following Priestley to America (*ODNB*, s.v. ‘William Russell’).

It seems that Priestley had not concerned himself about his grammar for several years, but this was about to change due to Joseph Bretland. It has been claimed that it was Priestley who asked Bretland to revise his grammar though without providing evidence to support that claim (*ODNB*, s.v. ‘Joseph Bretland’).
In the light of the extracts from Priestley’s letters presented here, combined with the fact that Bretland was still teaching at that time, it is possible that it was actually the other way around, though Priestley may have remembered Bretland’s interest in his work from the earlier letter regarding the *Course of Lectures on Oratory and Criticism*. On 14 December 1784, Priestley wrote to Bretland:

If you undertake my Grammar, please inform me of it soon, that I may stop the reprinting of it in its present form [...] If you do, it will be a pleasure to me to think of our names having some connexion, by being united in the same work (Rutt 1831: 366–367).

This remark appears to indicate that despite the last edition having come out in 1773 (see chapter 3) Priestley’s grammar was still in print and presumably also in circulation seven or eight years later. Priestley evidently stuck to the plan and in a letter dated 5 April 1785, he handed the *Rudiments of English Grammar* over to Bretland:

I shall be much obliged to you if you will take my English Grammar under your own care, as if it was your own, and make whatever additions or alterations you think proper; and if your choose, I will write you a short letter, which you may insert in the preface, requesting it as a favour that you would do so. I cannot attend to these matters now (Rutt 1831: 379–380).

Two months later – it seems after having conferred with his bookseller Joseph Johnson – Priestley informed Bretland as to the status of the copyright of the book: “I recollect that the property of my English Grammar is not in myself, but the booksellers into whose hands it came on the bankruptcy of M’ Johnson” (letter to Joseph Bretland, 6 June 1785).

It would be entirely in character for Priestley to leave the subject of grammar behind when he felt he was finished with it. The following passage from a letter to the Unitarian minister Newcome Cappe (1733–1800), dated 13 April 1777, is illustrative of this sentiment:

My manner has always been to give my whole attention to a subject till I have satisfied myself with respect to it, and then think no more about the matter. I hardly every look into anything that I have published (Rutt 1831: 299).
As promised, Priestley did write the short letter mentioned above, and it was inserted by Bretland in his publication of the *Rudiments of English Grammar*. This letter indeed confirms that Priestley was done with grammar and was happy to leave it to other people. An excerpt from the letter reads as follows:

I think myself happy that you think it worth your while to publish a new edition of it, being confident that you, who have been several years in the practice of teaching it, must be much better qualified to improve it than I should now be. I therefore very cheerfully and thankfully leave it entirely to yourself, to publish it with whatever additions, or alterations, you may think proper (Priestley 1789: xiv).

Bretland reissued editions of Priestley’s *Rudiments of English Grammar* in 1786, 1789 and 1798. As to the changes he made to Priestley’s grammar in these editions, this will be discussed in more detail in chapter 3.

At this time, Priestley’s theological work was starting to become entangled with his political views, though he would usually deny having any. It seems that for Priestley, the political implications of his theology were the problems that others would make of them. For him, religious liberty was indistinguishable from civil liberty, or at least inextricably linked to it. The fact that Dissenters were barred from taking public office, for instance, meant that their rights as citizens were severely curtailed because of their religion. Priestley’s self-proclaimed disinterestedness in politics is illustrated by a passage from a letter to Benjamin Vaughan (1751–1835), a political reformer and one of his former students at Warrington Academy:

I thank you for the political intelligence you have sent me. I take very little interest in anything of this kind, and do not pretend to have any opinion [...] I hope you have received the copies [...] of my *Letters to a Philosophical Unbeliever* Part II (letter to Benjamin Vaughan, 2 March 1787).

The publication of the *Letters to a Philosophical Unbeliever* (Priestley 1787a, 1787b), together with his *Defences of Unitarianism* (Priestley 1788a, 1788b, 1790b), was bringing him more than ever before into the political arena. Priestley was well aware, however, of the controversial nature of his publications, and even referred to them as such in his letters. The following quotation from a letter to Theophilus Lindsey, dated 27 November 1787 illustrates this: “I
shall give orders to send along with this a copy of my Controversial pamphlet, much improved, I hope, since you saw it in MS” (Mills 2008: 34). We must keep in mind, however, that at this time the word controversial was also used in the weaker sense of ‘open to discussion’ or ‘polemical’ (OED s.v. ‘controversial’). It was at this time that Priestley, perhaps becoming aware of his own eminence in society as a nationally prominent figure, decided to embark upon writing his memoirs. On 9 September 1787, he wrote to Theophilus Lindsey:

I have told you that I intend to write some memoirs of myself, to be published after my death. I have begun them here. I shall shew the work to you and Mrs. Lindsey. I do not mean to make it large, and may nearly finish it while I am here (Mills 2008: 32).

Priestley never finished his memoir, but he would continue them in America, where they would be completed and published by his son Joseph, two years after his death in 1804. In the meantime, however, Priestley appeared to have welcomed the attention he received, whether positive or negative, as can be seen in the following passage from a letter to William Turner, Unitarian minister at Wakefield: “I am glad to hear of the industrious circulation you mention of any of the pieces ag’ me, as it tends to promote discussion which must in time be favourable to truth” (letter to William Turner, 1 January 1788). Priestley was ever confident that open debate would always lead to truth and the improvement of social circumstances.

Despite Priestley’s professed reluctance to do so, he did engage in politics. He allied himself with the abolitionist movement in England, and he had supported American independence and the revolutionary movement in the early 1770s. He may not have regarded these causes as politically engaged, but he must have known that they were bound have a political aspect to them. The religious-political climate of England grew increasingly volatile after the outbreak of the French Revolution on 14 July 1789. Many political radicals in England rejoiced at the French Revolution, hoping that its effects of liberation would spread throughout Europe. Perhaps because it also fit into his millenialist ideas (see Garrett 1973: 60), so did Priestley: “I rejoice that the
cause of liberty seems to go on so well in Brabant & Flanders” (letter to Theophilus Lindsey, 29 November 1789).

As yet, nobody could have known that the effects of the French Revolution would be felt in Britain before long, and that these effects would not bring the expected relief from political disenfranchisement and social oppression. In general, and for Priestley personally, the effect would in fact be quite the opposite, as the religious and political climate in England was becoming less and less friendly to Dissenters, and Priestley was becoming the focal point for the mounting hostility. He was evidently not unaware of the possibility that some sort of violence might break out, as appears from the following quotation:

The clergy and tory friends of the establishment are meeting in many places to oppose [us] They will certainly do something violent, of which a good advantage may be taken (letter to Theophilus Lindsey, 27 January 1790).

Priestley appeared to have been right in his assessment of the Tories and the Anglican clergy. However, the ‘King and Church’ sentiment was shared and championed around England and “a good advantage” was not to be taken from the violence of the Birmingham Riots that were to erupt a year later. The increase in hostility towards Dissenters in general, and himself in particular, was not lost on Priestley, for early in 1790 he wrote the following to Lindsey:

The spirit of party here is astonishing. Mr Russell says measures are taken to ring the bells, and illuminate the town on the expected event of Tuesday next, and in that case we apprehend the mob will be instigated to do mischief (letter to Theophilus Lindsey, 26 February 1790).

In response, Priestley himself had adopted a more strident attitude towards the Anglican church and, though perhaps not fully aware of the possible consequences, had apparently decided not to hold back. In one of his last letters to that other loud voice of religious dissent, Richard Price, he wrote:

[T]here is no field in which a man is exposed to more serious hatred than in that of Politics [...] I have sinned beyond forgiveness in many respects, but happily I am not apt to be disturbed at censure from any quarter, when I know it to be ill founded. With respect to the church [...] I have a long time ago drawn the sword, and thrown away the scabbard, and I am very easy about the consequences (letter to Richard Price, 27 January 1791).
The circumstances and events surrounding the Birmingham Riots have been discussed by Rose (1960) and Schofield (1963) and I refer to those works for more information. Priestley and his friend William Russell managed to avoid any bodily harm, but their houses – including Priestley’s library and laboratory – were ransacked and destroyed.

2.4.6. London 1791–1794
Although the riots destroyed much of Priestley’s work, they did not deter him from publicly speaking his mind. Almost immediately after the riots, he set to work on a pamphlet to the public on the subject of the riots (Priestley 1791c, 1792) and decided not to pull his punches. He gave his reasons for doing so in a letter to Lindsey:

Not to offend the clergy and the Court, is impossible, and therefore that is no object with me. Whatever justifies us, will of course condemn, and therefore irritate them (letter to Theophilus Lindsey, 30 August 1791).

After being displaced from his home in Birmingham, Priestley found refuge in Clapton, in the London borough of Hackney, where he succeeded the recently deceased Richard Price as minister at the Gravel Pit Meeting. In addition, Priestley gave lectures on chemistry at Hackney’s New College. But the political climate in England had permanently turned sour for Priestley, of which he was well aware, as shown in a letter to the merchant John Vaughan (1756–1841) in Philadelphia, the brother of Priestley’s former pupil Benjamin:

I can give you but an imperfect idea of the violence of the Church and King party in this country, especially with respect to myself, who since the death of Dr Price, am the most obnoxious of all the Dissenters (letter to John Vaughan, 23 February 1793).

Priestley was not the only one to suffer the consequences of his notoriety. His sons were unable to find work because of him and decided to leave England. William first went to France, while Joseph Jr. and Priestley’s youngest son Harry

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11 The riots are also known as the Church-and-King Riots and due to Priestley’s notoriety as a radical at the time, they are even known as the Priestley Riots, since Priestley was the main target, though others such as William Russell also found their houses destroyed and themselves forced to flee the neighbourhood.
joined the radical political writer Thomas Cooper (1759–1839), another one of Priestley’s persecuted friends, to a settlement on the Susquehanna river in Pennsylvania. Meanwhile, indictments against dissenters, charging them with sedition, were being handed out left and right, as Priestley communicated to John Vaughan: “Prosecutions for seditious publications, and speeches, are without number, and the late Act against Aliens [is] executed with great rigour to the distress of many innocent and worthy persons” (letter to John Vaughan, 6 February 1793). Priestley decided not to wait for his own arrest, and in April 1794, he and Mary packed up the house in Clapton, his laboratory and his library, and booked a passage across the Atlantic. The prologue of The Invention of Air gives a lively impression of the Priestleys’ voyage to America aboard the ship Samson (Johnson 2008: 3–12).

2.4.7. Northumberland, Pennsylvania 1794–1804
After Priestley emigrated to America in 1794, his correspondence is primarily concerned with his political, theological and scientific publications, but no more mention of his grammar or his interests in language is found in his letters. His isolation in the back country of Pennsylvania, his health and his precarious finances become the most frequent topics. The building of his new house on a plot along the banks of the Susquehanna river\(^\text{12}\) was an especially severe drain on his resources. To his brother-in-law John Wilkinson, Priestley wrote “[a]s houses are not to be got here, I have begun to build one, but the expense will be great, on the account of the enormously high price of labour, and the scarcity of workmen of all kinds” (letter to John Wilkinson, 12 November 1794). Unfortunately, the money that Wilkinson had settled on him was useless, as it rested in the French funds which had been frozen during the war with England, and the new house indeed used up a considerable amount of his resources, shown by the frequent drafts upon John Vaughan in Philadelphia. It is clear from Priestley’s repeated references to money – for instance, in many letters from

\(^{12}\) The house remains there to this day on a street which is now called Priestley Avenue, where it serves as a museum.
1796 he repeatedly requests Vaughan to send him his annual account – that he was deeply concerned about his finances.

Though Priestley does not mention his grammar or anything relating to the English language in his letters, the names of contemporary grammarians are sometimes found, though never in connection to their grammars. One example is the famous American lexicographer and grammarian Noah Webster (1758–1843), after Priestley had read Webster’s *Brief History of Epidemics and Pestilential Diseases* (1799), though he never referred to Webster’s work as grammarian or lexicographer, for which Webster is primarily known among linguists. Another example is William Cobbett, who is known for memorising the grammar of that other famous English grammarian, Robert Lowth (Aarts 1986: 609), though he is not discussed for his *Grammar of the English Language* (1818) since this was not published until fourteen years after Priestley’s death. Cobbett is mentioned because had attacked Priestley in his pamphlet *Observations on the Emigration of Dr. Joseph Priestley* (Cobbett 1794) and in his newspaper *Porcupine’s Gazette*, which he published between 1797 and 1800. Priestley also mentioned Robert Lowth in his correspondence, on the subject of the revival of his earlier plan to publish a new Unitarian bible:

> I mentioned in a former letter to you, or to Mr [Lindsey] my wish to print all the good new versions of the books of scripture in one volume, as a common Bible, and [I desire] to have [Haverman’s] New Testament, Horsley’s [Hosea], and any other that you [approve]. I have Lowth, [Blayney], and Newcome on Prophets. But I want *Heath on Job* [letter to Thomas Belsham, 24 September 1803].

Again, it is not with reference to his grammar that Lowth is mentioned, as Priestley’s reference concerns Lowth’s translation of *Isaiah* (1778). Lastly, an interesting case is Sir William Jones (1746–1794), also a language expert though not a grammarian. Typically, as was the case with other grammarians, Priestley did not mention Jones’s work on universal language, referring to him as a source of legal information for a new theological work.

Priestley devoted himself to religious writings during this time and he was certain that he would be able to effect a change in the religious sentiments of the Americans. As he wrote to Lindsey:

> ...
I see everything ripe for the propagation of Unitarianism in this city and New York, and I doubt not this Continent in general. My coming, I perceive, will contribute greatly to it, whether I open a congregation or not (letter to Theophilus Lindsey, 5 July 1794).

It seems that he was right, as he is now credited with the establishment of Unitarianism in America. Priestley's views on Christianity were of considerable influence on at least one of the founding fathers of the United States:

He had some immediate impact in the establishment of modern Unitarianism in England and the United States [...] The religion of the "Founding Fathers" of the United States was informed by the theology of Joseph Priestley. John Adams and Thomas Jefferson lightened their later years (1813–16) by a lengthy correspondence that included favorable remarks on Priestley's views of religion and extended comments on Priestley's writings (Schofield 2004: 236).

With his last two major works published, the *Doctrine of Phlogiston Established* and the *History of the Christian Church*, Priestley appears to have been satisfied in having lived a life filled with purpose:

I am, as Mr. Wilkes used to say, an exhausted volcano. My time is over, and my poor state of health, and my age together, warn me to quit all laborious pursuits. Indeed, I feel a languor creeping upon me that I am not able to shake off (letter to Benjamin Smith Barton, 12 July 1803).

Before the end of the century, both his youngest son and his wife had died of illnesses, and over the years following, Priestley's own health continued to deteriorate. Finally, on the sixth of February 1804, Priestley died in his home in Northumberland. Back in England, his younger brother Timothy Priestley (1734–1814), an Evangelical minister, delivered a funeral sermon for him (Priestley 1804). As a testament to his fame among his contemporaries during his lifetime, memoirs and biographies of Priestley started to appear that very same year.

### 2.5. Summary

In this chapter, I have shown that Priestley occupied himself with many different projects and pursuits. Even a relatively short – though focussed – biography such as I have presented in section 2.4 shows that he truly deserves the reputation as one of the great eighteenth-century polymaths. In his long and
highly varied career, Priestley’s school grammar, *The Rudiments of English Grammar*, and his lectures on language and belles-lettres are perhaps no more than brief, necessary excursions into the ‘science of language’ of a man who dedicated his life to the pursuit of so many different subjects. Nevertheless, the following four chapters of this work, will be dedicated to Priestley’s work on grammar and language, and will be primarily be concerned with *The Rudiments of English Grammar*, Priestley’s school grammar.
3. The Rudiments of English Grammar 1761–1798

3.1. Introduction

Priestley’s Rudiments of English Grammar can be seen as one of the main codifying grammars of English in the late eighteenth century. In order to unearth the norms inherent in the grammar, it is necessary to find out where these norms may have come from. And to be able to do so, an investigation of the sources that Priestley used to create his Rudiments of English Grammar is required. In this chapter I will reconstruct its origin and publishing history. The first part of this chapter deals with the genesis of Priestley’s Rudiments of English Grammar (section 3.2). Anyone writing on grammar has to begin somewhere and since no grammarian lives in a vacuum, it is likely that the grammarians of the Late Modern English period used other grammars as sources for their own work. I will trace the sources that Priestley used in the composition of his school grammar. Since the second edition of the Rudiments of English Grammar is considerably larger than the first, and the subsequent editions that came from Priestley’s hand are all rather similar, I will only discuss the composition of those two editions in this chapter. The second part of this chapter (section 3.3) contains an investigation of the publishing history of the Rudiments of English Grammar, which traces the different editions and reprints in which it has appeared after its original publication in 1761. The chapter is concluded with a brief summary and discussion of the findings.

I have used the following bibliographical sources to reconstruct a publishing history of the various editions of Priestley’s grammar: A Bibliography of the English Language from the Invention of Printing to the Year 1800 (Alston 1965), A Bibliography of Joseph Priestley, 1733-1804 (Crook 1966), Eighteenth Century Collections Online (ECCO), as well as many contemporary sources, such as library catalogues, booksellers’ sale catalogues, magazines, newspapers and advertisements appended to Priestley’s works. Many of the latter kinds of
works were found using ECCO and Google Books, after performing both title and full-text searches with the search terms ‘english’, ‘grammar’ and ‘priestley’. Whereas library and sale catalogues may not be completely reliable sources for the investigation of the dissemination of a certain work (Auer 2008a: 74) or what was owned or read by a certain individual (Suarez 1999: 337), they are still useful in finding out what existed at a particular time. In addition, I also made use of the Database of Linguistic and Stylistic Criticism in Eighteenth-century Periodical Reviews: the Monthly Review, first series (1749-1789) & the Critical Review, first series (1756-1789), which was compiled by Carol Percy at the University of Toronto.

3.2. Writing The Rudiments of English Grammar
In chapter 2, I discussed the question why Priestley’s Rudiments of English Grammar was published. Having answered this question – with some necessary speculation – these answers now bring us to the question of how Priestley’s grammar came to be. Since there is sufficient textual and bibliographical evidence available to answer this question, there is little need to speculate on this account. First, I would like to take a closer look at Priestley’s approach to grammar writing.

3.2.1. Priestley’s approach to grammar-writing
Priestley specifically composed his Rudiments of English Grammar for use in the school that he ran during his ministry at Nantwich in Cheshire. In his memoirs, Priestley puts it as follows: “[f]or the use of my school, I then wrote an English Grammar, on a new plan, leaving out all such technical terms as were borrowed from other languages, and had no corresponding modifications in ours, as the future tense, &c.” (Priestley 1806: 44). So from the start, Priestley’s grammar was intended specifically as a school grammar. Vorlatt mentions that contemporary grammarians were aware of the requirements for grammars designed for use at schools:
The 18th- and 19th-century grammarians were concerned with the didactic and pedagogical presentation of their work. The question-and-answer method, the use of small and large print, of footnotes and indexes, the introduction of examples and exercises reflect this preoccupation (Vorlat 2007: 518).

Many of these aspects can also be found in Priestley’s *Rudiments of English Grammar*. One of these is the question-and-answer format, a traditional form which was “[i]n the 18th century [...] commonly believed to be an exquisite pedagogical device” (Vorlat 2007: 518). Apparently, Priestley believed this as well, and gave the following argument for using this format in the preface to his grammar: “[t]he method of Question and Answer hath been made choice of, as being judged to be, in this case, both the most intelligible to the scholar, and the easiest for the master” (Priestley 1761a: iv). Priestley also uses footnotes in the first edition of his grammar, though not in the second. Vorlat notes that footnotes were used for various purposes:

They may offer additional, more detailed rules, which complete the main rules in the text. Or they may explain or justify the specific wording of a rule. In general footnotes are more useful to the teacher than to the pupil (Vorlat 2007: 518).

The footnotes in Brightland & Gildon’s *Grammar of the English Tongue* (1711), for instance, contained the more theoretical aspects of their school grammar (Vorlat 2007: 501). In Lowth’s *Short Introduction to English Grammar* (1762) the footnotes contained his prescriptions (Tieken-Boon van Ostade 1997: 452; 2006a: 544). Both these two kinds of uses are found in the footnotes in the first edition of the *Rudiments of English Grammar* (Priestley 1761a). Possibly Priestley noticed this range of functions while working on the second edition of his grammar and got the idea to change the approach he had taken with the first edition. In the second edition of *Rudiments of English Grammar* (Priestley 1768a), there are no more footnotes, but a very large section with ‘Notes and Observations’ has been inserted. This section was aimed at a higher level of learners, as indicated in the sub-title of the second edition: ‘for the Use of Those Who Have Made Some Proficiency in the Language’. Priestley’s changes in the
second edition of his grammar and his motivations will be discussed further in chapters 6 and 7.

The following two passages from Priestley’s Lectures on Oratory and Criticism (1777a), show his ideas as to an approach to writing a grammar. The first is concerned with the topics to be discussed. Priestley refers to the customary four parts of grammar and writes that "a person who writes a grammar must consider that grammar consists of Orthography, Etymology, Syntax, and Prosody, and discuss what relates to each of them in their order" (Priestley 1777a: 12). This division was common enough in contemporary grammars. The other passage that illustrates Priestley’s ideas on grammar writing deals with the different objectives that ought to be kept in mind when writing a school grammar, rather than a philosophical grammar:

It may not be unuseful to observe, in order to illustrate the variety of method, that another person, intending to draw up a synthetic or systematic treatise upon the same subject, for the use of learners, would most naturally take a method the very reverse of Mr. Harris’s. For example, he would, in the first place, enumerate the several classes into which words may be distributed, and show the modifications that each of them admit. After this he would show in what manner these words, according to their different species, form sentences, and how these sentences are combined into periods. This is the method of the General Grammar of Messieurs de Port Royal, and others. (Priestley 1777a: 63).¹

Priestley’s insight in this matter illustrates his pedagogical awareness. Since the Lectures on Oratory and Criticism were composed when Priestley was a tutor at Warrington academy, and after he wrote the Rudiments of English Grammar, we cannot say whether he already had these ideas when he composed his school grammar, or whether they were the result of composing it.

3.2.2. Sources for the first edition (1761)

The following sections will deal with how the first and second editions of the Rudiments of English Grammar (Priestley 1761a, 1768a) came to be. There will be grammatical works which may have influenced Priestley in writing his grammar but did not necessarily serve as direct sources for it. This could include

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¹ The “General Grammar of Messieurs de Port Royal” refers to the Grammaire Générale et Raisonnée (Arnauld & Lancelot 1660), often referred to as the ‘Port Royal grammar’.
works that Priestley read and from which he used abstract ideas or general approaches, but which he did not use for the purpose of providing definitions, and consequently did not directly contribute to the text as such. They could also be works that Priestley read and did not necessarily agree with, but which did require him to think about his own approach to the subject. It is very difficult to find evidence for these kinds of sources, and consequently they are almost impossible to identify. Unfortunately, there is no record of books in Priestley’s possession at that time, most of them having been destroyed during the Birmingham riots in July 1789. The list of Priestley’s possessions compiled by McKie (1956) includes some books, but these are limited to a few dozen scientific titles; no grammars or other books on language are mentioned. The book catalogue of Priestley’s library, published in Philadelphia in 1816, contains only those titles Priestley was able to rescue from the riots and those he acquired afterwards. This catalogue contains no works on English grammar or the English language, except David Irving’s Elements of English Composition (1801) and Priestley’s own Course of Lectures on the Theory of Language, and Universal Grammar (1762) and Rudiments of English Grammar (1789).²

The other kind of possible sources are works that did serve as direct sources for Priestley’s text, which will most likely be other grammars. These are the kinds of sources that are far easier to identify by biographical and bibliographical evidence and textual comparison. Two of these are grammars that were in existence at the time of publication of the first edition of the Rudiments of English Grammar (1761a). They are the Samuel Johnson’s ‘Grammar of the English Tongue’, prefixed to his Dictionary of the English Language (1755) and John Ward’s (ca. 1679–1758) Four Essays upon the English Language (1758). Priestley explicitly acknowledged his debt to both Johnson and Ward in the first edition of his Rudiments of English Grammar. In the preface of his first edition he wrote that “[i]t is not denied that use hath been made of other Grammars, and particularly of Mr. Johnson’s, in compiling this” (Priestley 1761a: iv).

² The catalogue of Priestley’s library is available online on LibraryThing, where it can be browsed and searched [http://www.librarything.com/profile/JosephPriestley].
Priestley’s use of Ward’s work in writing the *Rudiments of English Grammar* is also explicitly mentioned in the list of irregular verb forms appended to the grammar, the content of which “is extracted chiefly from Mr. Ward’s catalogue” (Priestley 1761a: 39). It is a forty-three page list of irregular and strong verbs. Considering Priestley’s use of Ward’s list for is own list of irregular verbs, it is worthwhile to investigate more closely whether he also used other parts of Ward’s *Four Essays upon the English Language* as direct sources for the first edition of the *Rudiments of English Grammar*. Both Johnson’s *Dictionary of the English Language* and Ward’s *Four Essays upon the English Language* will be included in the analysis of Priestley’s sources for the first edition of the *Rudiments of English Grammar* in section 3.3.2. Another grammar that has been suggested as a source for Priestley’s *Rudiments of English Grammar* is John Kirkby’s *New English Grammar* (1746):

Priestley’s teacher, John Kirkby (1677–1754), a congregational minister and schoolmaster at Heckmondwike, Yorkshire, was himself the author of an English school grammar (1746), and it may have been due to him that Priestley, before making his name as a scientist, devoted himself to the study of languages (Poldau 1948: 137).

Tieken-Boon van Ostade (1992: 168) notes the similarity of the systems of parts of speech of both grammars and concludes that Priestley adopted Kirkby’s system. Since Priestley was instructed by a John Kirkby from ages thirteen to sixteen, between 1746 and 1749, when the *New English Grammar* was just published, this may seem plausible. However, it appears that there were two different John Kirkbys. Schofield notes that the John Kirkby (b.1678) who instructed the young Priestley was a schoolmaster and Calvinist preacher at Heckmondwike Chapel (Schofield 1997: 8, 12). However, the John Kirkby (c.1705-1754) who published the *New English Grammar* in 1746 was a clergyman, born almost thirty years later. Consequently, there appears to be no hard evidence that the *New English Grammar* had any influence on Priestley’s

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2 Lists of irregular verbs in eighteenth-century grammars contained both strong and irregular verbs, as no distinction was made between the two. The term ‘strong verb’ was not invented until the beginning of the nineteenth century, coined by Jacob Grimm (*OED* ‘strong verb’ in ‘first cited author’).
Rudiments of English Grammar. However, it is striking that Priestley used as a system of division for the parts of speech that was not used before, except in Kirkby's New English Grammar, as shown by Tieken-Boon van Ostade (1992: 168). It is therefore possible that somehow Priestley was influenced by Kirkby's grammar after all. For now I refer to Tieken-Boon van Ostade (1992) for further information; a possible future comparison of the two grammars may shed more light on this subject.

In his Dictionary, Johnson refers to John Wallis's (1616–1703) Grammatica Linguae Anglicanae (1653), an English grammar in Latin. Consequently, Priestley's grammar may also have been influenced by Wallis, either indirectly through Johnson or directly, after reading Johnson's work. Kemp, in his English translation of Wallis' grammar (Kemp 1972: 69-70), hints at Wallis's influence on the grammars of both Priestley and Lowth but I suspect any influence of Wallis's Grammatica Linguae Anglicanae on Priestley's Rudiments of English Grammar was negligible. Wallis's grammar is completely unique - the only grammar that falls under system 25 – in Michael's classification (1970: 203–205). There is evidence that Priestley was familiar with it, although whether he was at the time of the composition of his grammar in the late 1750s is unclear. Priestley discusses Wallis's grammar in his Lectures on the Theory of Language and Universal Grammar (1762: 298–301). However, he only does so as an example of a philosophical and universal grammar. Kemp's translation of Wallis' grammar (1972) shows that Priestley's Rudiments of English Grammar differs too greatly in structure from Wallis's Grammatica Linguae Anglicanae to have been directly influenced by Wallis's. But similarity is not to be expected since Wallis's grammar was not a grammar designed to be used in schools, unlike Priestley's.

When we look at the similarities between different grammars based on their grammatical categories, it could be suggested that those grammars which Michael (1970) classified as belonging to the same system as Priestley's might have been of influence. However, this investigation can be brief, as all other grammars listed under system 15 follow the publication of Priestley's grammar,
rather than predate it. This leaves the grammar prefixed to Johnson’s Dictionary and Ward’s Four Essays as definite sources for Priestley’s Rudiments of English Grammar. To which extent these grammars were used as sources remains to be answered, and I will try to do so in the next section.

3.2.3. The influence of Johnson and Ward

In this section, I will compare Johnson’s Dictionary of the English Language, Ward’s Four Essays Upon the English Language and Priestley’s Rudiments of English Grammar with each other, in order to trace any possible influence from the former two works on the latter. I will do so by focussing on the definitions of the various parts of grammar, the parts of speech, and other aspects of grammar discussed in these texts.

In the grammar prefixed to the second edition of his Dictionary, Johnson gives the following definition of grammar and its constituent parts: “GRAMMAR, which is the art of using words properly, comprises four parts; Orthography, Etymology, Syntax, and Prosody” (Johnson 1755, Vol.1: sig. a1'). He continues to explain why he used this four-fold distinction:

In this division and order of the parts of grammar I follow the common grammarians, without enquiring whether a better division might not be found [...] I likewise use the terms already received, and already understood, though perhaps others more proper might sometimes be found (Johnson 1755, Vol.1: sig. a1').

Johnson’s reference to “the common grammarians” raises the question of who they were. Johnson is not explicit about this, which is unfortunate as this might reveal other potential sources for Priestley’s grammar. However, one of them may be identified. Vorlat mentions that in William Lily’s Short Introduction of Grammar (1567), “which by royal decree was the only authorized school grammar and held this position for three centuries” (Vorlat 2007: 507) the “definition of grammar as the ‘recte scribendi atque loguendi ars’ (1567: Aii, r) will stand model for definitions in innumerable teaching grammars” (Vorlat 2007: 513). It thus stands to reason that Lily was one of the “common grammarians” that Johnson referred to. As mentioned above, Johnson explicitly
mentioned Wallis, who can also be counted among them. For the definition of grammar, however, Wallis is definitely not a source, as he did not define grammar or its components. It is quite possible that Johnson had no specific grammarians in mind, but that this kind of reference was common practice which was used to invoke a common frame of reference which readers/learners of grammar – as well as their writers – could be expected to be familiar with. Lily’s grammar, with its function as a model grammar in schools, would be one of the grammars to fall in this frame of reference.

In his *Four Essays Upon the English Language* Ward gives no explicit definition of grammar, but merely notes its importance for educated readers in the preface: “Grammar, being the key to all science, a due regard has been paid to it by men of the best sense, and most extensive knowledge” (Ward 1758: iii). Priestley’s definition of the parts of grammar is the same as Johnson’s, though Priestley represents them in the question-and-answer format that he uses throughout his grammar. The text of the grammar proper begins as follows:

Q. *What is Grammar?* A. Grammar is the art of using words properly. Q. Of how many parts doth Grammar consist? A. Of four, *Orthography, Etymology, Syntax,* and *Prosody* (Priestley 1761a: 1).

It seems that Priestley copied Johnson almost verbatim here, and not only in his definition of grammar, but also in his identification of the parts of grammar. There is no such correspondence in his definitions with those of Ward. Johnson’s definition of orthography, which is the first part of grammar, is as follows:

*Orthography* is the art of combining letters into syllables, and syllables into words. It therefore teaches previously the form and sound of letters (Johnson 1755, Vol.1: sig. a1f).

Although Ward does not explicitly mention the parts of grammar, he does have definitions for two of them: orthography and etymology. Ward’s definition of orthography is more elaborate than that of Johnson, and reads: “Orthography considers the several letters and syllables of words, in order to write them in the best and most proper manner, as regulated by etymology, custom, analogy and distinction” (Ward 1758: 1). Priestley’s definition is exactly the same as the
one in Johnson’s Dictionary and is therefore very likely a verbatim repetition of
it: “Orthography is the art of combining letters into syllables, and syllables into
words” (Priestley 1761a: 1). Vorlat mentions that “the question is raised, from
the second half of the 18th century on, whether orthography does not belong in
thought that it did, and does not deal with orthography in the Rudiments of
English Grammar, adding the following footnote to its definition:

For Orthography, though properly a part of Grammar, I refer to books written
upon that subject; such as Dr. Watt’s Art of reading and writing English, which I
mention as being a proper introduction to this grammar (Priestley 1761a: xiif).

Also note here the didactic element of the use of a footnote to instruct the
teacher, as discussed in section 3.2.1.

The eighteenth-century definition of etymology is somewhat different from
that in Present Day English. Rather than referring to how the meaning of words
was formed historically, in eighteenth-century grammars “etymology deals
with the parts of speech or word classes, sometimes also with inflection and
derivation” (Vorlat 2007: 504). This is exemplified by Johnson’s definition of
etymology, the second part of grammar, which “teaches the deduction of one
word from another, and the various modifications by which the sense of the
same word is diversified; as, horse, horses; I love, I loved” (Johnson 1755, Vol.1:
sig. a2v). From Johnson’s examples, we are led to suspect that etymology
corresponds to what is now called morphology. Ward’s definition of etymology
is couched inside his argument why finds it important. He writes that “[a]n
attendance to the etymology, or derivation of words, is often very serviceable
to fix the spelling, or true manner of writing” (Ward 1758: 1). Priestley defines
etymology in almost exactly the same words as Johnson, even to the point of
using the same examples, as shown here:

Etymology is that part of Grammar which teaches the deduction of one word
from another, and the various modifications by which the meaning of the same
word is diversified; as Horse, Horses; I love, I loved (Priestley 1761a: 2).
Thus Priestley, following Johnson, understands etymology to be something different from Ward, whose definition is less precise.

Johnson considers syntax, or the third part of grammar, not to be a very important part of grammar. Vorlat noted that only from the eighteenth century onwards, chapters on syntax in English grammars start to become in any way substantial, starting with Greenwood (1711). Johnson, with his scanty attention to syntax, is mentioned as an exception (Vorlat 2007: 505–506). Regarding syntax, Johnson writes the following:

The established practice of grammarians requires that I should here treat of the Syntax; but our language has so little inflection, or variety of terminations, that its construction neither requires nor admits many rules. Wallis therefore has totally omitted it; and Johnson, whose desire of following the writers upon the learned languages made him think a syntax indispensible necessary, has published such petty observations as were better omitted (Johnson 1755, Vol.1: sig. c25).4

Although there is no explicit definition here, one might get the impression that Johnson equates syntax with the correct use of the proper inflections and terminations of words. Johnson does have an entry syntax in the dictionary proper, which defines it as "that part of grammar which teaches the construction of words" (Johnson 1755 Vol.2, s.v. 'syntax'). As we have seen, Johnson himself does not define syntax as the construction of parts of sentences, and Ward does not even have a definition of syntax at all. Priestley defines syntax as follows: "Syntax is that part of Grammar which teaches the proper construction of words, or the method of joining them together in sentences" (Priestley 1761a: 32). He clearly deviates from Johnson as he feels that syntax mainly involves the proper use of the conjunctive particles. To this definition, he adds the following footnote, stating that "the art of English Syntax must consist chiefly, in the proper application of the conjunctive particles; and the accurate use of these can only be learned from observation and a dictionary" (Priestley 1761a: 32f). Priestley's definition of syntax is closer to that in Johnson's

4 Johnson does not refer to himself in this passage but to Ben Jonson (1572–1637), whose English Grammar was included in for instance, his collected works Jonson (1641).
Dictionary than that in the grammar prefixed to it, specifically in the reference to the “construction of words” in both definitions. Perhaps it was the dictionary’s definition that Priestley started from and expanded upon according to his own knowledge (or that of another grammarian). Johnson defines prosody, the fourth and last part of grammar, as being composed of two parts, of which he also gives the definitions:

Prosody comprises orthoephy, or the rules of pronunciation; and orthometry, or the laws of versification [...]. Pronunciation is just, when every letter has its proper sound, and when every syllable has its proper accent, or, which in English versification, is the same, its proper quantity. [...] Versification is the arrangement of a certain number of syllables according to certain laws (Johnson 1755, Vol.1: sig. c2’).

Ward has no section on prosody at all and only makes a remark about its relation to verse in a section called “Quantity”, which he defines as follows: “Quantity is the measure of time requisite for the distinct pronunciation of a syllable” (Ward 1758: 27). Priestley is very short on prosody, which he defines as follows:

Prosody is that part of Grammar which teaches the rules of Pronunciation, and of Versification [...]. Q. Upon what doth the art of versification depend? A. Upon arranging the syllables of words according to certain laws, respecting quantity or accent (Priestley 1761a: 35).

Both Priestley and Johnson write that prosody encompasses pronunciation and versification. It appears that Priestley also used Johnson as a source here, though he condensed Johnson’s definition by taking the technical terminology out. This makes sense, since he was writing a school grammar, intended for a young audience who were as yet probably new to grammar. Priestley’s definition of pronunciation also includes accent, which is repeated in his definition of versification. His definition of versification was clearly also taken from Johnson, and is a combination of Johnson’s definitions of versification and pronunciation. From their respective definitions of the parts of grammar it is clear that Ward used a very different way to systematise grammar than his contemporaries Johnson and Priestley.

Michael’s (1970) method of classification of grammars, based on the parts
of speech distinguished in them could be helpful in comparing the grammars of Johnson, Ward and Priestley. In his *Four Essays Upon the English Language* Ward does not explicitly set up a system of parts of speech in advance, but he does give definitions of the parts of speech as he discusses them each in turn (see below). Indeed, Michael does not classify Ward’s grammar as belonging to any of the systems, but he classifies Johnson’s grammar as system 10 and Priestley’s as system 15, both of which are what he calls Latin systems. These he explains as follows:

The first of these Latin systems is the traditional system as found in Lily, and the nineteen others are minor variations of it. The variations are often unwitting, and do not suggest any desire to modify the system substantially, far less to reform it. They are latinate and conservative (Michael 1970: 210).

Although Johnson does not explicitly mention the parts of speech in a list, he has sections in his grammar on the following five: articles, nouns, adjectives, pronouns and verbs. Priestley, in turn, adopts a system with eight parts of speech: nouns, adjectives, pronouns, verbs, adverbs, prepositions, conjunctions and interjections (Priestley 1761: 2). As he does more often, he explains his reason for his use of this system in a footnote:

I have adopted the usual distribution of words into eight classes, in compliance with the practice of most Grammarians; and because, if any number, in a thing so arbitrary, must be fixed upon, this seems to be as comprehensive and distinct as any. All the innovation I have made hath been to throw out the Participle, and substitute the Adjective, as more evidently a distinct part of speech (Priestley 1761a: 21).

Again, we see a general reference to common practice among grammarians of the time. This system of eight parts of speech was based on a Latin paradigm that would go on for centuries (Vorlat 2007: 506–508). In Priestley’s division in the *Rudiments of English Grammar*, articles – which according to Vorlat (2007: 509–510) are problematic in a latinate system – fall under the heading of “Substantives”. Priestley ends his section on the parts of speech with the following summary:

* A Substantive admits of [a] [the] good, bad, or some other known adjective before it […] An Adjective hath no determinate meaning with only [a] or [the]
Johnson gives no definition of nouns in the section ‘Of Nouns Substantives’ in which they are discussed. He merely mentions their lack of inflections, saying that “relations of English nouns to words going before or following are not expressed by cases, or changes of termination, but as in most of the other European languages by prepositions, unless we may be said to have a genitive case” (Johnson 1755, Vol1: sig. b1'). In the dictionary proper, Johnson’s definition of a noun is taken from “Clarke’s Lat. Grammar”, and reads as follows:

The name of any thing in grammar. A noun is the name of a thing, whether substance, mode, or relation, which in speech is used to signify the same where there is occasion to affirm or deny any thing about it, or to express any relation it has in discourse to any other thing Clarke’s Lat. Grammar (Johnson 1755 Vol2, s.v. ‘noun’).

Although I have not yet been able to definitively trace this definition to a specific work, Johnson probably refers to John Clarke’s (bap. 1687–1734) New Grammar of the Latin Tongue, Comprising All in the Art Necessary for Grammar-Schools (1733). Just as was the case with Wallis’s grammar, there is no evidence to indicate that Priestley either owned Clarke’s work or was in any way familiar with it.

One of Ward’s four essays is entitled ‘The Use of the Articles’, which covers articles, nouns and adjectives, and touches upon pronouns and adverbs as well. Ward has no definition of nouns, but merely gives a classification of them: “[n]ouns are of two sorts, substantives and adjectives; the former of which are again divided in common and proper” (Ward 1758: 69). Thus in Ward both the substantive and the adjective fall under nouns (see also Michael 1970: 218).

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5 In this quotation, the square brackets around [a] and [the] are part of the original text.
This is not the case with Priestley, where the noun and the adjective are primary parts of speech (Michael 1970: 231). Priestley thus equates nouns with substantives, which he defines as follows way: “[a] Noun or (as it is sometimes called a Substantive) is the name of any thing; as a Horse, a Tree; John, Thomas” (Priestley 1761a: 2). The dictionary definition from Johnson, which had been borrowed from Clarke, is possibly the one that Priestley used as a starting point. Johnson does not define the articles in general – which is not untypical of a grammar using a Latin system (number 10 in Michael 1970: 225) – whether they are a separate part of speech or whether they belong to different categories, but only defines the indefinite and definite articles:

The English have two articles, an or a, and the [...] A has an indefinite signification and means one, with some reference to more [...] This has a particular and definite signification [...] used in both numbers (Johnson 1755, Vol.1: sig. a2r–b1v).

Ward places the article under the heading of “common substantive”. He gives the following definitions of the articles in general, with the forms of the indefinite and definite articles:

Articles do properly belong to common substantives; and not to proper names, unless when used for common nouns by way of similitude; nor to adjectives, except some few only, as will be shewn afterwards [...] There are two articles, a and the; the former of which is called indefinite, and the latter definite [...] [the indefinite article] often does not determine the noun, to which it is prefixed, to any certain species; and never to any certain individual [...] [the definite article] always determines the noun, to which it is prefixed, to some certain species, or individual (Ward 1758: 69–74).

Priestley does not explicitly mention the article as a part of speech, but he defines it in the section on substantives, to which he adds his definitions of the indefinite and definite articles:

Q. What are the words [a] and [the] that are frequently placed before nouns? A. They are called Articles [...] and they are placed before nouns to ascertain the extent of their signification [...] The article [a] (before a consonant, but [an] before a vowel) intimates that one only of a species is meant, but not any one in particular [...] Hence it is called the article Indefinite [...] The article [the] limits the signification of a word to some one or more of a species [...] For this reason it is called the article Definite (Priestley 1761a: 6–7).
He adds a footnote explaining his choice to discuss articles under the heading of ‘Substantives’, rather than as a separate part of speech:

The account of the Articles is inserted in this place because of their connection with nouns: And it was not thought necessary, in imitation of the Greek grammars, to enumerate them among the distinct parts of speech, because there are no other words to be ranged under the same class. In universal grammar they should be considered as belonging to the class of Adjectives (Priestley 1761: 6f).

We see that Priestley makes a distinction between what is appropriate for a school grammar, and what for a philosophical or ‘universal’ grammar.

Johnson, just as he does for the article, does not give an explicit definition of adjectives, but merely mentions their attributes. However, the dictionary entry adjective has the following definition, again derived from Clarke’s Latin grammar: “[a] word added to a noun, to signify the addition or separation of some quality, circumstance, or manner of being Clarke’s Latin Gram.” (Johnson 1755 Vol. I, s.v. ‘adjective’). Ward mentions adjectives only as they pertain to the use of articles, and does so in the following way:

[W]hen the adjective precedes its substantive [...] the article is placed before them both [...] except [...] adjectives used by way of question, or admiration; or with the comparative adverbs as, so or too coming before them [...] Adjectives likewise, when used emphatically, by way of distinction, or without a substantive, have an article put before them (Ward 1758: 77–79).

It is hard to say from Priestley’s definition of adjectives whether he was influenced by Johnson’s – or rather Clarke’s – definition or not. He defines adjectives as “words that denote the properties or qualities of things” (Priestley 1761: 7).

As is the case of articles and adjectives, Johnson provides the forms and attributes of pronouns, but does not define them explicitly. After giving a list of all the pronouns, he goes on to describe but not define the personal, possessive, relative and demonstrative pronouns in a section that is too long to repeat here. Ward only mentions pronouns in relation to their use with articles, saying that “[P]ronouns, whether substantives or adjectives, have no article set before them, except the relative same” (Ward 1758: 80). He also mentions them in relation to their use in compounds, like himself which derives from him and self,
or in cases where a pronoun is coupled with a substantive, like *self-mover* from *self* and *mover* (Ward 1758: 63). Priestley defines pronouns as “words that are used as substitutes for nouns, to prevent the too frequent and tiresome repetition of them” (Priestley 1761a: 8). He then adds a footnote that indicates that he may not have been completely satisfied with this classification, or at least that another may be possible:

> It might not have been improper to have classed all the Pronouns under the heads of Substantives, or Adjectives; the personal pronouns being of the former kind, and all the other denominations of the latter (Priestley 1761a: 8f-9f).

Like Johnson, Priestley definition of relative pronouns reads rather more like a description of their function. He writes that the “RELATIVE pronouns (so called because they refer, or relate to an antecedent or subsequent substantive) are who, which, what and whether” (Priestley 1761a: 10–11).

Johnson does give a definition of the verb, but only gives the following description of one of its sub-classifications, active and neuter:

> English verbs are active, as I love; or neuter, as I languish. The neuters are formed like the actives. Most verbs signifying action, may likewise signify condition or habit, and become neuters, as I love, I am in love; I strike, I am now striking (Johnson 1755, Vol.1: sig. b1v).

Ward’s entire fourth essay focuses on verbs and is called ‘The Formation of Verbs, and their Analogy with the Latin’. In this essay, Ward defines the verb as follows:

> A Verb is that part of speech, by which one thing is attributed to another, as to its subject. Verbs with respect to their signification are active, passive, or neuter. A verb active denotes the doing of an action [...] A verb passive denotes the reception or effect of an action [...] A verb neuter denotes either the existence of a thing, or the manner of its existence (Ward 1758: 81).

In addition, he classifies verbs as being either transitive or intransitive. This is something which Priestley does not do, and his definition of verbs is that a “verb is a word that expresseth what is affirmed of, or attributed to, a thing; as, I love; the horse neighs” (Priestley 1761a: 12).

Both Johnson and Priestley explicitly argue that the English language has only two inflected tenses: the present and the preterite. Priestley adds that
these two tenses express the “time present” and “time past” (1761a: 13). With regard to mood, both Johnson and Priestley use the term “conjunctive mood” for what in modern grammar is called the subjunctive. Johnson also uses the term “potential mood” which was also sometimes used for the subjunctive mood expressed by a modal verb. Priestley moreover has an appendix with irregular verb forms, for which he acknowledges his indebtedness to Ward:

I have chosen [...] a catalogue of irregularly inflected verbs, excluding those verbs [...] that are become obsolete [...] It is extracted chiefly from Mr. Ward’s catalogue; but without taking any notice of his distinction of conjugations: because, if we make use of that term in a sense analogous to that in which it is used in other languages, there is, certainly, no such thing as conjugations of English verbs (Priestley 1761a: 39).

In a section following that of verbs, Johnson also gives a classification of irregular verbs.

Johnson does not mention adverbs, prepositions and interjections in the grammar prefixed to his Dictionary, although their definitions do appear in the respective entries in the dictionary proper. All three definitions are cited as being taken from Clarke’s grammar. Johnson’s dictionary entry has the following definition for adverb:

A word joined to a verb or adjective, and solely applied to the use of qualifying and restraining the latitude of their signification, by the intimation of some circumstance thereof; as of quality, manner, degree. Clarke’s Latin Grammar (Johnson 1755 Vol.1, s.v. ‘adverb’).

The dictionary entry for preposition reads as follows:

PREPOSITION [...] In grammar, a particle governing a case. A preposition signifies some relation, which the thing signified by the word following it has to something going before in the discourse Clarke’s Lat. Gram. (Johnson 1755 Vol.2, s.v. ‘preposition’).

The entry for interjection in the dictionary reads:

INTERJECTION [...] A part of speech that discovers the mind to be seized or affected with some passion: such as are in English, O! alas! ah! Clarke’s Lat. Gram. (Johnson 1755 Vol.1, s.v. ‘interjection’).

Ward mentions adverbs in relation to their position with respect to adjectives and substantives, but he does not actually define adverbs, as shown in the
following sentence: “when some adverb is prefixed to the adjective, the
substantive is placed either before or after them both indifferently” (Ward
1758: 78). There are no definitions for prepositions and interjections in Ward’s
Four Essays either. Priestley defines adverbs as follows, specifically citing three
types of adverbs, namely those of place, time and manner.

Adverbs are words that denote the manner, and other circumstances of an
action [...] The principal of them are the three following: viz. 1st, Those of Place
[...] 2dly, Those of Time [...] And, 3dly, Those of Quality or manner (Priestley
1761a: 27–28).

These types of adverbs are not the same three as those named in Johnson’s
dictionary, which were quality, manner and degree. Priestley defines the prepo-
sition as “a word that expresseth the relation that one word hath to another”
(Priestley 1761a: 28). And his definition of interjections is based on their usage:
“[i]nterjections are broken or imperfect words, denoting some emotion or
passion of the mind; as, ah, oh, phy” (Priestley 1761a: 28). In the case of
adverbs and interjections, the definitions are not quite similar enough to be
able to determine whether Priestley was influenced by Johnson or not.

There are some other topics that are discussed in some of the grammars
under consideration here, but not always in all three of them. The only topic
that occurs in all three works is derivation, so I will briefly discuss that here.

Johnson’s description of derivation includes the following:

Nouns are derived from verbs. The thing implied in the verb as done or
produced, is commonly either the present of the verb; as, to love, love, to fright,
a fright; to fight, a fight; or the preterite of the verb, as, to strike, I strick or
stroke, a stroke. The action is the same with the participle present, as loving,
frighting, fighting, striking (Johnson 1755, Vol.1: sig. c1v).

Priestley’s section on derivation starts with a description that is not necessarily
reminiscent of Johnson’s:

Nouns are frequently converted into verbs by lengthening the sound of their
vowels [...] Verbs, with little or no variation, are converted into substantives,
expressing what is denoted by the verb as done or produced; as love, a fright;

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6 There is no separate entry for phy, a variant spelling of the exclamative fie, in Johnson’s Dictionary of the English Language.
from to love, to fright; and a stroke, from struck, the preterite of the verb to strike (Priestley 1761a: 29).

However, it is noteworthy that Priestley uses the same examples as Johnson, which makes it more likely to be a case of borrowing. Ward has a separate section called ‘Derivatives’, and defines a derivative as "[a] derivative word is that, which owes its origin to some other word, in the same language, from which it differs in sense only, or both in sense and form" (Ward 1758: 55).

Priestley includes a short section on figurative language, called ‘On Figures’, which Johnson does not have, and he concludes the Rudiments of English Grammar with a twenty-page section called ‘Observations on Style’, and a twenty-seven-page section called ‘Examples of English Composition’, which has examples from Addison in The Spectator, Hume, Pope, The Rambler and the bible. No such sections are present in Johnson’s Dictionary or Ward’s Four Essays Upon The English Language. It appears that it was Priestley’s own idea to include these sections in his grammar.

From this analysis we can conclude that Priestley did not create The Rudiments of English Grammar from scratch, as it were, but drew upon existing scholarship from in particular the grammar prefixed to Samuel Johnson’s Dictionary and John Ward’s Four Essays upon the English Language. There are many similarities between the grammars of Johnson and Priestley. These similarities are not so much present in their structure as in the definitions of terms from the grammar, as well as those in the dictionary proper. Besides Priestley’s acknowledgement of Johnson’s influence, the comparison of the two texts performed here clearly shows that Johnson’s grammar was a direct source for Priestley’s. Most of Johnson’s grammatical definitions listed in the dictionary proper are derived from Clarke’s New Grammar of the Latin Tongue (1733). It does not seem, however, that Priestley used this work for his own grammar, possibly because he felt that English required its own grammar, as he writes in the Preface to the first edition of his Rudiments of English Grammar, where he writes the following:
The propriety of introducing the *English Grammar* into *English schools*, cannot be disputed; a competent knowledge of our own language being both useful and ornamental in every profession, and a critical knowledge of it absolutely necessary to all person of a liberal education (Priestley 1761a: viii).

As we can see, Priestley found the teaching of English – rather than Latin – in schools important. Consequently, he expressed surprise at the use of Latin terminology in contemporary grammars of English in the preface to the second edition of his *Rudiments of English Grammar*:

I own I am surprised to see so much of the distribution, and technical terms of the Latin grammar, retained in the grammar of our tongue; where they are exceedingly awkward, and absolutely superfluous; being such as could not have entered into the head of any man, who had not been previously acquainted with Latin (Priestley 1768a: vii).

I suspect Priestley found that in order to be able to teach English effectively, teachers needed to be able to use an English grammar, with an English rather than a Latin terminology.

With respect to Ward’s grammar, apart from the fact that Priestley extracted the irregular verbs from the catalogue that Ward attached to his work, there is hardly any similarity between Ward’s *Four Essays upon the English Language* and Priestley’s *Rudiments of English Grammar*. Indeed, Michael classifies them as belonging to different systems, though both Latin ones. Ward’s grammar belongs to system 4, whereas Priestley’s belongs to system 15. All in all, it seems unlikely that Priestley used Ward’s work as a source for anything other than the list of irregular verbs.

### 3.2.4. Sources for the second edition (1768)

The second edition of the *Rudiments of English Grammar* (1768a) is considerably different from the first. The most obvious difference is that it is more than twice as long, counting 222 pages against the 100 pages of the first edition. The sections ‘Observations on Style’ and ‘Examples of English Composition’ from the 1761 edition have been removed and a lengthy section – about two thirds of the total number of pages – called ‘Notes and Observations’ has been introduced. This is not the place for a detailed comparison between the two, but...
a discussion of the differences and Priestley’s motivations for writing a second edition can be found in Hodson (2008). Briefly summarising, in the 1768 edition, Priestley re-evaluated both the grammatical and pedagogical decisions he had made in the 1761 edition. The changes reveal his self-consciousness in writing a grammar and the question of whether the English grammarians in general knew enough about the language to write authoritatively about it seems implied in the text. Consequently, whereas the 1761 edition was a straightforward school grammar, the 1768 edition – specifically with its section ‘Notes and Observations’ – Priestley appeared “to have become aware that the task he had set himself was much more complex than he had originally conceived” (Hodson 2008: 189). I will return to Priestley’s changing ideas about his work in chapter 5. A discussion of differences regarding the normative elements between the two editions (also compared to the first and second editions of Lowth’s grammar) can be found in chapter 7.

It can be assumed that the works that were sources for the 1761 edition of Priestley’s grammar were also used as sources for the second edition of the *Rudiments of English Grammar*, which was after all based on the earlier edition, so we already have Johnson and Ward. In the preface to the 1768 edition, Priestley makes a reference to James Harris (1709–1780) in relation to his own lectures on universal grammar:

> To the same treatise I must [...] refer my readers [...] with respect to the definitions of terms, and some other articles relating to Grammar, in which I differ from Mr. Harris, and other grammarians (Priestley 1768a: xiv–xv).

It is clear from this passage that Priestley may have been influenced by several grammarians, the only one of which named here is Harris. He thus must have been at least acquainted with Harris’s work, most likely his philosophical grammar *Hermes* (1751). Harris’s work, however, need not have been an actual source for Priestley’s grammar.7 In the preface to the 1768 edition of the

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7 Interestingly, Lowth also mentions Harris’s *Hermes* in the preface to his *Short Introduction to English Grammar* (1762: xiv).
*Rudiments of English Grammar*, Priestley acknowledges his obligations to both Johnson and Lowth.

I must not conclude this preface, without making my acknowledgments to Mr. Johnson [...] I must, also, acknowledge my obligations to Dr. Lowth [...] I have taken a few of his examples [...] to make my own more complete (Priestley 1768a: xxiii).

The influence of the Lowth’s grammar (1762) on Priestley's 1768 edition of the *Rudiments of English Grammar* is too complex to discuss in paragraph or two here. Put briefly, it appears that after reading Lowth’s grammar, Priestley became more critical of his own work and his own attitude towards grammar (Hodson 2008). The relationship between these two texts will be explored in greater detail in chapter 6, where I will show that Priestley did more than "take a few examples" from Lowth’s grammar. The second edition of his grammar has considerably more normative strictures in it than the first. In chapter 7, I will show Lowth’s influence through a quantitative analysis of prescriptive and descriptive language in the first two editions of both their grammars.

In the section 'Of the Derivation and Composition of Words', Priestley gives a list of affixes used in word derivation which he mentions he has “extracted chiefly from Mr. Johnson” (Priestley 1768a: 30–34). The list that follows is largely the same as the one in the section 'Of Derivation' in the first edition of the grammar (Priestley 1761a: 29–32), in which Johnson is not, however, named as a source. It appears that this was an oversight on Priestley's part since he does credit Johnson in both the 1761 and 1768 editions as a source for a list of disyllabic adjectives that are compared by periphrasis rather than by inflection (Priestley 1761a: 8; 1768a: 77). As in the first edition, he includes a list of irregular verbs in the second edition of his grammar, for which he again used the long list of verbs from John Ward’s *Four Essays upon the English Language* as a source. Thus, we can list James Harris, Samuel Johnson, Robert Lowth, and John Ward as sources for the second edition of Priestley’s grammar.

It appears, however, that besides other grammarians, the popular press may also have had some influence on it. An otherwise positive review of the
first edition of the *Rudiments of English Grammar* in the *Critical Review* (1756-1790) had the following to remark as its one point of criticism of the work: “Examples are subjoined, which, in our opinion, ought to have been omitted” (*Critical Review* 13, 1762: 77). It is not unlikely that Priestley read this review. Although it is impossible to conclusively prove the influence of the *Critical Review*, it at least appears that Priestley took its advice to heart and removed the section ‘Examples of English Composition’ from the first edition of his grammar. Considering the fact that the review, though short, is on the whole positive. It is not unlikely that Priestley, if he read it, took its sole point of criticism seriously.

Summarising, for the second edition of his grammar Priestley used mainly the same sources as for the first. Additionally, Priestley used Lowth’s grammar, which, although it was first published in 1762, shortly after Priestley’s, was reprinted several times before Priestley’s second edition came out in 1768. Priestley appears to have taken Lowth’s grammar very seriously and to have paid close attention to it when it came to compiling the second edition of his own (see chapter 6). I suggest, therefore, that Priestley not merely criticised Lowth in the second edition of the *Rudiments of English Grammar* (see Hodson 2008: 184-185), but that he actually let Lowth’s grammar guide his attitude more than previously indicated. The result was a greatly enhanced edition of the grammar that he had first written some ten years earlier as a schoolteacher in Nantwich. The difference between the first and second editions of Priestley’s *Rudiments of English Grammar* are so considerable that I will deal with them at length in chapter 6. In the writing the second edition, Priestley may also have been influenced by the reception of the first edition of his grammar in the popular press, as shown by the article from the *Critical Review*.

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8 From the Database of Linguistic and Stylistic Criticism in Eighteenth-century Periodical Reviews (Percy et al.)
3.3. Publishing *The Rudiments of English Grammar*

3.3.1. Introduction

In order to reconstruct the publishing history of Priestley's grammar, I have collected bibliographical data regarding the various editions of the *Rudiments of English Grammar*. This information may be presented by way of a tree diagram such as Figure 3.3.1 below. It should be remembered that some of the 'editions' mentioned in the following sections are not actually different editions but merely reprints of the same book. It was not an uncommon practice for book-sellers to advertise books as new editions that were actually merely reprints of the same edition (see also Suarez 2000: 141). The difference between new editions and reprints is defined as follows:

> An edition, first of all, is all the copies of a book printed at any time (or times) from substantially the same setting of type, and includes all the various impressions, issues, and states which may have derived from that setting [...] there is a new edition when more than half the type has been reset, but that if less than half the type has been reset we are probably dealing with another impression (Gaskell 1985: 313).

Resetting the type will alter the spacing and the pattern of worn types and can therefore be detected by close examination of the pages of the texts under examination (Gaskell 185: 313). It should be noted that this definition is primarily based on technical aspects. It does not say anything about changes in the content of a work from one edition to another. These changes, however, should be taken into account as even relatively minor changes in the set text may reflect fundamental changes in the meaning or attitude of the author.

3.3.2. Editions and reprints of *The Rudiments of English Grammar*

In what follows, I will trace the publishing history of the work, based largely on the structure of the various editions that have been published. For instance, where the structure provides no useful information to distinguish between editions, bibliographical data is compared in order to try to do so. This bibliographical data usually comprises the size of the book and its price. Recurring patterns in the prices of the book in different sources may help to identify the
size of a publication where it is not listed. Prices of books varied depending on the size and binding of the book, with the smaller duodecimo volumes generally being cheaper than the larger octavo ones (see also Suarez 2000: 142). The binding of a book also contributed to its final price. In the eighteenth century, books were delivered to the bookseller as printed pages (Suarez 2000: 136), which could be ordered with a specific binding according to the wishes of the customer (Suarez 2000: 143), for which the pages were sent to a bookbinder.

Though published nearly half a century ago, the first volume of Alston’s *Bibliography of the English Language from the Invention of Printing to the Year 1800* (1965) is still a standard reference work for the bibliographical study of the history of English grammars. Nine eighteenth-century editions of Priestley’s *Rudiments of English Grammar* are listed in Alston, published in 1761, 1763, 1768, 1771, 1772, 1784, 1786, 1789, and 1798 (Alston 1965: 40–41). Eight of these are also available from ECCO; the only one not in ECCO is the 1763 reprint of the first edition. Consequently, since the full text of this edition was not available to me, its place in the genealogical line had to be inferred from other available information. My bibliographical research has yielded a total of fifteen different editions and reprints of Priestley’s *Rudiments of English Grammar*, all published between 1761 and 1798, including those already known and listed in Alston. Crook’s *Bibliography of Joseph Priestley* (1966) does not refer to any editions of Priestley’s grammar that are not already present in Alston, including those reprinted in Rut’s editions of Priestley’s works in 1826 and 1833 (see also Alston 1965: 41; Crook 1966: 114) in which the *Rudiments of English Grammar* were collected in a single volume, together with Priestley’s *Course of Lectures on the Theory of Language, and Universal Grammar* and his *Course of Lectures on Oratory and Criticism*. I will proceed by discussing the various editions and reprints of Priestley’s *Rudiments of English Grammar* that I have been able to trace.
1761

The first edition of The Rudiments of English Grammar was published in 1761 in a duodecimo size by Ralph Griffiths. This edition is listed in Alston (1965: 40) and it is also available in ECCO. In Priestley’s Considerations on Differences of Opinion among Christians (1769) this grammar is advertised for the price of 1s.6d as number seven in a list of books “Published by Joseph Priestley” prefixed to this work. Using the Database of Linguistic and Stylistic Criticism in Eighteenth-century Periodical Reviews (Percy et al.), I found reviews of this edition in volume 13 of the Critical Review (1763: 77) and volume 26 of the Monthly Review (1762: 27–31). Both magazines mention the work as a duodecimo with a price of 1s.6d.

1762

The 1762 reprint of the Rudiments of English Grammar is mentioned in the second volume of Mithridates, a German book on linguistics from the early nineteenth century (Adelung & Vater 1809: 325). It is listed as an octavo volume, most likely an octavo reissue of the 1761 duodecimo edition. No price is mentioned and the publisher is not identified. The Bibliotheca Brittanica (Watt et al. 1824: 776) also lists an octavo edition from 1762 with a price of 2s.6d. The difference in price between this volume and the 1761 duodecimo is probably due to the fact that the octavo is bigger and requires more paper (see Suarez 2000: 142) and was therefore more expensive to produce.

1763

There is a 1763 edition listed in Alston (1965: 40), of which no copy has been located. The only other reference to a 1763 edition was found in the Catalogue of the New York State Library: 1855: Law Library (Homes 1856: 607), described as a duodecimo edition, though without a price. This edition is possibly a reprint of the 1761 duodecimo edition. As with the 1762 octavo reprint, there is

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9 Up until the 1780s, the word bookseller was used to refer to what we now call a publisher, as well as a seller of books (Feather 1984: 409).
no mention of who published it, and Alston does not identify the publisher either. However, it is likely to have been Griffiths who had also published the original 1761 edition, since Becket & de Hondt and Joseph Johnson (1738-1809), who published the 1768 second edition and all the ones after it, do not appear in ECCO as publishers of Priestley’s works until 1765.

1768

The second edition of the *Rudiments of English Grammar* is listed in Alston as a duodecimo volume, published in London by Becket & de Hondt and Joseph Johnson (Alston 1965: 40). This edition is also available in ECCO, and the *Critical Review* has reviewed this edition, listing its price at 2s.6d. (*Critical Review* 26, 1768: 101–106). This duodecimo seems rather expensive, since they usually seem to cost less than two shillings, so it may have been expensively bound. This is the first time, as far as can be verified, that the name of the bookseller Joseph Johnson appears on the title page. Johnson was to become Priestley’s regular bookseller, and he appears on the title page of every edition of the *Rudiments of English Grammar* from 1768 until the last edition in 1798. Johnson also published most of the other works that Priestley wrote while he lived in England, as well as the English editions of some of the works that Priestley originally had printed in America after his forced emigration.

Another 1768 edition of the *Rudiments of English Grammar* is listed in the catalogue of the bookseller Peter Molini for a price of 2s. It is advertised as “new, the larger sort”, which implies that refers to the octavo edition (Molini 1765: 83). Curiously, the publication date of the catalogue is listed as 1765, which would make it impossible to be able to list a book published in 1768. The catalogue is possibly an updated reissue of an earlier one with an unmodified date, or has simply been misdated. The *Bibliotheca Brittanica* (Watt et al. 1824: 776) also lists an octavo edition from 1768 with a price of 2s.6d. and there is also a review in *The Monthly Review* of an octavo edition of the second edition of the *Rudiments of English Grammar* from 1768, priced at 2s.6d. as well (*Monthly Review* 39, 1768: 184).
1769

Alston lists a 1769 duodecimo edition of the *Rudiments of English Grammar*, published in London by Becket & de Hondt and Johnson & Payne (Alston 1965: 40). The size being the same and the number of pages nearly so, it seems likely that this is a reprint of the 1768 edition. This is confirmed in advertisements in two of Priestley’s other works. In Priestley’s *Familiar Introduction to the Study of Electricity* (1769a), this edition of the grammar – number eight in a list “Published by Joseph Priestley” appended to the book – is advertised as the “second Edition”, for the price of 3s. A similar list in the second edition of Priestley’s *History and Present State of Electricity* (1769c: sig.4Y5v) published the same year has this second edition for a price of 2s.6d. The different prices could refer to different bindings.

Another 1769 duodecimo of Priestley’s grammar published by “Becket & Hardy, London” is listed in the *Classed Catalogue of the Educational Division of the South Kensington Museum* (South Kensington Museum 1867: 30). This version appears to be a different one from the 1769 edition listed in Alston. It is mentioned as being “bound” but without a price. It is possible that this is a mistake, and that it should read “Becket & de Hondt”, but it would appear that this is indeed a different edition. I have, however, not been able to identify the Hardy in Becket & Hardy; the company is not listed in Maxted’s (2007) index of members of the London book trade, though Becket & de Hondt is. There is a possibility that “Becket & Hardy” was a misspelling or that two separate businesses were referred to. A Hardy listed as a ‘stationer’, trading as ‘Brown-sword & Hardy’ in Budge Row, may possibly have sold Priestley’s grammar.

A catalogue of the bookseller Benjamin White, published in 1772, listed “Priestley’s English Grammar” as being published in 1769 at a price of 1s.6d. (White 1772: 99), without mentioning the size of the book or the bookseller. It is uncertain whether this refers to the edition by Becket & de Hondt and Johnson & Payne, or the one by Becket & Hardy. Suarez mentions that in the latter half of the eighteenth century it was almost impossible to distinguish
between true library auction catalogues and fixed-price catalogues (Suarez 1999: 330). Another possible explanation for the great variation in price for what appear to be identical editions in identical sizes may be that some of them were sold at a fixed price, whereas others were used copies that actually did come out of a private library, as for instance the one that was being auctioned off by Benjamin White.

1771

A 1771 duodecimo edition of the Rudiments of English Grammar, published in London in 1771 by J. & F. Rivington and T. Lowndes et al. is listed in Alston (1965: 40). ECCO also has a duodecimo edition published in London in 1771 by J. & F. Rivington, T. Lowndes, S. Crowder, T. Becket & Co., and J. Johnson. Given this information and the fact that the number of pages of the work in ECCO is identical to that in Alston, they are likely to be one and the same edition. The earliest contemporary reference to this edition of the grammar is in a 1781 booksellers’ catalogue by Thomas Payne & Son, who list it as “Priestley’s English Grammar”, priced at 1s.6d. (Payne & Son 1781: 166). Another catalogue, published by Robert Faulder, lists two copies of the 1771 edition with different prices (Faulder 1783: 126). One of them is advertised as “neat” for the price of 2s.6d. and the other is advertised as “sewn” for the price of 2s. Since these books are the same size, the difference in price between the two copies must clearly be the result of the differences in the type and cost of the binding. However, it does not explain the difference in price compared to the one in the catalogue by Thomas Payne & Son. It is possible that these two actually refer to different reprints.

1772

1s.6d. (Payne & Foss 1818: 14). A catalogue of the British Museum Department of Printed Books (Ellis & Baber 1817, s.v. 'Priestley'), the Catalogue of the New York State Library: 1855: Law Library (Homes 1856: 607) and the Classed Catalogue of the Educational Division of the South Kensington Museum (South Kensington Museum 1867: 30) also list the 1772 duodecimo edition, but all without a price.

The "Third Edition" in ECCO is not the same as the one found in Alston. Whereas Alston lists a duodecimo edition of the Rudiments of English Grammar, there is an octavo in ECCO, published in 1772 by J. & F. Rivington, T. Lowndes, S. Crowder, T. Becket & Co., and J. Johnson. An early nineteenth-century catalogue from the library at King's College, London, also lists this octavo edition (Marsden 1827: 188). There are other references to the 1772 edition of the Rudiments of English Grammar in various booksellers' catalogues, but most of them do not specify whether it concerns the duodecimo or octavo edition.

1773

From 1774 onwards, the advertisements in Priestley's published works list a three-shilling "4th Edit." of the Rudiments of English Grammar. I have found this advertisement in twenty-two of Priestley's works published between 1774 and 1793 that are available in ECCO. Even though this edition of Priestley's grammar appears regularly in these advertisements, the work itself does not seem to have come down to us. There are no direct references that accurately date the year of publication of this edition, so the evidence is circumstantial, and we can only infer its existence. However, the fact that it occurs in advertisements attached to Priestley's works from 1774 onwards but not before that year, combined with the publication of an official "Third Edition" in 1772, makes it likely that this "Fourth Edition" was published either in 1774 or a year earlier in 1773. This edition was probably, like most other editions, published in duodecimo.

We can look for confirmation of this hypothesis to advertisements in contemporary newspapers. There, the book appears every week for a period of
two months, at least from 16 October to 18 December 1773, in the London Evening Post, a newspaper that was published three times a week:

This day were published, price 3s. bound. The Rudiments of English Grammar: to which are added, notes and observations for the use of those who have made some proficiency in the language. By Joseph Priestley, L.L.D. F.R.S. Printed for J. and F. Rivington, No. 62, and J. Johnson, No. 72, St. Paul’s Church yard; T. Becket, in the Strand; and S. Crowder, in Pater-noster-row. Where may be had, a small edition of the above Grammar, for the use of schools, with examples of English composition, price 1s. 6d. (London Evening Post, Tuesday 16 October 1773).

This proves at least that an edition was published, in 1773. Unfortunately though, it does not also confirm that it was published explicitly as a fourth edition. Note that it appears that the original 1761 “small edition” was still for sale at this time. Whether it was still in print is uncertain, but not impossible.

1784

Alston lists a duodecimo “Fourth edition” of the Rudiments of English Grammar (Priestley 1784), published in Dublin in 1784 by P. Byrne and not, as all the other editions were, in London (Alston 1965: 40). As there is no evidence of Priestley having had any contact with its Irish printer P. Byrne, I conclude that this is a pirated edition, probably reset and printed from the London 1773 fourth edition. Gaskell noted that after “the copyright Act of 1709 [...] there was still damaging competition from piratical publishers overseas (especially in Ireland and Holland)” (1985: 185). It appears that this was the case for the 1784 Dublin edition. ECCO also has a duodecimo edition published in Dublin in 1784 by J. Byrne, which is likely to be the same as the one in Alston. The structure and content of the pirated 1784 Dublin edition is nearly identical to that of the 1772 duodecimo London edition, with only the final advertisement “Published by Joseph Priestley L.L.D. F.R.S.” being deleted from the pirated edition in favour of an advertisement in the front of the work Just Published by the Printer hereof. This makes it likely that the 1773 fourth edition probably did not differ much from the 1772 third edition, which in turn would mean that this may also have been a duodecimo. The fact that this Dublin edition of the
Rudiments of English Grammar is called a "Fourth edition" suggests that that it was indeed based on a London fourth edition. The fact that the first page of the grammar proper in this pirate edition is different from that in the 1768, 1771 and 1772 London editions seems to corroborate this.

In another instance of Irish piracy publishing, the section 'Observations on Style' from the 1761 edition of the Rudiments of English Grammar was published as part of a pirated edition of Lowth's Short Introduction to English Grammar in Dublin in 1763. In chapter 4, I will discuss what this means for Priestley's status as a grammarian.

1786

The 1786 edition is possibly the first edition that was compiled by Priestley's friend, the Presbyterian minister and schoolmaster, Joseph Bretland (1742–1819). In June 1783, Priestley corresponded about the republication of his grammar with Bretland, who is credited with the alterations and additions in the 1789 edition. The book is listed in Alston as "A new edition" of the Rudiments of English Grammar in duodecimo, published in London by J., F. & C. Rivington and J. Johnston [sic.] et al." (Alston 1965: 41). This edition appears to be the same one that is also present in ECCO. I have found two eighteenth-century booksellers’ catalogues that also list this edition: Shepperson & Reynolds list it for a price of 1s.6d. (Shepperson & Reynolds 1791: 127) and Joshua Cooke lists it for 2s. (Cooke 1793: 99).

What the full text of the 1786 edition in ECCO reveals is that it is essentially a slightly revised version of the first edition of 1761. The main difference is that whereas Priestley did not deal with orthography in the first edition of his grammar, and therefore had not included an alphabet in his Rudiments of English Grammar, Bretland added one to this edition. A possible explanation for why Bretland used the first edition rather than a revised one may have been that this was either the edition he had been using in his school or that he found the

10 Priestley did include an alphabet in the second edition of the Rudiments of English Grammar published in 1768.
1761 edition more suitable for school use than the later editions. Some of the sections of the 1786 edition were enlarged a little and the section ‘Observations on Style’ was removed, but otherwise this edition of Priestley’s grammar is as it was when it was first published twenty-eight years before. It seems that the book of which Bretland had “been several years in the practice of teaching” (Priestley 1786: xvi) was the 1761 edition of the *Rudiments of English Grammar*. Two pages from the preface are missing in the edition in ECCO: pages xiv and xv, which contain the ‘Advertisement’, including a letter by Priestley in which he officially handed the work over to Bretland. This edition can be seen as a fifth edition or alternatively as the first ‘Bretland’ edition. I think it is useful to look at it as the latter, since Priestley was no longer involved in it, which is also supported by the fact that his published works from after this time do not advertise this edition but the official fourth edition (1773/74) of the *Rudiments of English Grammar*. Plainly that was the last official edition that could be called Priestley’s own.

In this edition, the Rivingtons and Joseph Johnson are mentioned first on the title page together, and the other booksellers follow after that, separated by the address of the Rivingtons and Joseph Johnson. This is probably to show a division between booksellers and trade publishers (see Suarez 2000: 139). Another new aspect is that for these ‘Bretland’ editions, the Robinsons appear on the title page as booksellers for the first time. The elder George Robinson was “a successful purchaser of copyrights” (Maxted 2007), so it is possible that it was Robinson who bought the copyright from Joseph Johnson when the latter went bankrupt, which Priestley mentioned in his letter on 6 June 1785 to Bretland, which I have quoted from in 4.3.11.

1789

New Edition, Corrected" (Priestley 1789). As mentioned above, the 1789 edition is probably a reprint of the 1786 edition and their contents can be expected to be virtually the same. In the text of this edition in ECCO, the ‘Advertisement’ is complete.

1798

The last edition of the Rudiments of English Grammar in Alston is from 1798, “A new edition” in duodecimo, published in London by J. Johnson and F. & C. Rivington et al. (Alston 1965: 41). This duodecimo is also in the last ECCO, published in 1798 in London by J. Johnson and F. & C. Rivington; G.G. & J. Robinson; J. Nichols; and W. Lowndes, and listed as “A New Edition, Corrected”. The same edition is also listed in Lackington’s catalogues of 1799 (Lackington 1799: 330) and 1800 (Lackington 1800: 318) at a price of 1s.4d. for “new, bound” copies. This is the sixth edition, or the ‘second Bretland’ edition. Counting about 246 pages in total, the 1798 edition of Priestley’s grammar is the most extensive version of the Rudiments of English Grammar available. Since its initial structure follows that of the 1789 edition, also retaining the advertisement containing Priestley’s letter, it is probably based directly on it. This last and perhaps definitive edition of Priestley’s grammar incorporates the text of the previous two ‘Bretland’ editions, as well as the Notes and Observations from Priestley’s 1768 edition (or a later one based on it), which was not included in the 1786 or 1789 editions. This makes the 1798 edition the most complete version of Priestley’s Rudiments of English Grammar available, though its publication was not overseen by Priestley himself.

3.3.3. Publishing history

The information from the previous discussion is summarised in Appendix 1, which gives an overview of all the editions of that work I have been able to trace. I have also added information on the various booksellers of Priestley’s grammar in Appendix 2. The entries in italics (1762, 1763, 1769 and 1773) should be seen as not absolutely confirmed by multiple sources. As far as I can
tell, they have not been discussed in previous bibliographical sources, such as Alston (1965), and no copies have been located as yet. However, perhaps the existence of at least some of these editions may soon be confirmed. Recently a new project was begun to incorporate more information on eighteenth-century English grammars into an interactive database (Rodríguez-Gil & Yáñez-Bouza, forthcoming), based on Alston (1965). The goal of this project is to create an updated and interactive bibliography of eighteenth-century English grammars. Though not yet publicly accessible, at the time of writing, the Eighteenth Century English Grammars Database (ECEG-database) contained sixteen different editions and reprints of the *Rudiments of English Grammar*, five of which do not occur in the discussion above.\(^\text{11}\) Thus, there may have been as many as twenty different editions and reprints of Priestley’s grammar.

On the basis of the investigation presented in section 3.3.2, I have created a visual representation of the publishing history of Priestley’s *Rudiments of English Grammar*. Figure 3.3.1 below shows both new editions and reprints. New editions run in a straight line downward, with arrows connecting immediate descendants, whilst reprints or reissues are put on the side of this line, with arrows pointing from the edition that they are derived from. The 1786 and 1798 editions are somewhat unusual. The 1786 edition has no arrow coming from the edition that directly precedes it chronologically, as it is not based on the 1773 edition, but on the 1761 first edition. The 1798 edition has two arrows coming down to it because it has two direct predecessors, being an amalgamation of the 1786 and 1768 editions.

There is a possible alternative interpretation of this publishing history. What we now generally call the second edition of the *Rudiments of English Grammar*, that is the 1768 edition,\(^\text{12}\) could have been looked upon as being the first edition of a new book after the 1761 edition.

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\(^{11}\) I am grateful to Nuria Yáñez-Bouza for supplying me with the data on Priestley’s grammar from the ECEG database.

\(^{12}\) Alston lists the 1768 edition as "Another edition" (1965: 40).
Figure 3.3.1. Publishing history of the various editions and reprints of Joseph Priestley’s *Rudiments of English Grammar*
If this was so, either the 1769 or the 1771 edition was could have been seen as the second edition of that new book. Either the 1769 edition was a reprint edition of the 1768 edition, or the 1771 edition a reprint of the 1769 edition. Whichever it was, this consequently made the 1772 edition the proper third edition of the *Rudiments of English Grammar*, as advertised on its title page, and the 1773 edition the fourth.

### 3.4. Summary and discussion

In this chapter, I have shown that the work referred to as *The Rudiments of English Grammar* is not a monolithic work of grammar. Instead, the title covers a ‘family’ of editions and reprints, each of which tells its own story, which collectively make up Priestley’s grammar as it exists in history and in the minds of the people then and now. The publishing history of *Priestley’s Rudiments of English Grammar* is much lengthier and more complex than the information in Alston – which we must remember is at present a 45-year old study – would make it appear. A distinction has to be made between truly new editions and those that are merely reprints of the same work. Starting from the nine editions listed by Alston in 1965, it appears from the research for this chapter that there are at least fifteen editions and reprints of *The Rudiments of English Grammar*. And when information in the ECEG database is added this number may possibly grow to as many as twenty.
4. The Influence of *The Rudiments of English Grammar*

4.1. Introduction
For Priestley to be considered as one of the codifiers of the English language in the late eighteenth century, it has to be demonstrated that his grammar had a noticeable impact on the establishment of standard English in the Late Modern period, and on the usage of its speakers. An investigation of the influence of the *Rudiments of English Grammar* on the English language requires an investigation of the grammar itself. This chapter focuses on the influence or legacy of the *Rudiments of English Grammar* on the English language. I will start by identifying the factors by which such influence can be assessed (section 4.2). Then, I will discuss Priestley’s grammar in the light of these factors (section 4.3), and briefly look at the use of Priestley’s grammar in schools (section 4.4). I will conclude with a summary and discussion of the material presented in this chapter.

4.2. Determining influence

4.2.1. Factors of influence
The influence that Priestley’s *Rudiments of English Grammar* had on English usage is, as such, virtually impossible to determine. Leonard (1929), though praising Priestley for his descriptivism, claimed that the influence of Priestley’s grammar on the English language was negligible:

> It was, however, so remote from the general trend of thought in his time that it was without important influence. It [...] was obscured by the brilliance of Lounth’s completely logical grammar [...] and was completely buried under Lindley Murray’s eclectic productions (Leonard 1929: 14).

On the other hand we have Görlach, who claimed that Priestley’s grammar was “perhaps the most influential, largely usage-based schoolbook of his times”
(Görlich 2001: 247f). An investigation into the influence of the *Rudiments of English Grammar* may be able to provide some nuance to these widely different assessments of Priestley’s influence.

The influence of a work with practical applications, such as a grammar, is determined largely, though perhaps not exclusively, by a number of factors. Following Bergmann (1982), Auer distinguishes the following four factors: “(a) the dissemination of works [...], (b) the prestige of the author […], (c) the grammarian’s influence on other writers […], and (d) the effectiveness of use in schools” (2008: 58). As an additional factor, she adds the discussion of the grammars in book reviews (Auer 2008: 58). The difficulty with respect to using these factors to determine the influence of a work lies in the fact that most of them are interdependent. For instance, the very existence of reviews in the popular press is an indication of the degree of dissemination as well as of the prestige of a grammar, and the content of these reviews can be seen as an indication of the popularity of a work. Also, the grammarian’s influence on other writers will be based, at least partly, on that person’s prestige as a grammarian, which in turn may be generated by positive book reviews and a wide dissemination of the work. In addition, there are also other factors that determine the popularity of a grammar, such as the existence of different sizes of a grammar, piracy, and translations into other languages. The only factor that is almost completely independent is the use in schools, although this depends to a certain extent on the popularity of the grammar.

Therefore, in an endeavour to avoid this problem of interdependence I will separately investigate all factors that can be discussed individually as much as possible, keeping in mind that they are not independent of each other. The factors investigated are the following: print runs, advertisements in newspapers, reviews in the press, book catalogues, the printing of different sizes, republication or revision, piracy, translations, the use as a source for later grammars, and acknowledgements by later grammarians. Some of these factors are more important to the question of dissemination, while others are more germane to the issue of prestige or popularity. Since the matter of the use of the
grammar in schools is not dependent on these other factors, it will be discussed separately.

The information presented in this chapter was found with the help of ECCO and Google Books, which I searched using the terms ‘english’, ‘grammar’ and ‘priestley’ in both title and full-text searches. Given the limitation of these resources, the list of works that refer to Priestley’s grammar is limited to what was available at the time when I did the research. In addition, I have used the Database of Linguistic and Stylistic Criticism in Eighteenth-century Periodical Reviews (Percy et al).

4.2.2. Dissemination and prestige

It is unfortunately not possible to accurately determine the degree of dissemination of Priestley’s *Rudiments of English Grammar*. Although no amount of historical research will allow us to determine exactly how many copies were ever printed and how many people used the grammar, it is possible to give an estimation of the degree of dissemination. This can be done by looking at several aspects: the number of editions (see chapter 3), the number and sizes of print-runs, the existence of reviews and advertisements in the eighteenth-century press (magazines and newspapers), the existence of advertisements in booksellers’ and library catalogues, and advertisements in Priestley’s other non-grammatical publications.

The dissemination of a book or pamphlet through the network of the book trade at various levels (see also Suarez 2000: 139–140) can be called commercial dissemination and can be gleaned from the size of print-runs, the number of booksellers that appear on the title page, and the existence of advertisements in catalogues such as those named above. These are the very factors that Feather says can be used to judge what he calls “the market penetration of a book” (Feather 1984: 414). Estimating dissemination in this way only provides information on the availability of a book and reveals nothing about its use or popularity, since “[t]he mere presence of bookshops [...] does not prove that books were bought, any more than the acquisition of books
proves that they were read” (Feather 1984: 416). This remark is a good argument to distinguish between commercial dissemination and another kind, which could be called popular dissemination. What is required to estimate the degree of popular dissemination of such a work is evidence of the presence of books in the collections of private persons and those of libraries or schools, against the background of Feather’s remark above. The school setting provides another complication: it is often hard to determine whether all pupils had their own copy or whether only the teacher had one. In the latter case, although the pupils would have been working without a book of their own, they might have copied the rules from the master or memorised them. Hence, a work might effectively be disseminated among an audience who do not actually own a physical copy of the grammar.

With regard to prestige, even detailed historical research cannot determine precisely and conclusively how popular Priestley’s *Rudiments of English Grammar* was. Prestige can be estimated, however, by looking at the following aspects: the existence of different sizes of the same edition, the republication of Priestley’s grammar by others, the publication of pirated editions, the existence of translations, the use of Priestley’s work as a source for later grammars, and references by other grammarians.

### 4.3. Factors of influence and Priestley’s grammar

In this section, I will discuss the various factors relevant in determining the influence of Priestley’s grammar. They are, as mentioned above: print runs, the distribution network, the printing of different sizes, reviews in the press, listing in book catalogues and advertisements, piracy, translations, references by later grammarians, republication or revision, and the use as a source by other grammarians.

#### 4.3.1. Print runs

The number and sizes of print-runs of a book can be used to calculate how many copies in total must have existed when the work was in print. Suarez
mentions that typical print runs in the eighteenth century ranged from 500 to 1,500 copies (Suarez 2000: 140), depending on size and the cost of production. Robert Lowth estimated that in roughly twenty years after its first publication in 1762, a total of 34,000 copies of his *Short Introduction to English Grammar* had been published (Tieken-Boon van Ostade 2008a: 102). Tieken-Boon van Ostade counted 34 editions of Lowth’s grammar, which averages to print runs of 1,000 copies (2008a: 102). There is no indication that Priestley kept track of the number of printed copies of his grammar, and his was not reprinted quite as often as Lowth’s. I have been able to conclusively trace fifteen editions and reprints of the *Rudiments of English Grammar* (see chapter 3). Starting with a conservative estimation of print runs of 500 copies, that brings the total output of Priestley’s grammar to a minimum of 7,500 copies. In her study of library and sale catalogues, Auer found that the two most frequently listed grammars were those of Lowth and Priestley. When only one work of grammar was present in such catalogues, it was almost always Robert Lowth’s *Short Introduction to English Grammar* (1762), arguably the most authoritative and important eighteenth-century grammar in its own time. However, when two were present, the other one was usually Priestley’s *Rudiments of English Grammar* (see Auer 2008a: 70–72). So it is not unreasonable to assume that, given the apparently comparable popularity to Lowth’s *Short Introduction to English Grammar* – when inferred from comparable visibility at least – Priestley’s *Rudiments of English Grammar* was popular enough to warrant larger print-runs than assumed above.

The later editions, especially, can be expected to have been printed in larger numbers because these show more booksellers mentioned on the title page. Since “[s]ometimes booksellers put the names of one or more trade publishers next to their own names because they wanted to advertise wider distribution for a book” (Suarez 2000: 139), such a larger distribution network would only be required for larger print runs. Alternatively, it is possible that the larger number of booksellers on the title page is an indication that the book was divided into shares among several booksellers, which was done in order to cut
production costs. Since half of the production costs went to buying paper, greater costs directly reflect larger print runs (Suarez 2000: 137–138).

Consequently, from the data concerning the number of editions and reprints of the Rudiments of English Grammar presented in the previous chapter, the total number of copies printed can be estimated to have been 7,500 to 15,000 copies. However, if we add the information from the ECEG-database, the number of editions and reprints rises to twenty and consequently the total number rises to between 10,000 and 20,000 copies of Priestley’s Rudiments of English Grammar printed in the latter half of the eighteenth century. Of this considerable number, only seventy-three copies of the various editions of Priestley’s grammar have survived, according to Alston (1965: 40–41).

4.3.2. Distribution networks

The booksellers’ names on the title page of Priestley’s Rudiments of English Grammar can give an indication of the size of the publication. More names means that more booksellers were involved – each perhaps owning a number of shares in the copyright to reduce the costs of large impressions (see above)¹ – and that a wider network for wholesale and retail would be available. This meant not only a wider distribution network within London, but also outside the metropolis, since the booksellers did business with “provincial booksellers, who [...] were to provide the basis for a far wider network of distribution of London books throughout the country” (Feather 1988: 68).

When we track the various editions of the Rudiments of English Grammar we see that the number of booksellers involved increases steadily (see also Appendix 1). For the original 1761 edition, it is just Ralph Griffiths who appears as the bookseller. For the 1768 edition two booksellers occur on the title page: Beckett & de Hondt and Joseph Johnson.² Then for the London editions from 1771 onwards, this increased to as many as five: Rivington, Lowndes, Crowder, Becket & Co. and Joseph Johnson. After Joseph Bretland decided to revive

¹ In the letter quoted in 4.3.11, Priestley indicates that he sold the copyright to Joseph Johnson outright. Johnson may later have sold shares in it to other booksellers.

² I count companies rather than persons, so Beckett & de Hondt is regarded as one bookseller.
Priestley’s grammar in 1786 (see also 4.3.9) we also find five booksellers on the title page: Rivington, Lowndes, Joseph Johnson, J. Nichols and Robinson. These five remain on the title page until the last edition in 1798. Although between the two last stages, two names disappear from the title page, and two new ones make their appearance, we can still speak of an increase in terms of potential dissemination, because one of the new booksellers was Robinson, who “had the largest wholesale trade of any individual by 1780” (Maxted 2007). We can conclude from this that the possibility for disseminating Priestley’s *Rudiments of English Grammar*, in London but also nationally, was greatly increasing during the entire period that it was in print.

4.3.3. Printing of different sizes
The existence of differently-sized editions published in the same year can be an indication of the popularity of a work. They indicate that the work was popular enough to warrant republication in a cheaper edition (probably in a larger print run) or in a more expensive ‘deluxe’ edition. The following quotation from Priestley’s letters seems to indicate that a quarto volume is more prestigious than an octavo volume. He writes that:

As there will not be enough for two volumes 8vo, I have some thought of printing it in 4to, especially if I dedicate dedicated it to the Duke, as it will have a more respectable appearance (letter to Theophilus Lindsey, 3 September 1798).

It is possible that in the same way, an octavo volume was considered to be more prestigious than a duodecimo volume, which would indicate that an octavo reprint of a duodecimo volume is a sign of its success. The fact that the bookseller would be willing to incur additional costs in resetting the type and the extra paper that a larger size volume required, should also be seen as an indication that a book was selling well.

The 1768 edition of the *Rudiments of English Grammar* is listed in Alston (1965: 40) and ECCO as duodecimo, but the *Monthly Review* has a review of an octavo edition (*Monthly Review* 36, 1768: 184). This could mean that the ‘standard’ duodecimo size was also published as a larger, more expensive
octavo edition, probably for a different type of buyer, as a result of the popularity of the book. The 1772 edition of the *Rudiments of English Grammar* is listed as a duodecimo in Alston (1965: 40), but as an octavo in ECCO. This could be a mistake in one of the sources, but it could also mean that the duodecimo size was issued in a more expensive octavo edition at the same time. I have found mainly two prices for the 1772 editions, 2s. and 3s., but unfortunately I have not found any source that lists both the price and the size.

However, the evidence that book prices provide is not unproblematic. The reviews of the 1768 edition in the *Monthly Review* and the *Critical Review* both list a price of 1s.6d. but where the *Monthly Review* gives this price for the octavo (*Monthly Review* 36, 1768: 184), the *Critical Review* gives it for the duodecimo (*Critical Review* 26, 1768: 101). Similar complications can be found elsewhere. For example, in the advertisement appended to Priestley’s *Considerations on Differences of Opinion among Christians* (1769b), which lists a “second edition” for the price of 3s. without mentioning the size of the book. However, T. Lowndes’s catalogue for 1774 lists what appears to be the octavo, advertised as “new, the larger sort”, for a price of 2s. (Lowndes 1774: 83).

4.3.4. Advertisements in newspapers

Newspapers were used for the advertising of the publication of new titles. Suarez writes that “[a]dvertisements in London and provincial newspapers became the most important means of reaching the reading public” (2000: 139). Using the 17th and 18th Century Burney Collection Newspapers database to search for priestley and grammar, I came across several advertisements for various editions of the *Rudiments of English Grammar*. The only advertisement for the first edition was a short notice in the *London Evening Post* of Tuesday 9 March 1762, which I have quoted in chapter 3. The second edition of Priestley’s grammar was advertised in the *Public Advertiser* of Friday 15 April 1768, together with other titles sold by Joseph Johnson. It was also advertised in the *St. James’s Chronicle or the British Evening Post* on a weekly basis between 19 April and 7 June 1768. Three advertisements in the same two newspapers
announce the publication of the 1769 reprint of the *Rudiments of English Grammar*, together with what is probably the first edition of Priestley’s *New Chart of History* (1770b second edition). The advertisements for the fourth edition, like those for the second, ran for about two months in the fall of 1773. Finally, in the summer of 1799 we find the same advertisement for two different editions of Priestley’s grammar in the *Sun* and the *Times*. The advertisement reads as follows:

**FOR THE USE OF SCHOOLS.—This Day were published, Price 1s. 6d. a New Edition of THE RUDIMENTS OF ENGLISH GRAMMAR, adapted to the Use of Schools, with Examples of English Composition. By JOSEPH PRIESTLEY, L.L.D. F.R.S. &c. Printed for J. Johnson, and F. and C. Rivington, in St. Paul’s Church-yard; G. Robinson, in Paternoster-row; J. Nichols, in Red Lion Passage, Fleet-street; and W. Lowndes, Fleet-street. Where may be had, price 3d. sewed, the above Grammar, with Notes and Observations on the Compositions of Modern Writers, for the Use of those who have made some proficiency in the Language (Sun 18 July 1799, Times 14 August 1799).**

This advertisement suggests that the shorter edition was “This Day published” even though the most recent edition of the *Rudiments of English Grammar* was that of 1798, which is the largest and most complete one, and possibly also the one referred to later in the advertisement, being on sale for a mere threepence. In addition to advertisements for the grammar itself, the *Rudiments of English Grammar* was also advertised in an advertisement for Priestley’s *Free Address to Protestant Dissenters on the Subject of the Lord’s Supper* (1768b), which appeared in three issues of the *St. James’s Chronicle or British Evening Post* in December 1768.

### 4.3.5. Reviews in the press

The popular press of eighteenth-century England got actively involved in the public debate on the state of the English language in the second half of the eighteenth century. In order to find references to Priestley’s grammar in the popular press, I have concentrated on the two main periodicals of the latter half of the eighteenth century: the *Monthly Review* and *Critical Review*. These

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1. This was the only edition available in ECCO.
periodicals reviewed new books and were two of the most influential ones of the time. In her analysis of the role of the Critical Review and the Monthly Review in the reception of grammars of the mid-eighteenth century Percy found that “[t]he reviews disseminated and very likely affected trends in the development of both the English language and of its codifying texts” (Percy 2008: 142). Reviews in magazines, especially positive ones, can therefore very possibly be taken as an indication, or perhaps more correctly a partial cause, of the popularity of the books reviewed.

**The Monthly Review**

The Monthly Review was started in 1749 by the bookseller Ralph Griffiths, who also published the first edition of Priestley’s *Rudiments of English Grammar*. Suarez argues that the “The Monthly Review (1749-1845), brainchild of the bookseller Ralph Griffiths, became the most important source of book reviews in the eighteenth century” (Suarez 2000: 139). Reviews of Priestley’s *Rudiments of English Grammar* in the Monthly Review are listed in an index to that magazine (Ayscough 1786), which shows that they appeared in volume 26 (February 1762) and in volume 39 (1768, after May). There is also mention of the Lectures on Oratory and Criticism in volume 62 of the Monthly Review (which appeared between March 1777 and November 1779). These reviews of the Rudiments of English Grammar are also listed in Alston (Alston 1965: 40). Griffiths’ Monthly Review was a swiftly growing publication; Forster notes that “Strahan’s ledgers show that after the first few months Griffiths was publishing 1000 copies of each issue of the Monthly, rising to 2500 in 1758, 3000 in 1768, and 3500 in 1776” (Forster 2004). We can assume, therefore, that the Monthly Review ran between 2500 and 3000 copies at the time that Priestley’s Rudiments of English Grammar appeared in it in 1762. A book review in an issue of the Monthly Review could spread the word about the existence of a new grammar and act as a powerful tool in its dissemination.

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*The full texts of these reviews of Priestley’s Rudiments of English Grammar in the Monthly Review are reproduced in Appendix 3. I am grateful to Carol Percy for supplying me with the texts.*
It may be useful and possibly revealing to look at the reviews more closely, and fortunately both reviews are also in the Database of Linguistic and Stylistic Criticism in Eighteenth-century Periodical Reviews. The first review of Priestley’s *Rudiments of English Grammar*, appearing in volume 26, is of the first edition of 1761. The review is headed by the book’s bibliographical information and starts with a lament on the state of the English language in the then current English system of education, which was thought to place too much emphasis on Latin and not enough on English. The reviewer complains that “it is certainly absurd that our youth should waste [...] time in learning to write or speak a dead Language, which they might more usefully employ in studying their own” (*Monthly Review* 26, 1762: 28). This sentiment echoes Priestley’s own, and consequently the reviewer is either very sympathetic to that argument, or he may be parroting Priestley here. Indeed, it was not uncommon that reviews expressed ideas closer to those of the author of the book reviewed than to that of the reviewer (Percy 2008: 127). Perhaps in many cases, the work itself was deemed more important than the opinion of it, presented by the reviewer:

The Rudiments of English Grammar are exhibited with great accuracy and clearness in this little treatise, by Mr. Priestley. Upon the whole, we commend his brief manner of explaining and laying down his Precepts; but we could wish that he had been a little more diffuse in the Syntactical part (*Monthly Review* 26, 1762: 28).

Evidence of this is that by far the largest part of it, almost three out of three and a half pages, consists of extended quotations from Priestley’s book. The review also ends rather abruptly on one of these quotations, without any concluding remark by the reviewer. It should be observed that all the quotations from the grammar are general observations about the state of the codification of the English language, taken from its introduction, and that none of the normative comments from the grammar are reproduced in the text of the review. In this sense, Priestley’s *Rudiments of English Grammar* appears initially to have been characterised by the *Monthly Review* as a treatise on the state of the English language, rather than as a school-grammar. This can be understood when we remind ourselves that “[r]eviewers’ statements should be seen less as reflecting
their sincere opinions than as engaging their readers' interest by taking controversial stands on current issues” (Percy 2008: 126).

It is not too far-fetched to suppose that in addition to this, commercial interests may also have been a motivating factor. In this light, the generally positive tone of the review is unsurprising, as the publisher of the Monthly Review, Ralph Griffiths, also published this first edition of the Rudiments of English Grammar. Griffiths, as a businessman, must have realised that a positive review in a successful magazine such as the Monthly Review would probably beneficially affect the sales of Priestley's grammar, and thus his own business. It seems unlikely that, if Griffiths had any influence over the reviewer (if he did not write it himself), he would have tolerated a very negative review.

Quotations from the reviewed work, which make up the bulk of this review, are a way of directly communicating the ideas of the author to the public, and at the same time providing them with a taste of the work to wet the appetite for purchase, as it were. The motive for attracting the attention of the public at large could also have been an attempt to aim it at more than merely the market for school grammars. Thus, such a review as this, with elaborate quotations, can serve a communicative as well as a commercial function. A review of the octavo second edition of Priestley's grammar was written by Andrew Kippis (1725–1795) in volume 39 (168: 184–186). Kippis starts with a profession of pleasure at the increased interest in the English language, writing that “It is with pleasure that we have observed the regard which has, of late years, been paid to the cultivation of our native tongue” (Monthly Review 39, 1768: 184). In the same paragraph, Kippis implicitly links Priestley's name with that of Lowth, through which Priestley is put on the same level of importance and authority as Lowth in matters of grammar. Kippis, however, passes no judgement on whether Priestley's grammar is better than Lowth's or not:

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5 From other reviews in the Critical Review 26, which also contains a review of Priestley's grammar, it appears that the use of extensive quotations from the works reviewed was not a rare practice. In fact, at the time “[b]ook reviews tended to be long and fulsome, with copious quotations” (Encyclopedia Britannica online, s.v. 'history of publishing').
Few of our readers can be unacquainted with the our obligations to the bishop of Oxford, for pointing out the grammatical errors of even such authors as Swift, Addison, Pope, &c. and a similar design is here more fully pursued by Dr. Priestley, though it is conducted in a different manner (Monthly Review 39, 1768: 184).

On the whole, though, the review is positive, which is no great surprise coming from this particular reviewer. Kippis had been one of Priestley’s personal benefactors since as early as the late 1750s, when he occasionally assisted him financially during his years as a struggling and insolvent assistant minister at Needham Market. Kippis also helped Priestley to relocate to a more theologically congenial congregation at Nantwich, Suffolk, where he started writing his grammar in the late 1750s (Schofield 1997: 74). This review differs from the review of the first edition of the Rudiments of English Grammar in the Monthly Review in that it does not quote quite as extensively from the work it reviews. Only two paragraphs out of the review that is almost two pages in length are direct quotations from Priestley’s introduction.

However, several remarks are quotes without being marked as such. Compare the following two quotations, the first of which is from Kippis’s review article: “Dr. Priestley thinks that there will be an advantage in his having collected examples from modern writings, rather than from those of Swift, Addison, and others, who wrote about half a century ago, in what is generally called the classical period of our tongue” (Monthly Review 36, 1768: 185). A comparison with the following passage from to the second edition of Priestley’s grammar shows that Kippis was virtually quoting him without using quotation marks. Priestley writes in the Preface: “I think there will be an advantage in my having collected examples from modern writings, rather than from those of Swift, Addison, and others, who wrote about half a century ago, in what is generally called the classical period of our tongue” (Priestley 1768a: xi). When these kinds of unmarked quotations are included, the bulk of this review is made up from quotations of Priestley’s remarks in the Rudiments of English Grammar as well. Like the review of the first edition, this one ends on a quotation, without any concluding remarks from the reviewer. Perhaps this is a
feature of the eighteenth-century review as a text type (though it could also be merely a feature of the *Monthly Review*’s book reviews). As with the review of the first edition of Priestley’s grammar, the reviewer does not quote any of the pre- and proscriptive comments that the second edition contains, even though their number increased dramatically between the first and second edition, as I will demonstrate in chapter 6.

**The Critical Review**

The *Critical Review* was started in 1756 by the Scottish printer Archibald Hamilton (1719–1793), with Tobias Smollett (1721–1771) as its editor (*Encyclopedia Britannica* online, s.v. ‘history of publishing’), and was published by J. Robinson from 1774 onwards. Alston (1965: 40) lists no other reviews of Priestley’s *Rudiments of English Grammar* in the *Critical Review* than the one in volume 26 (1768: 101–106). The Database of Linguistic and Stylistic Criticism in Eighteenth-century Periodical Reviews (Percy et al.) has this review, but it also contains a earlier one in volume 13 (1762: 77), which is the first review of Priestley’s grammar found in the *Critical Review*. The review of the grammar starts with the bibliographical information of the work, and the actual text is short enough to be quoted in full from the Database of Linguistic and Stylistic Criticism in Eighteenth-century Periodical Reviews:

> We may venture to recommend this little performance to those who are desirous of attaining a fundamental grammatical knowledge of the English language. The preface is well written, and the observations on stile useful, though by no means new. Examples are subjoined, which, in our opinion, ought to have been omitted (*Critical Review* 13, 1762: 77).

The reviewer only gives an evaluation of the beginning and end of the grammar. One wonders whether the reviewer actually read the whole text or just the parts mentioned. The review of the second edition of the *Rudiments of English Grammar* in volume 26 (1768) is much more elaborate than that of the first edition. Like all reviews, it is headed by the bibliographical information of the work. The review proper starts with a quotation from Dryden regarding the bad state of the English language, followed by almost two pages of
prescriptions—by the author of the review?—illustrating and justifying the validity of the Dryden quotation. After that, one of the positive aspects of Priestley’s grammar is mentioned:

The author of the work now before us has subjoined to this new edition of his grammar many useful notes and observations, in which he has pointed out a great number of gallicisms and other improprieties, which have insinuated themselves into the stile of some of our most eminent writers (Critical Review 26, 1768: 103).

After assuring the “philological readers” that they “will not be displeased with the following remarks” (Critical Review 26, 1768: 103), this introduction is followed by three and a half pages of extracts from Priestley’s grammar. However, these extracts only feature the pre- and prescriptive comments from Priestley’s grammar, and none of his philological insights. The review ends with the following evaluation of the effect of the grammar on the language: “This work is a valuable addition to that of the accurate and judicious Dr. Lowth; and, we hope, will contribute to the refinement of the English language” (Critical Review 26, 1768: 106).

Just as in the reviews in the Monthly Review, Priestley’s name is connected to Lowth’s, again showing their comparable importance and popularity. By this time, Lowth’s grammar was already becoming a national standard (Percy 2008: 134–137). In this review, Lowth’s work is seen as requiring the “valuable addition” of Priestley’s grammar. The reviewer’s focus on the prescriptive and prescriptive features of the grammar shows clearly the normative climate in which Priestley’s work was published.7 This review probably added to the normative reputation of Priestley’s grammar, propagating and strengthening the normative climate of the time.

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6 Technically, they are both prescriptive and proscription comments. I will go into further into this distinction in section 6.5. Simply speaking, they are the dos and don’ts with regard to correct usage.

7 The focus of the review also clearly shows that the labelling of a grammar as prescriptive or descriptive depends largely on the point of view of who is doing the labelling. Although Priestley’s grammars were clearly normative, as I will discuss in chapters 5 and 6, they can be labelled as descriptive if looked at from a point of view that starts with the intention of the author. However, from a point of view that starts with how the readers of the grammar use it, it probably is more accurate to label it as a prescriptive grammar. This topic will be discussed further in chapter 7.
4.3.6. Book catalogues

Bookseller’s catalogues can give an indication of the degree of dissemination of a work, and of its popularity (see also Auer 2008a). The number of these catalogues in which Priestley’s grammar appears should give some indication of this. In addition, the length of the period that the book appears in catalogues after its initial publication gives an indication of its longevity. The catalogues used in this investigation include both regular bookseller’s catalogues, also known as fixed-price catalogues (Suarez 1999: 329), in which the booksellers advertised their publications, and the auction catalogues published for the sale of private libraries that were put up for auction. With regard to the difference between auction catalogues and bookseller’s catalogues, Suarez (1999: 330) has shown that from about 1750 onwards, it is almost impossible to determine for either of these types of catalogues which books were actually part of the library to be auctioned off, and which books were added to it from the inventory of the bookseller. Therefore, I have not tried to distinguish between the two and I have taken the evidence from auction catalogues together with that of the bookseller’s catalogues. This distinction is also not very relevant for the present discussion, as it only becomes a problem when one wishes to determine the origin of the books in these catalogues. I have found a total of twenty-five references to Priestley’s grammars in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century bookseller’s catalogues. In her search of booksellers’ and library catalogues, Auer finds references to various editions of Priestley’s Rudiments of English Grammar in two additional eighteenth-century book sale catalogues (Auer 2008a: 64–65). The most frequently mentioned edition of Priestley’s grammar is the 1761 edition. The earliest listing found was in a catalogue published in 1772 by Benjamin White and the latest was in a catalogue by Thomas Rodd and W.A. Chislett from 1845.8 It is clear then, that Priestley’s Rudiments of English Grammar regularly appeared in bookseller’s catalogues for at least eighty years after it was first published. There is no quantitative

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8 This catalogue erroneously lists the work as being written by “R. Priestley” (Rodd & Chislett 1845: 98). It is possibly a misprint.
basis for comparison, but I think this illustrates that, although Priestley’s grammar never matched the widespread popularity of the grammars of Lowth or Murray, it had enough longevity and intrinsic relevance to last well into the first half of the nineteenth century.

It is striking that of all the bookseller’s catalogues I have found that list Priestley’s grammar, only three catalogues, that of Thomas Lowndes published in 1774 and those of Joseph Johnson in 1781 and 1794, are catalogues from the booksellers that are actually listed on the title page of the *Rudiments of English Grammar* as its ‘official’ booksellers from 1771 onwards. It can be expected that all other official booksellers connected with the *Rudiments of English Grammar* would have listed the book in their catalogues as well: Thomas Becket & P.A. de Hondt, the Rivingtons, the Robinsons and J. Nichols. Since some of these booksellers appear to have been fairly important in the eighteenth-century book industry – the Robinson’s, as mentioned above, and the Rivingtons, for instance, judging from the long years they managed to remain in business – it is unlikely that they did not publish their own catalogues. The relatively large number of other bookseller’s catalogues carrying the *Rudiments of English Grammar* shows that the disseminating network is larger than can be gleaned from merely looking at the names of the booksellers on the title pages of the books. The editions of the grammar most frequently listed in the bookseller’s catalogues are the second edition of 1768 and the third edition of 1772. Six catalogues also list the quarto volume of Priestley’s *Course of Lectures on Oratory and Criticism* from (1777a). Only Joseph Johnson’s catalogues list a fourth edition of the *Rudiments of English Grammar*. These catalogues are interesting because they also list other books written by Priestley. This is not entirely unexpected, as Priestley must have been one of Johnson’s major authors.

Inclusion in public and institutional libraries in the Late Modern English period show that even in its own time the grammar was deemed important or popular enough that it should be available to a large audience (see Auer 2008a), and to be preserved for posterity. This gives some indication of how wide-
spread the awareness of the importance of the *Rudiments of English Grammar* was. The greater the number of catalogues that list Priestley's grammar in private library collections, and some public ones, the greater was its degree of dissemination. I have found only fourteen library catalogues from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that list Priestley's *Rudiments of English Grammar*, but I suspect that this picture is far from complete.

In her search of catalogues of circulating library catalogues, Auer found editions of Priestley's *Rudiments of English Grammar* in four such catalogues (Auer 2008a: 70), making a total of eighteen with the ones I have found. Three of these list the 1761 edition and one that from 1771. The earliest reference I have been able to trace is from a catalogue of the *Faculty of Advocates of Edinburgh*, published in 1776, which lists the 1768 duodecimo edition of the *Rudiments of English Grammar*, and the latest reference is from 1867, in the *Classed Catalogue of the Educational Division of the South Kensington Museum* (South Kensington Museum 1867: 30), which lists the 1769 and 1772 duodecimo editions. It is clear, however, that Priestley's grammar appears in library catalogues dating from at the most fifteen years after its first edition for a period of at least ninety years, so until more than sixty years after Priestley's death. Other works are mentioned, but the ones listed most often are the 1768 octavo, 1769 duodecimo, and 1772 duodecimo editions of the *Rudiments of English Grammar*. The 1777 quarto edition of Priestley's *Course of Lectures on Oratory and Criticism* is also frequently listed in these library catalogues.

**4.3.7. Advertisements in Priestley's other work**

The *Rudiments of English Grammar* are often listed in advertisements in Priestley's other published works. I have found thirty-one of Priestley's works in ECCO that have the grammar in a list of Priestley's publications appended to them of which I have given a list in Appendix 4. The earliest occurs in three of Priestley's works: *Considerations on Differences of Opinion Among Christians* (1769b), *A Familiar Introduction to the Study of Electricity* (1769a), and *The History and Present State of Electricity, with Original Experiments* (1769c). The
first two of these list both the 1761 and 1768 editions, the third only the 1768 edition. The latest reference I have found is in *A Description of a New Chart of History* (Priestley 1793), which lists an undated edition – which may be that of 1761 – and an undated "Fourth Edition" for a price of 3s. The most frequently recurring references are to the 1768 edition of the *Rudiments of English Grammar* and, from 1774 onwards, to an undated 3s. fourth edition, which I have argued in chapter 3 was published in 1773. The advertisements list no sizes for these editions, but based on their prices, I surmise that we are dealing with the second edition in duodecimo and the fourth edition in octavo. This 3s. fourth edition of the *Rudiments of English Grammar* occurs in almost all lists of published works appended to Priestley’s publications. It is consequently very curious that there is no reference to this edition in any of the bookseller’s catalogues which I have found that list Priestley’s grammar. As yet, I have no explanation for this. Another unusual thing is the advertisement in the *Letters to the Author of Remarks on Several Late Publications Relative to the Dissenters* (Priestley 1770a). This work lists a “third edition” of the *Rudiments of English Grammar* as a published work. However, the official third edition that is known is that of 1772. This could mean, if it is not a printing error, that there is an earlier edition that was also known as the third edition before the publication of the 1772 edition.

No edition of the *Rudiments of English Grammar* after the fourth is listed in the advertisements appended to Priestley’s later works, including those published until his death in 1804. This suggests that Priestley was no longer involved after that edition, as I have indeed argued in chapter 2. The last edition that we know Priestley was personally involved with is the 1772 “third” edition, though he may still have been involved in the publication of the 1773 fourth edition. Conversely, the editions of the *Rudiments of English Grammar* after 1772 no longer contain any reference to Priestley’s earlier other publications. This is most likely because they were no longer supervised by Priestley himself, but by Joseph Bretland. As Priestley was no longer personally involved in the publication of his grammar, there would be no need to for Bretland
append such a list. There is no such list of Bretland’s own work either, probably
since the grammar was not so much his that he could append a list of his own
works.

4.3.8. Piracy

Pirated editions are also a testament to the popularity of a book, and also to its
dissemination outside its ‘designated’ market. The fact that a pirated edition of
Priestley’s grammar exists is in itself an indication that Priestley’s grammar
enjoyed popular success in its own time. Copyright only extended to Great
Britain and, as was noted in chapter 3, many pirated editions of English works
were printed in Ireland (Gaskell 1985: 185). Advertised as a “Fourth Edition”,
the printer P. Byrne in Dublin published a pirated edition of the fourth London
edition of the grammar in 1784. Not only Priestley’s school grammar was
pirated in Ireland. In 1781, a pirated edition of Priestley’s Course of Lectures on
Oratory and Criticism was published in Dublin by William Hallhead (Priestley
1781). In addition to this, over twenty years earlier, the section ‘Observations
on Style’ from the first edition of Priestley’s grammar had been appended to a
pirated second edition of Lowth’s Short Introduction to English Grammar
(1763), printed in Ireland, after being published earlier that year in London.
The first edition of Lowth’s grammar had been published in 1762 and was very
popular in England. This indicates that in the early 1760s, the grammars of
Priestley and Lowth were the most visible and authoritative English grammars.

4.3.9. Translations

The existence of translations of a work is also a mark of its popularity. The fact
that a grammar spreads beyond the borders of its original language and is seen
by foreigners as representing the language it describes is indicative of its
importance within and outside its culture. So far, I have found only one trans-
mentions that there was a French translation of Priestley’s grammar in 1799.
This translation by Ferdinand Bayard is also present in Crook’s Bibliography of
Joseph Priestley (1966: 114). There are references to Bayard’s translation on
two French websites: that of the Institut National de Recherche Pédagogique (INRP) and in the Corpus de Textes Linguistiques Fondamentaux (CTLF). Both these sites have references to Bayard’s *Grammaire Anglaise* (1798), which means that the 1799 edition in Crook was actually a reprint or a second edition, of which Crook made no note. This also suggests that the French translation of Priestley’s grammar was popular enough to be reprinted. Interestingly, the translator Bayard and not Priestley is given as the author on both French websites. This translation is also listed in *La France Littéraire* (Quérand 1835: 346), a French dictionary of literary figures. I have not been able to see a full-text version of the book in order to be able to determine whether it is a genuine, straightforward translation or a French grammar that is merely based on Priestley’s *Rudiments of English Grammar*.

That Priestley was known outside England as a language scholar is also indicated by the existence a German translation of his *Course of Lectures on Oratory and Criticism* (1777a). Translated by the German critic and literary historian Johan Joachim Eschenburg (1743–1820), “best known by his efforts to familiarize his countrymen with English literature” (*Encyclopædia Britannica* 11th ed., Vol.9 s.v. ‘Eschenburg, Johann Joachim’), *Dr. Joseph Priestley’s Vorlesungen über Redekunst und Kritik* (Eschenburg 1779) was published in Leipzig just two years after its original had appeared in England. The short period between the original and the translation can be seen as an indication of the importance of the work and its author, perceived by the translator.

4.3.10. Acknowledgements by other grammarians

References to Priestley or his grammar in the introductions or prefaces of other grammarians works are illustrative of his reputation as a grammarian. Many of these stem from the last quarter of the eighteenth century. They show how well-known Priestley’s grammar was in the second half of the eighteenth century. These acknowledgements also show that among his peers and contemporaries, Priestley’s status as a grammarian was the very highest, and that he was often named in the same breath as Lowth and Johnson. In its introduction,
the *Easiest Introduction to Dr. Lowth’s English Grammar* (Ash 1766) advertised itself as a proper introduction to the grammars of Priestley and Lowth:

the Editor [John Ryland] is certain, that if this little Book was prudently used, by Schoolmasters and Governnesses of Ladies Boarding-Schools, they would find their Scholars improve with greater Expedition, and be soon prepared to learn with Understanding and Pleasure, those higher and more excellent Grammars with which we are now favoured. He means Dr. Joseph Priestley’s English grammar, 12mo. which should be read and taught after this, and then a youth should be made acquainted with the Beauties and Blemishes, the Defects and Perfections of our finest English Writers, by reading with Attention and frequent Repetition, the best Grammar ever written in our Language, by one of the most learned and most amiable of Men, Dr. Robert Lowth (Ash 1766: viii–ix).

The fact that specifically these two grammarians are named suggests that they enjoyed a certain status. Consequently, it would be advantageous for a new grammar to associate itself with them. The elocutionist and orthoepist John Walker (1732–1807) referred to Priestley and Lowth in his *General Idea of a Pronouncing Dictionary of the English Language* (1774), crediting them with showing the irregularities of English usage:

Few subjects have more employed the pens of every class of critics than the irregularity of the English language [...] Johnson, who saw farther into this subject than any author before him, severely experienced the disorder and confusion among our writers; and though Lowth and Priestley contend warmly for the simplicity of the principles of our language, yet, with peculiar justness and accuracy, they exhibit the most striking proofs of the uncertainty of its usages (Walker 1774: 1).

The same three grammarians, their names now joined by those of Harris and Elphinston, were also mentioned as “grammarians as unequalled as our poets and philosophers” (Walker 1774: 7). In the dictionary itself, which was published a year later, the references to Priestley and Lowth were not repeated. In his *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* (Blair 1783), the Scottish literary critic Hugh Blair (1718–1800) refers to Lowth, Campbell and Priestley as sources for writing English properly:

[T]he Reader ought to peruse Dr. Lowth’s Short Introduction to English Grammar, with Critical Notes; which is the grammatical performance of highest authority that has appeared in our time, and in which he will see, what I have said concerning the inaccuracies in Language of some of our best writers, fully
verified. In Dr. Campbell’s Philosophy of Rhetoric, he will likewise find many acute and ingenious observations, both on the English Language, and on Style in general. And Dr. Priestley’s Rudiments of English Grammar will also be useful, by pointing out several of the errors into which writers are apt to fall (Blair 1783: 182).

Despite their political differences, the American lexicographer Noah Webster praised Priestley’s attention to the force of custom in his *Dissertations on the English language* (1789):

[N]either Johnson, Lowth, nor any other person, however learned, has a right to say that the phrases are not good English. That this is the fact, every person may satisfy himself, by consulting the good authors and observing the universal practice in discourse [...] Dr. Priestley is the only writer upon this subject who seems to have been guided by just principles (Webster 1789: 205).

Webster’s, however, may have been politically motivated when we look at the following passage from the same work, in which Webster writes that there is no “grammatical treatise, except Dr. Priestley’s, which has explained the real idioms of the language, as they are found in Addison’s works, and which remains to this day in the American practice of speaking” (Webster 1789: 290). Since Webster was trying to establish a national language for the United States (see Weinstein 1982), based on the English that was spoken there already, a doctrine of usage as argued by Priestley was very useful to his cause. The anonymously published *Rudiments of Constructive Etymology and Syntax* (1795) praises Priestley as well as Lowth. Its author writes that “[w]hat has hitherto been done in this science, by the late Bishop of London, Dr. Priestley, &c. does honour to their literary and critical abilities” (anonymous 1795: x). In the preface to his *English Grammar*, the schoolmaster Thomas Wright writes the following:

As this little book is designed for the use of my own school, I shall offer no apology for it’s appearance, nor endeavour to raise it’s merits by depreciating the labours of others who have written on the same subject; but were my motives required for adding to the long list of Grammars, I would say, that our best authors, Lowth, Johnson, and Priestley, have written for persons of maturity, without any view to the early part of education (Wright 1800: v).

So although he qualifies the grammars of Priestley and Lowth as not being suited for the use in schools, at the same time he holds them up as being among
the best authors. A final contemporary example comes from the grammar of one of the other main codifying grammarians of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, that of the Quaker Lindley Murray (1745–1826), which reads as follows: “For the assertion, that there are in English but two cases of nouns, and three of pronouns, we have the authority of Doctors Lowth, Johnson, Priestley, &c. names which are sufficient to decide this point” (Murray 1795: 28). That Murray regarded Priestley and Lowth as authorities is also evident from the fact that he based much of his hugely successful and influential English Grammar, Adapted to the Different Classes of Learners (Murray 1795) on the grammars of Priestley and Lowth (see Vorlat 1959). These references constitute an endowment of prestige by other grammarians. Again and again, often together with Johnson and Lowth, Priestley is held up as being one of the most authoritative grammarians of the time.

4.3.11. Reproduction and revision

Republication of a work testifies to its lasting popularity, even after the author no longer can or wants to be involved. Joseph Bretland republished the grammar after Priestley’s had decided not to work on any new editions himself. In a letter to Bretland, Priestley clearly stated that he did not own the copyright (“property”) himself, but had probably sold it outright to Joseph Johnson:

I recollect that the property of my English Grammar is not in myself, but the booksellers into whose hands it came on the bankruptcy of Mr. Johnson. He however has a share, and I have written to him, desiring that he would get you leave to print your edition (letter to Joseph Bretland, 6 June 1785).

The situation was such that “[b]ooksellers ordinarily purchased ‘copy’, the right to reproduce a writer’s work, for a fixed sum” (Suarez 2000: 132). At this point in time, copyright referred in the literal sense to the right of the person holding the copy, and property was defined as pertaining to material items only. Not until the final quarter of the eighteenth century under the influence of several law suits did the notion of ideas as property arise, and consequently the

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9 According to the Copyright Act of 1710 (‘Statute of Queen Anne’), registered “[c]opies [...] were protected for 14 years with the possibility of a further fourteen thereafter” (Feather 1988: 74).
question of the rights of the author as proprietor of his/her own copy (Feather 1987: 22). What does this mean for the authority of editions of Priestley’s grammar published after the second? It seems that as far as the textual authority of all editions of Priestley’s grammar after the 1768 second edition is concerned, we cannot automatically assume that alterations were made or even authorised by Priestley himself. In fact, of all editions of Priestley’s grammar after the official “Third Edition” of 1772, it is Joseph Bretland who is responsible for any changes, as he himself mentions in the ‘Advertisement’ prefixed to the 1789 edition of the *Rudiments of English Grammar,* when he introduces Priestley’s letter authorising him to make changes in the work: “THE following Letter from Dr. PRIESTLEY to me J. BRETLAND, Jun. containing a compliment to which I am very far from thinking myself intitled, shows, that I had his leave to make what alterations and additions I might please” (Priestley 1789: xiii). As proof of this, Bretland included a letter from Priestley to himself, dated 14 September 1785, in the ‘Advertisement’. The letter effectively authorised Bretland to make any alterations he felt necessary. Since the published letter is quite short, I quote the body of the text here in full:

As my present pursuits allow me no leisure to attend to my English Grammar, I think myself happy that you think it worth your while to publish a new edition of it, being confident that you, who have been several years in the practice of teaching it, must be much better qualified to improve it than I should now be. I therefore very cheerfully and thankfully leave it to yourself, to publish it with whatever additions, or alterations, you may think proper (Priestley 1789: xiv).

It seems that at that time, Priestley’s reputation as a grammarian had not diminished much, even though his grammar had been out of print for over ten years. In the ‘Advertisement’ Bretland’s gave the inherent merit of the work as his reason for republishing Priestley’s *Rudiments of English Grammar,* and apologies for any changes he made to it:

I trust that it will be sufficient to screen me from censure, that I have been instrumental in getting a work to be reprinted, which has been always justly

10 I quote from the ‘Advertisement’ in the 1789 edition because, although it also appeared in the 1786 edition by Bretland, most of the pages on which it occur were missing from the copy of that edition in ECCO.
celebrated for the peculiar simplicity of its plan, and, though frequently inquired for, was no longer to be procured (Priestley 1789: xiv). Bretland wanted to show that the republication of Priestley’s grammar was not a matter of personal gain, and adds the following footnote to that effect, stating that “J. Bretland will derive no pecuniary advantage from the republication of this work. He will think himself sufficiently rewarded for his trouble, if what he has done should meet with the approbation of his friend, the author, and of the publick” (Priestley 1789: xiv). Bretland apparently wanted to make it absolutely clear that he considered republishing the *Rudiments of English Grammar* a matter of public service.11

Another republication of Priestley’s grammar appeared early in the nineteenth century, in London. Judging by its title, *Dr. Priestley’s English Grammar Improved* (Guerrier 1827), this was effectively a revision of Priestley’s *Rudiments of English Grammar*. The question remains how heavily it was based on Priestley’s original grammar. Unfortunately, the full text of the work was not available to me to determine this, but two reviews provide some insight. The following comes from a review of Guerrier’s book in *The Imperial Magazine*:

> *Dr. Priestley’s English Grammar Improved, &c. &c., (Longman, London,) comes before us in a novel shape, which will operate as a recommendation. The radical principles of all grammars are nearly the same, we must therefore look for their variations from each other, in arrangement, and subordinate particulars (Imperial Magazine, Vol. 10 1828: 664).*

It is not straightforward whether the reviewer’s phrase “a novel shape, which will come as a recommendation” is praise or censure of Priestley’s work. *The Monthly Repository and Review of Theology and General Literature* contains a review of Guerrier’s book which says the following:

> Whatever be the merits of this treatise, we are inclined to think it must rest upon its own basis, the change, made in Dr. Priestley’s Grammar, and the additions which, in the present forms it has received, being such as to render it an essentially different publication. The chief resemblance to the work of Dr. Priestley is in that section which relates to verbs; a subject which that author

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11 This may sound noble, but the statement is also facile, since due to the ownership of the copyright by a number of shareholding booksellers, Bretland would probably not have been directly able to financially benefit from the sale of the work anyway.
will be allowed to have treated with philosophical simplicity [...] We think that this author, in rectifying their mistakes, and supplying their defects, has performed a task which will be beneficial to the rising generation (Monthly Repository and Review of Theology and Literature 1829: 865).

This reviewer seems to imply that Priestley's *Rudiments of English Grammar* was not the basis for this book, but merely an influence on his own. If that is so, it raises the question why the author would use Priestley's name in the title at all. I think that the answer is that Priestley's name still carried some intellectual weight within the realm of grammar writing.

**4.3.12. Use as a source**

The use of Priestley's *Rudiments of English Grammar* as a source for other grammars is evidence of its popularity and importance. I have found thirty-one grammars that mention Priestley's grammar and which consequently most likely used it, to a lesser or greater extent, as a source. The earliest reference to Priestley's grammar in other grammar books is in *The Easiest Introduction to Dr. Lowth's English Grammar* by John Ash (Ash 1766: viii–ix). The latest reference I have been able to find is from Goold Brown's *The Grammar of English Grammars*, published in New York (Brown 1851: passim).

Schofield (1997: 99) mentions that Lowth used Priestley's grammar as a source for later editions of his own grammar. However, I have not been able to corroborate this and Priestley's name is not explicitly mentioned in any of the editions of Lowth's grammars that are available in ECCO. Of other grammarians, we know that they used Priestley's grammar as a source for specific parts of their own grammars. According to Yáñez-Bouza (2008: 263), Priestley's discussion of prepositions in *that*-relative clauses was borrowed by Metcalfe for his *Rudiments of the English Tongue* (Metcalf 2nd ed. 1771: 75) and copied verbatim by Bicknell in *The Grammatical Wreath* (Bicknell 1790: II.70).

Three works that refer to Priestley's grammar were written in another language than English. They are *Mithridates*, published in German in Berlin (Adelung & Vater 1809); Connelly's *Gramatica que Contiene Reglas Faciles para Pronunciar, y Aprender Metódicamente la Lengua Inglesa*, published in Spanish
in Madrid (Connelly 1784) and by the same author El Nuevo Compendio de la Gramatica Inglesa, also written in Spanish but published in London (Connelly 1825). The subtitle of the first of Connelly’s grammars, con Muchas Observa-
ciones, y Notas Criticas, appears to reflect the influence of both Priestley and Lowth by an indirect reference to the respective subtitles of their grammars With Observations (On Style) and With Critical Notes. Two other grammarians explicitly refer to Priestley in the title of their grammars: the aforementioned Dr. Priestley’s English Grammar Improved (Guerrier 1827), and before that, a book titled The Elementary Principles of English Grammar, Collected from Various Authors; but Chiefly from Dr. Priestley by an unidentified author known only as “M.A.”, and printed for private use (M.A. 1785). What these references show is that within five years after its initial publication the Rudiments of English Grammar started to be an influence on other grammars for a period of almost ninety years.

Poldauf mentions two works which he claims were published anonymously by Priestley: Rudiments of English Grammar for the Use of Young Beginners (1788, Falmouth) and A Vocabulary or Pocket Dictionary, to which is prefixed a compendious grammar of the English Language (1765, Birmingham–London). The latter work we now know to have been authored by the printer and type founder John Baskerville. Poldauf argues that “Priestley's hand seems to have been at work at the anonymous Vocabulary or Pocket Dictionary published at Birmingham in 1765” (Poldauf 1948: 116), for which he gives the following reason “many ideas, distinctively liberal, which we first find in Priestley’s Observations (1768) are already hinted at there” (Poldauf 1948: 116). It is possible that there was some influence, since both men moved in the same circles, even at that time before their membership of the Lunar Society of Birmingham: Baskerville was acquainted with, for instance, both Matthew Boulton and Priestley’s mentor in science, Benjamin Franklin.

Lastly, the Quaker grammarian Lindley Murray borrowed extensively from Priestley for his English Grammar, Adapted to the Different Classes of Learners (Murray 1795), especially for the section on syntax (see Vorlat 1959: 113–114).
In the first edition of his grammar, published in 1795, Murray does not give his sources, but in the introduction to the third “improved” edition, we see the following acknowledgement: “[i]t is [...] proper to acknowledge in general terms, that the authors to whom the grammatical part of this compilation is principally indebted for its materials, are Harris, Johnson, Lowth, Priestley and Beattie” (Murray 1797: 7). Vorlat has shown that in later editions, Murray’s list of sources grows to include later grammars (1959: 108–109) and her evaluation of Murray can be summarised from her conclusion that “Murray is not an original author, nor a renewer. He is the typical grammarian of the end of a period [...] which saw a flourishing of plagiarism and prescriptivism as never before” (Vorlat 1959: 124). Current research on the grammarian Lindley Murray by Fens-de Zeeuw (in prep) may reveal more about the relationship between the grammars of Priestley and Murray.

4.4. School use

Priestley’s *Rudiments of English Grammar* was composed, written and published “for the Use of Schools”. One of the hardest things to determine in these kinds of investigations is how widely the grammar was used in British (and possibly Irish and American) schools, or outside school settings, and for how long a time it was used after it had been published. Suarez notes that the existence of various copies in various editions is not necessarily a reliable indication of the actual dissemination of a book. This is especially true for schoolbooks, since these were often produced in the cheapest editions and ‘used up’ by generations of pupils. As Suarez argues, “it is often the case that deluxe editions printed in very small edition sizes – and frequently more treasured than read – survive in far greater numbers than do highly popular books that were read to pieces” (2000: 141). This may also be true for Priestley’s grammar, which was designed to be used in schools. Another unknown factor that arises here is that although the book was intended for school use, it is hard to determine whether it actually was used as such.
As suggested in chapter 3, Priestley used some form of the text of his grammar in manuscript when he taught at Nantwich. Although this does not count as a use of the actual published grammar in manuscript form, it is nevertheless evidence of the use of its contents, assuming Priestley made no great changes between composition and publication. There is a hint that Priestley used his own grammar at Warrington Academy. The report of the trustees of the Academy mentioned at the beginning of this chapter sums up Priestley’s duties as tutor of languages and belles-lettres, which contains some illuminating remarks regarding Priestley’s works on grammar and language in general.

The English Grammar is taught to the younger students, and they are trained up in a regular course of English Compositions. By the Tutor in this Department are read Lectures on Logick; the Theory of Language, and Universal Grammar, Oratory and Criticism; the Study of History and Anatomy (Warrington Academy 1764: 2).

The fact that the names of the courses mentioned correspond so closely to the titles of Priestley’s published works on language, together with the fact that the course of English grammar is called “The English Grammar” instead of “English Grammar”, suggests that it refers to the book. However, as shown in his letter to Caleb Rotheram in chapter 2 regarding his grammar, Priestley wrote that he had not been able “to make trial of it” (letter to Caleb Rotheram, 18 May 1766). It is possible that Priestley’s grammar was used at the Warrington Academy, but by another tutor than Priestley.

There is clear evidence that the dissenting minister Joseph Bretland used the Rudiments of English Grammar in his school, according to the letter from Priestley in the advertisement to the 1789 edition that Bretland took upon himself to get published. In this letter, Priestley mentioned that Bretland had “been several years in the practice of teaching it” (Priestley 1789: xiv). The enduring popularity of Priestley’s grammar is likely to be the reason why Bretland found it necessary to get a new or revised edition printed. More information on actual use of Priestley’s grammar in schools would be very helpful in determining its actual influence on language users. Especially,
records of inventories of school libraries, bookseller’s catalogues offering large quantities for schools, perhaps at reduced prices, would all be of immense value in this kind of research. However, this kind of information was not readily available to me at the time of writing, if indeed these kinds of records are still in existence.

4.5. Summary and discussion
For ideas to take hold in the minds of others than the one with who they originated, they must be disseminated, and the eighteenth-century book trade has been shown to have been instrumental in the spread of Priestley’s ideas concerning grammar. The degree of dissemination, the popularity of a grammar book and the prestige of its author help to communicate its linguistic norm when it is used by individuals and schools. It is useful to note that the eighteenth-century popular press seems to have been interested in Priestley’s grammar only at the time of its publication. However, this is not surprising, as this was when a work was new and therefore news, which means that the press would be interested. Other institutions and individuals have a longer attention span. For them, Priestley’s Rudiments of English Grammar has remained an interesting work for nearly a century after it was first published.

Priestley’s grammar was printed in many editions and sizes, and disseminated widely by a growing network of metropolitan booksellers, as well as being published outside Britain in Irish pirated editions. It received positive reviews in the contemporary popular press, where it was often compared to Lowth’s grammar. It seems that knowledge of the value of Priestley’s grammar was not confined to England. Translations of his works appeared in France and Germany and were used as sources for English grammars in German and Spanish. Lastly, Priestley’s Rudiments of English Grammar was used as a source by many later eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century grammarians.

Despite all this, the question remains how influential Priestley’s grammar really was. Unfortunately, it is not possible to answer that question definitively. In this chapter I have only been able to give indications of its influence. I have
made it plausible that the work was widely disseminated within Great Britain, but only to some extent beyond its borders; that it was received well by critics and that it was relatively popular. I have also shown that it served as a source for various other grammars. This should mean that it was quite influential in its own day, though by a long way falling short of those of contemporaries such as Lowth, Murray and Webster. It can be said, however, that the *Rudiments of English Grammar* was not without its influence. Looking back at the comments by Leonard and Görlach quoted at the start of this chapter, it seems that the truth occupies some middle ground between their positions. Priestley’s grammar was important enough to be put on the same level as Lowth’s in the popular press and to be kept in libraries in which it was often the only other grammar next to Lowth’s. Compared to Murray’s grammar, it should be noted that there was a gap of thirty-four years between the first publications of these two grammars. When Murray’s first edition appeared in 1795, Priestley’s grammar had already been reprinted almost fifteen times, making several thousands of copies. The *Rudiments of English Grammar* were already influential before Murray’s grammar even existed.

Priestley did not confine himself to the hands-on approach of teaching, but also thought and published on the role of education in a wider social context. Besides giving lectures on language and rhetoric and publishing a school grammar, Priestley also published a number of long pamphlets on education, *An Essay On A Course of Liberal Education for Civil and Active Life* (Priestley 1768c) and *Miscellaneous Observations Relating to Education* (Priestley 1778), and a sermon on education *The Proper Objects of Education in the Present State of the World* (Priestley 1791a). Priestley’s influence, therefore, extends beyond the publication of the *Rudiments of English Grammar*, and a full assessment of its scope should include his role in the development of English education.

A book of grammar, like any other, is more than merely a physical item consisting of pages bound together with thread and glue in a cover of leather or cardboard. A book also contains an idea, and just like a book that goes through multiple editions, an idea interacts with the outside world and evolves over
time. Priestley's ideas about grammar, language (and education) evolved out of the ideas of others combined with his own ideas and points of view. Those ideas will be investigated in the following chapter.
5. Priestley's Philosophy of Language and Grammar

5.1. Introduction
In the previous chapter, I showed the potential influence that Priestley's *Rudiments of English Grammar* had on Late Modern English. To explain what the nature of this influence this may have been, I will reconstruct the philosophy behind Priestley's ideas about language and grammar. The focus of the investigation in this chapter will be on Priestley's school grammar, and where relevant to the argument, his two series of lectures on language will be discussed as well. I will start with a survey of the studies of Priestley's ideas on grammar and language (section 5.2), after which I will briefly look at the place of Priestley's grammatical works in his oeuvre (section 5.3). Then I will discuss Priestley's philosophy of language and grammar by investigating his grammatical works: *Rudiments of English Grammar* (1761a, 1768a), the *Course of Lectures on the Theory of Language and Universal Grammar* (1762), and the *Course of Lectures on Oratory and Criticism* (1777a) in section 5.4. The chapter is concluded by a discussion of Priestley's place within the public debate on grammar and correctness in language in eighteenth-century England (section 5.6) and a summary of the findings (section 5.6).

5.2. Previous studies
Many studies of the history of the English language have touched upon Priestley's ideas on language and grammar in some form or other. Most of these studies focus on eighteenth-century English grammars and deal primarily with the question of whether Priestley was a prescriptivist, a setter of arbitrary rules, or whether he was a descriptivist, an advocate of the force of custom and usage. The usual conclusion was that Priestley should be seen as an example of early descriptivism, and he was often contrasted with Robert Lowth as the prime example of prescriptivism. This misrepresentation of Priestley and
Lowth as two opposing poles of the grammatical tradition of eighteenth-century English is discussed more fully in chapter 7. In this section I will show that Priestley was often taken to be a descriptivist in the early twentieth century, although this view began to be challenged in the second half of the century, leading towards a critical re-examination of his role in the history of English.

5.2.1. Early twentieth-century evaluations

The twentieth-century perspective on Priestley can be traced back to a few seminal publications regarding the history of English grammar. Perhaps the most important of these was Leonard’s *Doctrine of Correctness in English Usage, 1700–1800* (1929). This book was one of the first modern histories of English grammars and Leonard’s views on the topic remained enormously influential for most of the century: He was also one of the first to firmly cast Priestley into the role as the sole example of a descriptive grammarian in the eighteenth century, as is evident from the following quotation:

Only one writer, Joseph Priestley, appears to have held to a clear conception of the force of usage, as presented by Horace and Quintilian and by Locke and his followers. His work, marred of course by his lack of training for specifically linguistic research, is, almost alone in the eighteenth century, a precursor of modern study of these problems (Leonard 1929: 14).

Besides the comment regarding Priestley’s idea of the force of usage, I find it particularly interesting that Leonard criticises Priestley for not having had any linguistic training, because at the time nobody had any philological or linguistic training in the modern sense. What Leonard meant, I suppose, is that Priestley had no specific expertise in the area of language studies in general, as opposed to someone like Robert Lowth perhaps, who was a Hebraist and had been professor of poetry at Oxford University. In chapter 6, I shall argue that Priestley did in fact have expertise in the area of language studies. Leonard’s view on Priestley’s attitude to usage is reiterated further on in his work, where he writes that “Priestley is undoubtedly the first writer in English, and apparently

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1 Leonard’s work, though limited seen from an early twenty-first-century perspective, still deserves being lauded as the first extensive modern treatment of eighteenth-century grammatical thought.
the only one in the eighteenth century, to take a reasonably consistent view of usage” (Leonard 1929: 142).

The idea of Priestley as the only descriptivist of the eighteenth century is echoed by Baugh & Cable's *History of the English Language* (2002), a revision of Baugh's original *History of the English Language* (1935). Baugh & Cable start by commending Priestley on his open-mindedness regarding the need, or rather a lack of need, for an English language academy, writing that "Joseph Priestley [...] was remarkably liberal in is views upon language, anticipating the attitude of later times" (Baugh & Cable 2002: 270). From their perspective, it appears as though Priestley was the only language scholar who was opposed to the idea of state-regulated language practice at the time, even though the lexicographer Samuel Johnson also clearly voiced his position opposing an English language academy in, as I will discuss further on in this chapter. Baugh & Cable also make a positive note of Priestley's alleged originality, independence, consistency and adherence to the doctrine of usage. I will list these comments in the order in which they appear in the book:

In 1761 Joseph Priestley published *The Rudiments of English Grammar*. In it he showed the independence, tolerance, and good sense that characterized his work in other fields (Baugh & Cable 2002: 274).

Of all the grammarians of this period only Priestley seems to have doubted the propriety of *ex cathedra* utterances and to have been truly humble before the facts of usage (Baugh & Cable 2002: 278).

The person who more wholeheartedly than anyone else advocated the doctrine [*the jus et norma loquendi*], however, was Joseph Priestley. His voluminous writings on chemistry, natural philosophy, theology, and politics have overshadowed his contributions to the study of language. In this field, however, as in all others, he was independent and original, and in his *Rudiments of English Grammar* (1761) he repeatedly insisted upon the importance of usage (Baugh & Cable 2002: 283).

The difference between Priestley and Campbell is that whereas Campbell expounded the doctrine of usage with admirable clarity and then violated it, Priestley was almost everywhere faithful to his principles [...] Thus Priestley stands alone in his unwavering loyalty to usage (Baugh & Cable 2002: 284).

More than any other, these two works established Priestley's reputation as the lone descriptive grammarian of the second half of the eighteenth century, a
reputation that would be upheld and uncritically propagated for most of the twentieth century. A few years earlier Bryan (1923) had presented a different view, implicitly labelling Priestley as a prescriptivist by including him in his discussion of the "founders of prescriptive English grammar" (1923: 383), together with Robert Lowth, George Campbell and Noah Webster. It seems no coincidence that this view of Priestley as a prescriptivist, rather than a descriptivist, predates the very influential works of Leonard and Baugh & Cable.²

In his On the History of some Problems of English Grammar before 1800 Poldauf (1948) discusses Priestley as part of a study specifically about the history of English grammar. Poldauf also propagates the picture of Priestley as a descriptivist in the eighteenth century. He emphasises the idea that Priestley’s awareness of usage gave him credibility as a descriptivist in the modern sense of the word: “Joseph Priestley (1733–1804) was the only writer who retained any clear idea of the force of usage” (1948: 137) and that “Priestley (1761–1768) gave us a clear idea of the actual usage of his day” (Poldauf 1948: 239). However, Poldauf also shows himself to be aware of the fact that by following Wallis – descriptivism aside – Priestley is part of an existing tradition of grammar writing and what we can call an emerging tradition of studies of modern languages by experts before the birth of modern linguistics in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. He describes Priestley’s shortcomings as follows:

In describing the structure of English Priestley turns out to be a less fortunate blend of scientist and grammarian than was Wallis a century before. He believes in the existence of universal grammar and his views, taken from various older grammarians, suffer from this and other misconceptions (Poldauf 1948: 137–138).

The implication is that Priestley’s work – specifically the Course of Lectures on the Theory of Language and Universal Grammar in this case – can be called

²Bryan (1923) is referred to by Leonard (1929: 4, 75, 189) and Baugh & Cable (2002: 278, 294) but apparently neither agrees with Bryan’s classification of Priestley as a prescriptive grammarian.
proto-linguistic. What is important here though, is that Priestley’s belief in a universal grammar is expressed in a work that is specifically concerned with universal language. With regard to his *Rudiments of English Grammar*, which is a school grammar, Priestley’s attitude is not quite the same, as will become evident in the following sections. This notion will also be discussed more fully in chapter 6. Poldauf argues that the impact and importance of Priestley’s *Rudiments of English Grammar* was limited compared to Lowth’s *Short Introduction to English Grammar*, in which he echoes Leonard’s view. He writes that Priestley’s “contribution to the problem of correct usage shrinks to very little, considering that the *Rudiments* could not have the same reception in the public as the *Short Introduction* by Lowth” (Poldauf 1948: 138). However, as seems to become more and more the case, this is not so much a confirmation, as it is the propagation of an erroneous assumption. On the other hand, later studies have emphasised the influence that Priestley’s grammar had on subsequent grammars, rather than its influence on the public directly. In addition, chapter 4 showed that the dissemination of Priestley’s grammar was much wider than has been assumed so far, and that its popularity in its own time should not be underestimated.

5.2.2. Changing opinions

It was not until much later in the twentieth century that the representation of Priestley as it occurred in Leonard (1929), Baugh & Cable (2002) and Poldauf (1948) was revisited and adjusted. Slowly, the point of view regarding Priestley’s place in the history of grammar writing seems to have gained more nuance, as in Sugg’s *The Mood of Eighteenth-Century English Grammar* (1964). Sugg explicitly addresses the stereotyped association of Late Modern English grammars with “unenlightened prescriptivism” (Sugg 1964: 239). This means

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3 Proto-linguistics refers linguistic study before the age of modern linguistics. It is in this sense that Wilkins (1999) refers to John Wilkins’ *Essay Towards a Real Character, and a Philosophical Language* (1668) as a work of “proto-linguistics” (Wilding 1999: 153). It is also in that sense that I refer to Priestley as a proto-linguist. The term proto-linguistics itself is not new, but is also used to refers to paleolinguistics, the study of proto-languages (Trask 2000).
that he is naturally more critical toward the established view of Priestley as a purely descriptive grammarian. His comparison of Priestley with Johnson is indicative of this more critical attitude. He writes that “Priestley, like Johnson, saw language as still in the category of art, the ‘rules of it being calculated to direct our practice’” (Sugg 1964: 248). This passage suggests that Priestley’s grammar was indeed prescriptive in some measure, though Sugg does not use the word. He does not use the word “descriptive” either in the following passage, but his antithesis of Priestley’s work to Aristarchus, which is explicitly described as prescriptive, makes it obvious that Sugg sees Priestley as neither wholly prescriptive nor wholly descriptive:

Following the culmination of grammatical work in the practically oriented books of Lowth and Priestley, the genteelism and moralism which marked middle-class education increasingly inspired the work of inferior writers. An extreme instance is Philip Withers’ Aristarchus (1789) [...] In this book we may see prescriptivism in the worst sense (Sugg 1964: 251).

It appears that because he is more critical with regard to Priestley as being a prescriptivist or descriptivist, Sugg is also more ambivalent about what Priestley’s grammar really is.

Elledge seeks to revise the received notions about the eighteenth-century history of grammar brought about by Leonard’s work in The Naked Science of Language, 1747-1786 (Elledge 1967: 294). He investigates the question of the scientificality of Priestley’s works on language and grammar, rather than the question of whether they were prescriptive or descriptive. To this end, Elledge focuses on Priestley’s more theoretical Course of Lectures on the Theory of Language and Universal Grammar rather than on the Rudiments of English Grammar, which, as said, was primarily a school grammar. According to Elledge, Priestley’s work was of great importance within the context of scientific language study in Britain in the eighteenth century, as he argues in the following passage:

[During the thirty-five years between 1751 and 1786 at least six important and influential works, in addition to Johnson’s Dictionary and its Preface, contributed to the development of attitudes and concepts necessary to the scientific study of language. These were James Harris’ Hermes (1751), Joseph Priestley’s
Lectures on the Theory of Language and Universal Grammar (1762), Adam Smith’s "Considerations concerning the First Formation of Languages" ([1767], Lord Monboddo’s Of the Origin and Progress of Language (1773–1792), George Campbell’s Philosophy of Rhetoric (1776), and Hugh Blair’s Lectures on Rhetoric (1783). [...] To be sure, they were imperfect by present standards, but none was prescriptive, none was primarily aimed at purifying the language, and all were informed by their author’s desire to arrive at scientific truth by the process of generalizing from observation (Elledge 1967: 280–281).

In addition, Elledge argues that Priestley’s scientificality had rubbed off on other grammarians who are usually seen to be primarily prescriptive, such as the American Quaker grammarian Lindley Murray, whose “famous grammar, first published in York in 1795, was much more ‘scientific’ and much less ‘prescriptive’ than it is generally said to be – thanks to the influence of Priestley” (Elledge 1967: 283–284).

In English Grammatical Categories and the Tradition to 1800, Michael (1970) identifies a number of systems of grammatical categorisation in English grammars. As such, it is expected that there would be more emphasis on the descriptive character of the grammars, of which his remark on Priestley’s grammar is an example. Michael argues that in the Rudiments of English Grammar “Priestley’s empirical approach enabled him to see the irrelevance, for English, of many inherited grammatical categories, but it also led [...] to misleading oversimplification” (Michael 1970: 407). In other words, Priestley’s ‘scientific’ approach of grammar gave him insights into the system that were new, but also restricted his thinking. The novelty of Priestley’s approach is, according to Michael, also found in Priestley’s other works on language:

Priestley’s title is interesting, as showing the juxtaposition, and suggesting the resemblance, if not the equivalence, of the new terminology to the old. The theory of language’ was what ‘universal grammar’ had in fact become. [...] What the lectures are most noticeable for, and what distinguishes them from earlier formulations of universal grammar, is Priestley’s readiness to speculate in psychological terms about the origin and development of language (Michael 1970: 175).

It seems that in taking a more analytical and methodical approach, Michael naturally comes across the more scientific nature of Priestley’s work.
However, the image of Joseph Priestley as a purely descriptive grammarian was apparently hard to resist, an image that has repeatedly been assumed to be virtually self-evident because of the empirical nature of his work as a scientist. Bornstein's *Introduction to Transformational Grammar* (1977) contains an historical overview of the study of grammar, from which comes the following, almost slavish adoption of the points of view of Leonard and Baugh & Cable:

As far back as the eighteenth-century, we find descriptive and prescriptive methods, liberal and conservative attitudes. The descriptive, liberal approach is found in Joseph Priestley's *Rudiments of English Grammar* (1761). Priestley, a chemist as well as a language scholar, was scientific and objective. [...] Like the Port Royal grammarians, he did not allow general principles to mislead him in the analysis of his own language but considered usage and the "custom of speaking" the "only just standard of any language." (Bornstein 1977: 8).

Indeed, the created dichotomy between Priestley the scientific descriptivist and Lowth the authoritarian prescriptivist has not, I think, anywhere been put as succinctly or as dogmatically as in the few paragraphs in this work that deal with the history of the study of grammar. However, since the work is not written by a historical linguist, we ought not perhaps expect too critical an attitude regarding what may seem like trivialities to transformational linguists.

5.2.3. Later critical studies

From the 1980s onwards, more attention has been paid to the question of the authority of usage. In addition, Priestley's works on the English language are evaluated more critically from a sociohistorical and – for the present purpose more importantly – a sociohistorical linguistic perspective. In *English Literature in History 1730-80: an Equal, Wide Survey* (1983), Barrell devotes one of the three lengthy chapters of his book to language and the idea of common usage. Barrell is perhaps the first to explicitly mention the real discrepancy between the representation of Priestley by the historians of the linguistics of English earlier in the twentieth century and his actual practice as a grammarian. The prescriptive nature of Priestley's work is implied in the following passage:

According to most histories of eighteenth-century linguistics, the most convinced advocate of the authority of custom in the decades after Johnson was Joseph Priestley, whose *Rudiments of English Grammar* appeared in 1761, a
little before Lowth’s Short Introduction. A careful reading of this work, however,
and of Priestley’s Course of Lectures on the Theory of Language and Universal
Grammar (1762) reveals his defence of custom to have been much qualified
(Barrell 1983: 161).

In Barrell’s view, the Rudiments of English Grammar is not overtly prescriptive
because of Priestley’s rare use of the word rule, arguing that “[t]he generally
permissive tone of the grammar may be gauged from Priestley’s attitude to
‘rules’ – he avoids the term as far as he considers possible” (Barrell 1983: 162).
In chapter 6, I will show that despite Priestley’s avoidance of the word “rule”,
there actually are overt prescriptive elements in his Rudiments of English
Grammar.

Smith’s Politics of Language 1791-1819 (1985) discusses the eighteenth-
century English grammars in the context of the class system and the political
climate in England, focussing on suffrage and political power. Given his political
activities and some politically charged statements in his grammar, Priestley is
quite naturally one of the grammarians referred to. In her treatment of his
work, Smith primarily makes note of the more prescriptive elements of
Priestley’s grammar:

Joseph Priestley, famous as a scientist, educator, philosopher, and radical,
criticizes other grammars for their disregard of ‘spoken and written’ English (p.
x). None the less, he was not entirely free of the prevailing disregard of the
vernacular language. In his grammar, he condemns ‘mere native English’ as he
calls it, for being incapable of sufficient cadence and sufficient intellectual
precision (Smith 1984: 10).

It should be noted that Priestley’s reference to “mere native English” was taken
from the section ‘Observations on Style’ and not from the grammar proper of
the Rudiments of English Grammar.

Azad’s Government of Tongues: Common Usage and the ‘Prescriptive’
Tradition 1650 to 1800 (1989) focuses primarily on the philosophical issues
related to the notion of common usage. Azad, though partly acknowledging
Priestley’s adherence to the authority of usage, argues that it is nevertheless a
mistake to call Priestley a descriptivist in the modern sense:
There is no doubt that Priestley is much clearer on the authority of custom and much more eloquent than any of his contemporaries. This difference has been misinterpreted as the sign of a modern, ‘descriptivist’ approach to language. But Priestley’s emphasis on ‘analogy’ and ‘best forms’ undermine this claim. Every usage is not of equal value (Azad 1989: 151).

Despite these words of caution, however, he does find Priestley to be more of a descriptivist than other grammarians of his time, with perhaps the exception of Noah Webster: “It was Webster, whom we might be tempted to dub ‘descriptivist’, who in fact stresses most the ‘right’ of the common people to act as a linguistic norm on the basis of the quality of their language” (Azad 1989: 219). Curiously enough, as I have mentioned above, Priestley and Webster were not regarded as descriptivists by Bryan (1923) but counted as two of the founders of English prescriptive grammar.

In A Dictionary of English Normative Grammar, 1700-1800 (1991), Sundby, Bjørge & Haugland 1991 call Priestley a descriptivist by intent, but at the same time they acknowledge his prescriptive, or at least his normative tendencies by the mere act of including him in their study in the first place:

Priestley is to all intents a descriptive grammarian [...] As far as the first edition of Rudiments is concerned, Priestley’s contribution to the Dictionary [of English Normative Grammar] is modest enough, but in the enlarged 1768 edition he makes a point of showing his preferences (Sundby et al. 1991: 38).

In ‘Joseph Priestley’s Approach of Grammatical Categorization and Linguistic Diversity’, Swiggers (1994) focuses on Priestley’s handling of grammatical categories on the Course of Lectures on the Theory of Language and Universal Grammar (Priestley 1762). Following Elledge (1967) and Michael (1970), he argues that in this work Priestley demonstrates a new, innovative scientific approach to language. The emphasis on Priestley’s scientific ideas – or perhaps more correctly Priestley’s ‘linguistic’ ideas – lifts this work out of the reach of the simple debate over descriptivism versus prescriptivism. Swiggers argues that “Priestley’s Course of Lectures [on the Theory of Language and Universal Grammar] should be read as an attempt to inaugurate the science of language, the aim of which goes beyond descriptive and normative status of grammar” (1994: 35). I would argue that Priestley already implicitly tried to perform this
'Inauguration' by comparing a grammar to a work of natural science in the preface of *Rudiments of English Grammar*, where he wrote that "[g]rammar may be compared to a treatise of *Natural Philosophy*; the one consisting of observations on the various changes, combinations, and mutual affections of words; and the other of the parts of nature" (Priestley 1761a: vi).

That being said, I have to concede that Priestley does not try to put this into practice until the *Lectures on the Theory of Language and Universal Grammar*, which were printed a year later. However, he is not able to absolutely equate these two kinds of texts because in his view language was not a natural phenomenon but rather a social one (see also Hodson 2006: 76).

Görlich highlights the similarity of approach in the grammars of Priestley and Lowth, rather than making pronouncements on the relative prescriptiveness or descriptiveness of their works in his *Eighteenth-century English* (Görlich 2001). He also reveals Priestley's shortcomings, noting that "[e]ven Priestley's largely descriptive approach did not stop him from providing a definition in which 'nominative' is a misnomer for 'base form'" (Görlich 2001: 98). Despite refusing to endorse the simplistic view of Priestley as a categorical descriptivist and Lowth as a prescriptivist, Görlich nevertheless places Priestley and Lowth in opposition to each other, writing that the "[t]he prescriptivism of Lowth is mainly found in his copious notes [...] compare the similar method followed by his opponent Priestley" (Görlich 2001: 27f). However, he does not actually make clear what they are on opposing sides of, merely taking for granted, it seems, that they are. Görlich is also of the opinion, expressed in a footnote quoted in the last chapter (Görlich 2001: 247f), that Priestley's grammar was much more important and influential than has been assumed, despite earlier claims to the contrary by Leonard (1929) and Poldauff (1948). I agree that Priestley's work has probably had more influence than has been realised, but Görlich's claim that it was the most important *schoolbook* of the time, not merely the most important grammar – which in itself is somewhat of a stretch already – seems to go rather far (see also chapter 4).
Hodson’s study of the descriptive reputation of Priestley’s grammar in ‘The Problem of Joseph Priestley’s (1733-1804) Descriptivism’ (2006) is the first to place Priestley’s work squarely in its socio-historical context. She takes up Azad’s argument and speculates as to the cause of Priestley’s reputation as a descriptivist:

*Rudiments* has often been interpreted as demonstrating that Priestley took a descriptive approach towards the study of language at a time when most of his contemporaries adopted much more prescriptive approaches [...] Such a characterisation both of Priestley’s work and that of his contemporaries is fundamentally misleading, and [...] important aspects of Priestley’s work have been overlooked because they do not fit comfortably with this schematic ‘prescriptivist versus descriptivist’ account (Hodson 2006: 58).

The problems associated with this “schematic” view of prescriptivism are discussed in chapter 7. As an example of these problematic but “important aspects of Priestley’s work”, Hodson observes that Priestley is not always consistent in his acceptance of custom:

It is noticeable [...] throughout the “Notes and Observations”, that Priestley is much more prepared to accept the idiosyncratic dictates of custom when it tallies with his own variety, and is less sympathetic to custom when he is not familiar with the form in question (Hodson 2006: 80).

Hodson, referring to a passage in Baugh & Cable (1993, quoted above as Baugh & Cable 2002: 283), argues that Priestley’s reputation as a scientist was of considerable influence on his gaining a reputation as a descriptive grammarian. It might even be said that this was rather a convenient reinterpretation rather than a reputation. In this, I subscribe to Hodson’s argument, which is as follows:

[K]nowing of his reputation in other fields, readers are predisposed to find independence and originality in his writings on language. Indeed, Priestley seems almost to be ideally designed to function as the sole representative of descriptivism in the 18th century. [...] it seems entirely fitting that he should bring the scientific method to bear on language; while as a radical political writer [...] he should rebel against the arbitrary reign of prescriptivism (Hodson 2006: 64).

We see this predisposition at work, for example, in Hussey’s (1995) discussion, who writes that “Priestley was a chemist and so possibly more disposed to examine the facts and usage of English than to proceed in a dogmatic manner”
(1995: 154). I find it striking that this clearly problematic point has hardly ever been raised before. Schofield, Priestley’s biographer, was possibly the first one to do so when he wrote that we “may reasonably doubt that Priestley’s grammatical writings would have achieved so much currency with modern grammarians had he not gone from grammar to science (though he had yet to do any of note when he wrote on languages)” (Schofield 1997: 101). In Chapter 2, I have demonstrated that the *Rudiments of English Grammar* was one of the first of Priestley’s works ever to be published, that it was not until a few years later that he became seriously interested in science, and even several years after that before he established a reputation as a scientist and political writer. The equation of the Priestley the grammarian with Priestley the scientist and political activist is therefore anachronistic and consequently untenable. When Priestley wrote his *Rudiments of English Grammar* in the late seventeen-fifties, the natural and political philosopher Joseph Priestley was merely a shadow of the grammarian.

In *Joseph Priestley’s two Rudiments of English Grammar: 1761 and 1768*, Hodson (2008) compares the first and second editions of Priestley’s grammar. She argues that the preface to the second edition of the *Rudiments of English Grammar* shows a significant tempering of the confidence that characterized the first edition, and that “Priestley appears to have been considerably less optimistic about the whole project of grammar writing in 1768 than he had been in 1761” (Hodson 2008: 183). Her conclusion is that such a comparison shows that Priestley had changed his outlook on the state of English grammars and English grammar writing considerably by the time he published the second edition of his grammar. She writes: “what a close reading of the two editions of *Rudiments* reveals is a grammarian gradually coming to recognise that, far from already being completed, much of the serious work in establishing the principles of English still remained to be done” (Hodson 2008: 189). More importantly than being merely an interesting study of the differences in content of these two editions of Priestley’s *Rudiments of English Grammar*, Hodson
(2008) is a study of the development of Priestley’s attitude to his grammatical work. This is also a topic explored further in this chapter.

As an aside, it is interesting to see that when one looks up Priestley’s name in the indexes of the works discussed in this chapter, it usually appears within the first twenty or so pages. This means that he is usually one of the first grammarians mentioned, which can be taken either as a testament to his lasting importance in eighteenth-century English language studies, or alternatively, to the amount of lip-service that has been paid to his reputation as the first descriptivist, attributed to him by Leonard.

5.3. Grammar writing in Priestley’s oeuvre
Chapter 2, I explored the part of Priestley’s life that was not concerned with grammar. This section, on the other hand, is concerned with how and in what way Priestley was involved with grammar in his work. I will present evidence from Priestley’s publications on grammar and language and from his letters that illustrate his ideas at various times. I will start with a short discussion of the notion of communication in Priestley’s ideas on language and grammar, after which I will try to show that there is a development to be found in Priestley’s ideas regarding the importance of grammar and grammar writing as an instrument in teaching correct English.

5.3.1. Language, communication and grammar
How are we to understand the interplay of the notions of grammar, language and communication in the mind of an eighteenth-century grammarian? It seems to me that Priestley belonged to the school of thought that supports the idea that the main goal of language is the communication of ideas. He makes this clear in the preface to the first edition of his *Rudiments of English Grammar*, in which he writes that "language, to answer the intent of it, which is to express our thoughts with certainty in an intercourse with one another, must be fixed

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* I am grateful to Jane Hodson for suggesting this idea.
and consistent with itself” (Priestley 1761a: vi). He returns to this point on the first page of the second edition, where he gives the definition that “LANGUAGE is a method of conveying our ideas to the minds of other persons” (Priestley 1768a: 1). I assume that with “language” Priestley referred to both the spoken and the written mode, although this is not made explicit here. This point has also been brought up by Schofield (1997), regarding the *Course of Lectures on the Theory of Language and Universal Grammar*:

The truly original and universal requirement is that of human communication [...] For Priestley, a study of language in general becomes a study of people, their societies, and their cultures (Schofield 1997: 105).

That Priestley also put this idea into practice is evident from his impressive body of work, covering many subjects. In the early part of the *Course of Lectures on the Theory of Language and Universal Grammar*, he reiterates the communicative aspect of language, writing that “the sole use of speech is mutual information” (Priestley 1762: 55). With respect to language in general, he was a little more elaborate in his argument:

In like manner is the art of language founded upon science; and it is a matter both of curiosity and usefulness to enquire into the natural powers of those sounds and characters which are the instruments of it, to consider the modifications they are capable of, and their fitness to answer the purposes of a language proper for the mutual communication of such beings as we are (Priestley 1762: 6).

Thus, the enquiry into language – and supposedly grammar as well – is not only interesting as a study of the improvements of language, it is also useful for the improvement of communication.

In the first lecture of his *Course of Lectures on Oratory and Criticism*, the spoken mode is explicitly mentioned with reference to communication, rather than the cover-term language: “The use of speech is common to all mankind [...] and this capacity was necessary to that mutual intercourse, and free communication, without which being of our social nature could not be happy” (Priestley 1777a: 1). What we see is that in each of his works on language and grammar, the *Rudiments of English Grammar*, the *Course of Lectures on the Theory of Language and Universal Grammar*, and the *Course of Lectures on Oratory and
Criticism, Priestley reiterates the importance of communication. Supposedly, the sentiments expressed in the previous and the following passages acted as a kind of mission statement for the course on oratory and criticism that Priestley taught at Warrington Academy in the 1760s:

Moreover, let a person be ever so perfect a master of his subject, he could not be taught to speak or write about it with propriety and good effect, without being previously instructed in the principles of Grammar, i.e. without a knowledge of the inflection of words, and of the structure of sentences, in the language he makes use of (Priestley 1777a: 3).

Communication is explicitly mentioned, as is grammar, but I find it somewhat curious that in a work on rhetoric the notion of communication, which must be a central tenet in the art of persuasion, is not more explicitly explored in the Course of Lectures on Oratory and Criticism.

Whether we are looking at spoken or written language, Priestley’s definitions indicate that it is more important that communication takes place at all, clearly, rather than the level of correctness with which it is done. He argued that “we ought rather to aim at perspicuity and strength of expression, than exactness in the punctilios of composition” (Priestley 1761a: 61). I will return to the discussion of the difference between writing and speech in Priestley’s grammar in chapter 6. Later in the Rudiments of English Grammar, in the section ‘Observations on Style’, Priestley elaborates upon the communicative use of language, its relationship to grammar and the difference between the spoken and written modes:

The use of writing, as of speaking, is to express our thoughts with certainty and perspicuity. But as writing is a permanent thing, it is requisite that written forms of speech have a greater degree of precision and perspicuity than is necessary in colloquial forms, or such as very well answer the purpose of common conversation [...] The ease of conversation seems, in some cases, to require a relaxation of the severer laws of Grammar (Priestley 1761a: 44).

It is these “severer laws of Grammar” in the above quotation that we should probably see as falling under the heading of prescriptivism. The question of Priestley’s prescriptivism and its underlying norms are the topic of chapter 6.

Elsewhere in the Course of Lectures on the Theory of Language and Universal
Grammar Priestley explains how the improvement of language, and thereby the improvement of communication, is to be achieved:

The chief thing to be attended to in the improvement of a language is the analogy of it. The more consistent are its principles, the more it is of a piece with itself, the more commodious it will be for use (Priestley 1762: 185).

What this attendance to the analogy of language entails or involves, however, is not made clear in these lectures. We can safely assume, I suspect, that writing about grammar and writing grammar books has something to do with making its 'principles more consistent'. This notion is explored further when I discuss Priestley's ideas on the role of the grammarian.

5.3.2. The importance of grammar and grammar writing

I have argued in chapter 2 that Priestley neither considered his works on language and grammar to be crucially important publications within his own oeuvre, nor placed a great emphasis on grammar per se. So if his grammar was not an important subject for Priestley in his private and vocational life, what does that mean for his ideas about the importance of grammar as such? In this section, I intend to demonstrate that we can see a development in Priestley's ideas regarding the importance and usefulness of grammar and grammar writing, part of which has been described by Hodson (2008).

In the Preface to the Rudiments of English Grammar, Priestley clearly states the goal of his book, and the conditions under which it is meant to function and to be interpreted. He writes that the “following performance is intended to exhibit, A view of the genuine and established principles of the English language; adapted to the use of schools” (Priestley 1761a: iii). The fact that the grammar is said to “exhibit” the “established principles” of English indicates that it promises to describe the English language as it is rather than prescribe what it should be. The phrase “adapted to the use of schools” is also significant, as it separates this grammar with regards to text type from so-called philosophical or universal grammars. What this specifically means for the Rudiments of English Grammar as a text is explored further in chapter 6. The following
sentence modifies the ‘mission statement’ quoted above to include that specifically “what is here drawn up is intended to exhibit only the present state of our language” (Priestley 1761a: iv). The phrase “present state” in this passage presupposes that the English language is subject to change, and that Priestley is aware of this. The use of the word “exhibit” hints at the role Priestley has in mind for the grammarian, which is the topic of section 5.5.2.

Priestley was optimistic and confident about the usefulness of a grammar book and about the fact that he himself was able to write it. As Hodson observed:

Taken as a whole, Priestley's tone in the 1761 Preface is markedly upbeat, both with regard to the state of the English language, and, in particular, with regard to the quality of his own text. [...] The opening of the first sentence [on page vi] strikes a note of modesty [...] but the rest of the paragraph appears to be anything but modest [...], the level of confidence he expressed in his own grammatical text is very high (Hodson 2008: 180).

This confidence in the usefulness of grammars is also present in the opening pages of the Course of Lectures on the Theory of Language and Universal Grammar, in which he says the following about the relation between language and grammar books: “LANGUAGE, whether spoken or written, is properly termed an Art; the rules of it being calculated to direct our practice” and “GRAMMARS are books that contain the rules and precepts of this art” (Priestley 1762: iii). Priestley makes a distinction here between ‘a grammar’, which is a book of the “rules and precepts” of a language, and the rules and precepts themselves, which constitute the grammar of a language. It is in this latter sense that Priestley uses the word “grammar” when he wrote that “the rules of Grammar, when persons are capable of using them, do very much facilitate acquiring this art [language], and are of great use in order to make a person more exactly and extensively acquainted with a language that was learned at first without their assistance” (Priestley 1762: 4). But he goes even further than this. According to him, a good grammar, deduced from the language of the best writers, in combination with a good dictionary would be sufficient to exhaustively describe the current state of the English language:
[It is very possible, from little more than the examples he [Dr Johnson] hath given from our very best writers of the use of every word in every sense, to compose a grammar of all the varieties of manner in which words are used, both as to their inflection and disposition, which, together with the dictionary, would be a complete system of our language as now used (Priestley 1762: 185-186).

In this passage, the word "grammar" appears to refer to the physical object, and is not synonymous with a 'system of language', which would require the combination of a grammar and a lexicon.

As was demonstrated in chapter 4, Priestley's grammar was all in all well-received, both critically and commercially. However, it seems almost certain that, in the years between the first and second editions, Priestley was losing confidence about the subject, or at least about his own grammar. It is hard to find out what exactly happened, but I think it not unlikely that the experience in teaching through presenting his lectures made Priestley think more critically about the subject and made him more aware of the shortcomings of his grammar. In the spring of 1766, almost five years after the publication of the *Rudiments of English Grammar*, Priestley expressed a fairly strong opinion on the usefulness of grammar in a letter to fellow teacher Caleb Rotheram, where he wrote: "I question whether it will signify much to teach any English Grammar" (letter to Caleb Rotheram, 18 May 1766). This comment, however, should not be taken at face value, but needs to be placed in its proper context. It seems to me that with this statement Priestley does not mean to say that teaching English grammar is intrinsically useless, but rather that he feels that none of the existing English grammar books is up to the task of actually teaching pupils English grammar – that is, a description of the rules of the English language – as it existed in his time. So when Priestley said that there is little use in teaching "any English Grammar", I do not think that he meant that no amount of English grammar could teach students proper English. The way he taught his classes at Nantwich and at Warrington, with an insistence on reading and writing in English, suggests that he actually believed the opposite to be true. What Priestley seemed to mean, rather, is that there was no particular English grammar book or teaching system, probably including his
own, that would sufficiently answer the purpose of teaching real English grammar.

In the same letter to Rotheram, Priestley wrote that he was not inclined to publish a second edition of his own grammar because, as he says, he feels that Lowth’s *Short Introduction to English Grammar* has made his own superfluous:

My *English Grammar* was not ready time enough for me to make a trial of it. It has been out of print two or three years, and I shall not consent to its being reprinted. Lowth’s is much better (letter to Caleb Rotheram, 18 May 1766).

Schofield doubts the sincerity of Priestley’s statement, saying that he could not really have thought Lowth’s grammar to be superior (Schofield 1997: 99) and that Priestley must have used his own grammar at the Warrington Academy because he composed his lecture notes there, which he seems to have used in the second edition of the *Rudiments of English Grammar*:

That he used the *Rudiments* at Warrington is clear from the “Notes and Observations” appended to the new edition [...] And, teaching English grammar at least to “the younger students,” why should he not have used his own text while it remained in print? For he did not really think Bishop Robert Lowth’s *Introduction to English Grammar* [...] was “much better” than his own work (Schofield 1997: 98–99).

Schofield may be right about Priestley using the *Rudiments of English Grammar* at Warrington, though the evidence is ambiguous, but I think he is wrong in the assertion that Priestley did not really think Lowth’s grammar was better. Lowth’s grammar was tremendously popular and had gone through as many as five editions by 1766, the date of the letter, whilst Priestley’s first edition had only been reprinted twice (see chapter 3). I suspect that at that time Priestley really was somewhat intimidated by Lowth’s grammar and its success, and that he really believed that Lowth’s grammar was better. I will return to this subject in chapter 6.

I have already mentioned in chapter 4 that Priestley may have used his grammar at Warrington Academy. The names of the courses in the 1762 report of the trustees of the Warrington Academy resemble the titles of Priestley’s publications on language too closely to be a coincidence, indicating that the titles of Priestley’s actual texts were taken and put into the report. The follow-
ing is an excerpt from the report, also quoted in chapter 4, which states: “The English Grammar is taught to the younger students, and they are trained up in a regular course of English Compositions” (Warrington Academy 1764: 2). The use of the definite article in “The English Grammar” combined with a reference to a course of compositions points towards the Rudiments of English Grammar, despite the apparent claim to the contrary in Priestley’s letter. In fact, a combined search in ECCO with the keywords english, grammar and compositions between 1700 and 1762 (the year of the report) yields only five results, three of which are grammars. Only two of them, Michael Maittaire’s The English Grammar (1712) and Priestley’s Rudiments of English Grammar contain a separate section on English compositions. Since Maittaire’s title exactly matches the name in the Warrington Trustees’ report, I cannot exclude the possibility that this was the grammar that was actually used at the Academy. But would Priestley really have been satisfied with using a grammar that was fifty years old while he had just published a brand new grammar of his own?

The passage from the letter to Rotheram also shows that Priestley had formed some doubts about the effectiveness of his own Rudiments of English Grammar in teaching students English grammar. The following quote from Hodson (2008), in addition to the ones already given earlier in this chapter, shows that Priestley was not confident about the potential ability of his Rudiments of English Grammar, nor would it seem in the light of the previous argument, of any English grammar book to teach English grammar. She writes that “[i]t is also significant that he deleted the two passages in which he expressed strongest confidence in his grammar” (Hodson 2008: 183) from the preface of the first edition. I have argued above that Priestley probably felt that there was no grammar available that could accurately describe the English language as it existed at the time, and Hodson (2008) argues that Priestley must have realised that his work was not yet done. Perhaps these reasons, coupled with the urging of his bookseller, Joseph Johnson, prompted Priestley to publish a new edition of his grammar after all.

The idea of fixing the language is discussed later in this chapter, but I can
say here that in the preface to the second edition of the *Rudiments of English Grammar*, Priestley notes that it was done hastily. He writes “our grammarians appear to me to have acted prematurely in this business, and to have taken a wrong method of fixing our language” (Priestley 1768a: xvi). I think that Priestley counted himself among these grammarians and that this passage can be read as Priestley coming to terms with the hasty, perhaps even injudicious “breezy optimism” as Hodson (2008: 181) puts it, of the first edition of his grammar.

Rather than considering the business of grammar writing to be futile, Priestley put the question of grammar and grammar writing into its proper social and historical context. The following passage shows the importance he placed on grammatical correctness in the light of grave philosophy:

I even think a man cannot give a more certain mark of the narrowness of his mind, and of the little progress he has made in true science, than to show, either by his vanity with respect to himself, or the acrimony of his censure with respect to others, that this business is of much moment with him. We have infinitely greater things before us; and if these gain their due share of our attention, this subject, of grammatical criticism, will be almost nothing. The noise that is made about it, is one of the greatest marks of the frivolism of a great many readers, and writers too of the present age.

Not that I think the business of language, and of grammar is a matter of no importance, even to a philosopher. It is, in my opinion, a matter of very considerable consequence; but in another view (Priestley 1768a: xiii-xiv).

The sentiment expressed in this passage appears to me to be evidence of Priestley’s earlier confidence in the usefulness of teaching grammar. But now it is relativised by the awareness that there is a greater exploration of science awaiting eighteenth-century man, so that the subject of grammar needs to be examined in the light of history-in-the-making. Knowing his priorities, the “infinitely greater things” Priestley mentions probably have to do with religious and political liberty and science than with grammar. This passage shows that according to Priestley, since he contrasts it with “true science”, the subject of “grammatical criticism” is not a philosophical matter, as is was for some other grammarians. Neither was it a political matter, because although Priestley was politically active, he did not seem to view grammar, or his grammar, as an
instrument in his political activities, unlike other politically active grammarians
such as Webster and Cobbett.\footnote{Cobbett made use of politically-charged, reactionary examples in his Grammar of the English Language (1819) to make his point, as shown in Aarts (1986), whilst Webster needed to make political use of grammar in order to create an American national identity and language, separate from Britain.}

In the Preface to the Rudiments of English Grammar, Priestley writes an
apology for his use of David Hume (1711–1776) as a source for many examples
of erroneous usage. Since it pertains to the present discussion, I quote it here:

If I be thought to have borne harder upon Mr. Hume than upon any other living
author, he is obliged for it to the great reputation his writings have justly
 gained him, and to my happening to read them at the time that I did; and I
would not pay any man, for whom I have the least esteem, so ill a compliment,
as to suppose, that exactness in the punctilios of grammar was an object
capable of giving him the least disturbance (Priestley 1768a: xiii).

It is the final clause of this passage which shows Priestley’s attitude to the finer
points of correct language in light of greater importance of the written com-
unication of ideas.

Despite these protestations of inadequacy and insignificance, Priestley
made it clear in the Course of Lectures on Oratory and Criticism (1777a) that
there was indeed a use for the teaching of grammar, for regardless of whether
a person be ever so perfect a master of his subject, he could not be taught to
speak or write about it with propriety and good effect, without being previously
instructed in the principles of grammar (Priestley 1777a: 3). When viewed in
succession in this way, Priestley’s works on language and grammar tell the
story of the development of Priestley’s ideas on grammar writing. It is the story
of a language scholar who started out with enthusiasm and confidence, writing
the first edition of the Rudiments of English Grammar and the Course of Lectures
on the Theory of Language and Universal Grammar; then went through some-
what of a crisis of confidence and tried to address this by revising his earlier
text and publishing a second edition of the Rudiments of English Grammar; and
at last appears to have regained a confidence in the usefulness of grammar in
the Course of Lectures on Oratory and Criticism. At the end of this rather familiar
story of a journey towards enlightenment, the grammarian Joseph Priestley, our protagonist, had gained a deeper and more subtle understanding of language and grammar. He had found a philosophy.

5.4. A philosophy of language

I have shown in chapter 2 that the importance of Priestley’s interest in grammar should not be overestimated. However, section 5.2 showed that Priestley was nevertheless interested in grammar writing, and that he had very definite ideas about it. As I also mentioned in chapter 2, his ideas about language can be better understood by viewing him as a theologian and philosopher. To do this, there are some concepts that need to be understood in order to make proper sense of Priestley’s philosophical ideas. These concepts are necessitarianism, millennialism and David Hartley’s (bap. 1705, d. 1757) associationism – all of which had a broad and profound influence on Priestley’s thinking. As it would extend much too far beyond the boundaries of the present study, I will not discuss Priestley’s philosophical works themselves, but I will discuss these concepts since it is useful to see them in their philosophical context. Additionally, I will briefly discuss the concept of a universal language, since it relates to the perfectibility of language, discussed later in this chapter. Up to this point, I have mainly referred to Priestley’s *Rudiments of English Grammar*, but in this section his other works on language become relevant as well. Besides his grammar, Priestley’s ideas about the present state and future of the English language are eloquently articulated in his *Lectures on the Theory of Language and Universal Grammar* (1762) and his *Lectures on Oratory and Criticism* (1777a). All three of these works will therefore be used illustrate the argument presented in this section.

5.4.1. Related studies

Recent scholarship has often tried to unite different parts of Priestley’s life and work. Alison Kennedy, in *Historical Perspectives in the Mind of Priestley* (Kennedy 2008), intimates that this trend possibly started with McEvoys’s remark on
the "synoptic" nature of Priestley's thought in his natural philosophy (McEvoy 1978: 5). It is now usually assumed that Priestley's philosophy in general involved such a comprehensive way of thinking. As Priestley's religious philosophy is considered to be central to all his thinking, the efforts at unification of his theories were usually made with an aim to resolve Priestley's religious philosophies with some other area of his work. In this section and the following I shall endeavour to do this for his thoughts on language.

Several articles on Priestley's philosophical outlook will form the framework for the discussion in this section. Not all of them deal with Priestley as a language expert, but they do reveal aspects of his character as a philosopher and proto-linguist that are relevant and enlightening. These works have tried to show that there was a more unified philosophy underlying all his ideas, whether they were theological, political, philosophical or scientific. It seems not unreasonable to assume that this would also count for his ideas about language. The effects of Priestley's millennialism and necessitarianism, for instance, on his ideas on language should be discussed. More complete discussions of Priestley's necessitarian and millenialist views, what they entailed and how they related to the notions of 'liberty' or 'freedom' and 'determinism' are given, for example, in Fruchtman (1987) and Kennedy (2006).

Fruchtman's The Apocalyptic Politics of Richard Price and Joseph Priestley (1987) deals mainly with Priestley's millenialist and necessitarian ideas in a socio-political context. Fruchtman details the subtle differences between the positions of Priestley and his friend Richard Price on the points of millennialism and necessity in the way these were illustrated in their jointly written Free Discussion of the Doctrines of Materialism, and Philosophical Necessity (Priestley 1778). These ideas are inextricably connected to Priestley's religious ones. In fact they may be said to be derived from them, and looking closer at those religious ideas gives us an idea of how he may have looked at the topic of language. Kennedy (2006: 42–91) traces the influence of Priestley's thought on the Unitarianism of John Kenrick (1788–1877).
Alexander (2008) is probably the first to explicitly relate Priestley’s millennialism to his ideas on language, focussing on Priestley’s *Lectures on the Theory of Language and Universal Grammar* (1762), which he composed when he was a lecturer of languages and belles-lettres at Warrington Academy.

5.4.2. Associationism

Priestley’s philosophy on language use was directly influenced by Hartley’s theory of the association of ideas. In the preface of his *Course of Lectures on Oratory and Criticism* (1777a), he makes this explicit:

> I have been frequently urged to make the Lectures public [...] partly with a view to the illustration of the doctrine of the association of ideas, to which there is a constant reference through the whole work (in order to explain facts relating to the influence of Oratory, and the striking effect of Excellencies in Composition, upon the genuine principles of human nature) in consequence of having of late endeavoured to draw some degree of attention to those principles, as advanced by Dr. Hartley (Priestley 1777a: i–ii).

Priestley explicitly refers to Hartley by name nine times in the whole of the work, and the phrase “association(s) of ideas” occurs nine times as well. There is only one instance of this phrase in the 1761 and 1768 editions of the *Rudiments of English Grammar* taken together, in which Hartley is not mentioned at all. This could be taken as an indication that the *Course of Lectures on Oratory and Criticism* fits perhaps better within Priestley’s philosophical body of work than within his linguistic or grammatical oeuvre. However, as the lectures are about language, the work will be included in the present discussion, though the emphasis will lie with the *Rudiments of English Grammar*.

Although Kennedy (2008) discusses Priestley as a historian, she convincingly incorporates his philosophical ideas into her discussion of his historical method. The same can possibly be done for Priestley’s ideas about language. Kennedy’s main argument is that Priestley’s theological histories and historical bible criticism show a “more sophisticated form of historical consciousness

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6 I used WordSmith 5.0 to search for hartley and association in these two editions of Priestley’s *Rudiments of English Grammar*, as well as in his *Course of Lectures on Oratory and Criticism* (1777a).
than he displayed in his secular historical ideas” (Kennedy 2008: 188). This raises the question whether a parallel in his linguistic works can be found, and whether it will also be possible to reveal a more sophisticated consciousness in his ideas about language.

As mentioned above, the influence of David Hartley's psychological theory on Priestley’s thought is a well-known fact. Aside from confessing his “great admiration of Dr. Hartley's theory of the human mind” in his memoir (1806: 79), Priestley also published his own edition of Hartley's Observations on Man (Hartley 1749) in 1775 as Hartley’s Theory of the Human Mind (Priestley 1775a). The date of publication of this work suggests that Priestley may have used it for several of his philosophical/theological works that were published in the few years immediately following, including the Course of Lectures on the Theory of Language and Universal Grammar. Certainly, Hartley's theories must have been much in his thoughts during that period. Kennedy notes an aspect of millennialism in Priestley’s historical thought which is influenced by Hartley’s associationism. This becomes clear from the following passage:

It was in the work of David Hartley that Priestley found the ideal mechanism to work alongside his own necessitarian ideas. Priestley wrote of the nature of separate cultures with regard to ethics, but there was nothing in his ideas which suggested the existence of moral relativism. In his creation of a theory of moral progress he was attracted to the unbroken cohesion of the idea of association and the simplicity of the hypothesis [... ] that moral knowledge could be explained by the association of ideas, and that this would actually create in man a moral sense which carried its own authority (Kennedy 2008: 184–185).

It is this idea of Priestley's acknowledgement of diversity coupled with a denial, or at least unawareness, of the equivalent linguistic relativism, that provides some insight into Priestley's linguistic thought. We can draw a parallel between Kennedy's assessment of his ideas on ethics and his linguistic thought. Priestley is known to emphasise the importance of usage, or the “all governing custom” (Priestley 1768a: xviii). This earned him his reputation as an early descriptivist, and he indeed makes note of variations in language. However, Priestley also held to the idea that there was such a thing as correct usage, and that there were preferred forms, as I will show in section 5.5 and discuss more fully in
chapter 6. Priestley believed in the eventual existence of a perfect language, as will be shown at the end of this section.

5.4.3. Necessitarianism

The concept of philosophical necessity involves the notion of free will, or liberty in its philosophical sense. Free will is a "philosophical term of art for a particular sort of capacity of rational agents to choose a course of action from among various alternatives" (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, s.v. 'free will'). One of the questions that Priestley and his contemporaries were concerned with was whether human beings have the power to be the first cause of things or whether their actions are dictated by other causes. In eighteenth-century philosophy, necessitarianism refers to the belief that human beings do not have this capacity (Harris 2005: 6–7). Priestley's necessitarianism, like many of his philosophical ideas, owes much to David Hartley, whose own ideas of philosophical liberty and necessity were in turn based on the work on this subject by the seventeenth-century philosopher Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679). Harris's Of Liberty and Necessity (2005) provides a historical overview of the various schools of thought regarding these subjects, and outlines Hartley's position as follows: "[I]t is literally speaking [...] God is the only agent in the universe: this is what it means to say that human beings do not have the power of beginning motion, and that every event is wholly determined by a prior event" (Harris 2005: 161–162). At first glance, this may appear to be no more than a matter of religious philosophy, but it is of essence for the understanding of Priestley's view of the world. Priestley's religious faith and his necessitarian and millenarianist views, which are related to his belief in God, lie at the core of his philosophical thought. He adopts Hartley's position that sees God as the sole power of first cause, as is illustrated by Harris (2005: 168) with a quotation from Priestley's The Doctrine of Philosophical Necessity Illustrated (1777c):

[T]here will be a necessary connection between all things past, present, and to come, in the way of proper cause and effect, as much in the intellectual, as in the natural world; so that [...] according to the established laws of nature, no event could have been otherwise than it has been, is, or is to be, and therefore all
things past, present, and to come, are precisely what the Author of nature really intended them (Priestley 1777c: 8).

Hartley emphasises that God is ultimately the cause of every event, while the passage from Priestley illustrates that his emphasis lay on the temporal aspect of this notion. How this translates into a philosophy of language for Priestley will be shown in the following sections.

5.4.4. Millennialism

Fruchtman’s ‘The Apocalyptic Politics of Richard Price and Joseph Priestley: a Study in Late Eighteenth-Century English Republican Millennialism’ (1983) provides a good picture of English eighteenth-century millennialism, as well as the finer points which distinguish some of its varieties. Fruchtman also makes note of Hartley’s influence on Priestley regarding the millennium (1983: 16). I will only discuss the more general aspects of their millennialism here, which are likely to be the ones that are relevant to the discussion in rest of this section. The millennium referred to in millennialism is not an event such as the highly anticipated but ultimately rather disappointing turnover of the Gregorian calendar from the twentieth to the twenty-first century, but to the literal realisation of a future paradise on earth, as foretold in the prophecies of the Christian scriptures, in which Priestley was a firm believer. As Fruchtman puts it: “Priestley thought that of human events as providentially controlled by cosmic forces that eternally stimulated human beings to work to fulfil the prophecies of God’s future universal, though earthly, paradise, the millennium” (1983: 1). In Priestley’s time, this idea of God’s paradise on earth was no longer taken literally, in the sense of the kingdom of God which would be reigned over for eternity by a returned Jesus Christ. Rather, more in line with Enlightenment thinking, it was seen as a utopic state of present society (Fruchtman 1983: 14). As Fruchtman explains:

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7 Fruchtman is a political scientist and he focuses on the political aspects of the kind of millennialism to which Priestley and Price subscribed, which he calls ‘republican millennialism’.
As it was characteristic of Enlightenment thinkers to believe in progress, they too thought the world was inevitably improving [...] This progress was inevitable only because God had ordained it. On the other hand it was intrinsically human, because men [...] were to achieve it through the orderly development of their political institutions and intellectual capacities (Fruchtman 1983: 20).

It is the last sentence of this passage that is especially relevant to the discussion of Priestley's ideas regarding the perfectibility of language.

Alexander's 'The Language of the 'Naked Facts': Joseph Priestley and the Apocalypse of Language' (2008) starts with a statement from the final lecture in Priestley's Lectures on the Theory of Language and Universal Grammar on the relationship between words and things:

These facts demonstrate the unspeakable advantage of the study of different languages. To appearance, this is an affair of words only; but these words are, more closely than men imagine, connected with things, and things of considerable consequence (Priestley 1762: 295).

According to Alexander (2008: 22), this statement seems hard to reconcile with Priestley's otherwise Lockean position on this topic, where signs are arbitrary. However, we can resolve this conflict by seeing Priestley's attitude to language in the light of his millenialist ideology. Alexander argues that:

[F]or Priestley, history was moving ineluctably by means of its human agents towards the apocalyptic moment when the scriptural prophecies of an earthly paradise would be fulfilled. Bolstered by the promise of human perfectibility which he found in the associationist theories of David Hartley [...] whether Priestley is writing about religion, government, history, education, or electricity, he does so always with one eye reckoning the distance to the millennium (Alexander 2008: 23).

Alexander suggests that Priestley also did this reckoning when he wrote about language, that the Lectures on the Theory of Language and Universal Grammar display a rhetoric that “anticipates this millennial moment” (Alexander 2008: 24) when perfect intelligibility would become a reality by means of a completely universal language. In fact, language itself was to be one of the instruments by which this would take place, for the following reason:

Performative language does something, it is precisely this productive function which is shadowed forth in the emphasis Priestley places on language as a 'means': in his theory, each utterance is an act – and a political act at that –
which either hastens or delays the arrival of the millennial moment of consummate meaning (Alexander 2008: 31).  

If this rhetoric is present in the Lectures on the Theory of Language and Universal Grammar, it stands to reason that Priestley's Rudiments of English Grammar might display the same kind of rhetoric in some form or other. Let us turn to the preface to the first edition of the Rudiments of English Grammar, where we find one of his most often quoted ideas about language: "[w]e need make no doubt but that the best forms of speech will, in time, establish themselves by their own superior excellence" (Priestley 1761a: vii). Admittedly, Priestley expressed this sentiment with regard to an English language academy, rather than one on the intrinsic nature of language. However, I do not think that this diminishes its relevance to the present argument, or in the one which relates Priestley's ideas about the intrinsic nature of language to his point of view of language in history and society. In the preface to the second edition of the Rudiments of English Grammar, Priestley says something similar, albeit in a somewhat different context:

[T]he best forms of speech, and those which are most agreeable to the analogy of the language, will soon recommend themselves, and come into general use; and when, by this means, the language shall be written with sufficient uniformity, we may hope to see a complete grammar of it. At present, it [the time] is by no means ripe for such a work; but we may approximate to it very fast, if all persons who are qualified to make remarks upon it, will give a little attention to the subject. In such a case, a few years might be sufficient to complete it (Priestley 1768a: xv).

Priestley's millennialist ideas are reflected in this passage, which combines its ideological spirit on a metalinguistic level – just as the performative aspect mentioned by Alexander does on a linguistic level – with a practical, real-world proposal for its actualisation. It seems that when we closely read the Rudiments of English Grammar, we can see that Priestley's millennialist ideology is not merely an aspect of his philosophical work, but that it is also present in the theoretical parts of what is primarily a practical, instructive text. It is also this

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8 Alexander refers to performative language, which he takes out of the context of pragmatics, in which it is usually discussed. He is talking about locations that have a perlocutionary effect, that is, utterances that change something in the real world.
aspect that lifts it above a simple grammar and makes it suitable for educational purposes above the level of the mere acquisition of basic literacy. The eventual establishment of the best forms of language can also be found in Priestley’s millennialist view of the role of evil in the world, which Fruchtman summarises as follows:

 Evil and corruption were only temporary phenomena which in no way detracted from the positive progressive flow of history [...] Through trial and error, particularly in matters of choice, the human mind progressed so that men attained near perfection in their moral judgments (Fruchtman 1983: 102).

This outlook appears to be just as suited to view corruption in language – or the corruption of language – as it is for the corruption of man and society at large. Man would attain near perfection in their linguistic judgements as well as in their moral ones. This aspect is akin to what Johnson calls the “progressive futurism” (2008: 35) of Priestley’s beliefs, which are at the core of his millennialism. As Fruchtman argues, Priestley and Price’s “millennialist impulse gave them the secure feeling that all human conduct was collectively leading history to its final glorious conclusion (Fruchtman 1987: 96). This means that, according Priestley's millennialism, there would come a time when the state of man would be one of perfection, presumably in all it aspects. The implications of Priestley’s millennialism seen from the point of view of a linguist mean that variations or ‘corruptions’ in language – in a very broad sense – originate and exist in man but do not alter the course of language towards an ultimate state of perfection. This perspective helps to resolve Priestley’s sometimes contradictory views on language, which then turn out to have been paradoxical instead.

5.4.5. A universal language

Before the discussion of the perfectibility of language proper can begin, however, it is useful to point out the concept of a universal language. A universal language referred to an artificial language based on logical principles and “real characters” (Knowlson 1975: 7–9). Such a language could be understood by everyone. The most serious proposal for the creation of a universal – or philosophical – language in England was probably that of the seventeenth-
century mathematician John Wilkins (1614–1672) in An Essay Towards a Real Character, and a Philosophical Language (1668), written at the request of the Royal Society. In the dedication, Wilkins gives the main reasons for inventing a philosophical language, stating that “[b]esides that most obvious advantage which would ensue, of facilitating mutual Commerce, amongst the several nations of the World, and the improving of all Natural knowledge; It would likewise very much conduce the spreading of the knowledge of Religion” (Wilkins 1668: sig. b1'). The idea was that a universal language would displace the mercantile lingua francas such as Portuguese, Latin as the language of science, and the languages of religion such as Hebrew and Greek. The commercial and scientific rewards of a universal language are obvious and mainly of a practical nature. Philosophically speaking, it is the religious aspect which is particularly important. The realisation of a true universal language would constitute a reversal of the Babelonian confusion and a return to the “lingua humana” that had been “the primitive language of mankind before Babel” (Knowlson 1975: 4). In the eighteenth century, the interest in the creation of an artificial universal language diminished considerably, partly due to the fact that French had become the dominant international language in Europe (Knowlson 1975: 140–141).

Even in the case of grammars of English, where it is apparent that universality was not the goal, the logic and freedom from ambiguity that a philosophical language offered was still seen as an ideal to be aspired to. An early example of this kind of grammar writing was, according to Rix (2008), Lane’s Key to the Art of Letters (1700). Lane’s “change of focus [...] shifting away from the denotational towards the communicative aspects of language” (Rix 2008: 548) could also be observed in Priestley’s grammar, as shown above. Lane’s emphasis on the “validity of English as a suitable vehicle for learning and erudition” (Rix 2008: 552) is echoed by Priestley’s emphasis on the importance of teaching English in schools, as shown in section 5.5 below.

It is important to distinguish these grammars, that is grammars which have this philosophical approach – and which are somewhat confusingly also called
philosophical grammars – from what are strictly speaking school grammars. James Harris’ *Hermes* (Harris 1751) is an example of the former, whilst Priestley’s *Rudiments of English Grammar* and Lowth’s *Short Introduction to English Grammar* are examples of the latter. The notion of a philosophical language is an important concept in Priestley’s philosophy of language, as will be made clear in the following sections.

5.4.6. The perfectibility of English

So far, we can conclude that Priestley was convinced of the notion that all of human life was working itself to a state of perfection. This millennialist belief was based on his religious convictions, instilled by the scriptures. But it percolated through to his ideas about the advancement of natural philosophy, politics and, as argued above, the advancement of language. Swiggers (1997: 41) notes that in the seventeenth lecture of the *Course of Lectures on the Theory of Language and Universal Grammar* (1762) Priestley provided the criteria for a perfect language:

In the first place it is necessary there be a sufficient copia of words; secondly that there be no ambiguities of words or concentrations; and, lastly, that the pronunciation of it be not grating, but pleasing to the ear. The two former of these criterions contribute to clear expression, and are therefore fundamental properties of a good language; the latter is a matter of ornament only (1762: 250).

In the introduction to these lectures, Priestley gave his definition of a universal, philosophical language as well as a reason for the study of language itself. His argument is the following:

[It] is only from a perfect knowledge of the theory of language in general that we can form any rational expectations of [...] one of the last and greatest achievements of human genius, viz. a *philosophical and universal language*, which shall be the most natural and perfect expression of human ideas and sentiments (1762: 7–8).

It seems that the notion of gaining “a perfect knowledge of the theory of language in general” constitutes the main thrust of Priestley’s argument for why the study of language is important.
Two aspects of Priestley’s necessitarianism provide a good basis on which to determine his views on the perfectibility of language. The first is that man had an innate divine attribute, which Fruchtman describes as follows: “[w]hat Priestley termed necessity and Price freedom was tied to man’s progressive path toward godly societal perfection” and “Providence ultimately directed human conduct. But even Providence was not an external force: it was God-internalised-within-men” (Fruchtman 1987: 95–96). What this means is that for Priestley there was no conflict between free will and philosophical necessity since the free will of man is a part of the divine within himself, an attribute of the divine as it were. Translated into linguistic ideas, this meant that language use would be as good as it could be as a matter-of-course, both in individuals and in a collective such as a society. This is precisely what Priestley says in the preface of the second edition of the Rudiments of English Grammar: “the best forms of speech, and those which are most agreeable to the analogy of the language, will soon recommend themselves, and will come into general use” (Priestley 1768a: xv). The consequence of this is that according to Priestley “the best forms of speech” were already inherently present in man, just like providence was, and that their coming “into general use” was just as much unimpeded by external forces as providence itself. Hodson finds a similar argument in William Godwin’s (1756–1836) Of English Style (1797), who writes for Godwin “English is in fact in a state of perpetual improvement” and that “[t]he perfectibility of language is therefore a fundamental aspect of the perfectibility of the human race” (Hodson 2000). This argument reflects Priestley’s millenialst ideology, which is not surprising considering the fact that Godwin and Priestley moved in the same circles.9

9 Godwin, like Priestley a dissenter, attended the Hoxton Academy in London, which was run by acquaintances of Priestley and was acquainted with the booksellers Joseph Johnson (also a dissenter) and George Robinson. Godwin had also read Priestley’s History on the Corruptions of Christianity (ODNB; s.v. ‘William Godwin’). Several of the notions regarding language that Hodson (2000) identified in Godwin’s work are similar to Priestley’s, and it is therefore possible that Godwin was actually directly influenced by Priestley.
By coupling Priestley’s pronouncements from his grammar, which deals specifically with English, with his general linguistic ideas, we can get a picture of his idea of the perfectibility of the English language. We start with the following quotation from the *Rudiments of English Grammar*, in which Priestley refers to the idea of ‘maturity’ of the English language, though he does not actually explain what he means by it, stating only that “[i]f the English language hath not already attained to its maturity, we may safely pronounce that it never will” (Priestley 1761a: 60). There is reason to assume that Priestley believed that English had “already attained to its maturity”, as he gives the criteria for this in the following passage:

> It is writing that fixes, and gives stability to a language [...] And when a language is so much read, written, and diffused in books through the bulk of the nation that speaks it as the English, in its present state, it would be absolutely miraculous were it to receive any considerable alteration (Priestley 1761a: 60–61).

The kind of perfection of the language’s development into a universal or philosophical language was not to be expected with regard to the English language, but it was also not required: a relative kind of perfection would suffice. Priestley mentions two ways in which such a state of relative perfection could be attained. The first is through a democratic process of usage, aided by the guidance of grammar-books. Priestley describes this as a “manufacture for which there is a great demand, and a language that many persons have leisure to read and write, are both sure to be brought, in time, to all the perfection of which they are capable” (Priestley 1761a: vii). I take the “manufacture” that Priestley speaks of to be grammars, rather than the system of English grammar. It is this way to relative perfection that most closely corresponds to Priestley’s necessitarian ideology. The second way is through a more active approach, requiring the direct intervention of language experts. This process would amount to grammarians and critics removing undesirable elements from the language and is as such a much stricter normative process. As Priestley argues:

> [T]o compose a grammar of all the varieties of manner in which words are used, both as to their inflection and disposition, which, together with the dictionary, would be a complete system of our language as now used. Merely to
drop what, from such a system, were apparently useless and inconvenient, would make the language as perfect as the general nature of it would admit (Priestley 1762: 185–186).

Seen from the perspective of an eighteenth-century philosophy of language, the achievement of relative perfection, of an English language that would be as good as it could be, was a reasonable expectation.

5.5. The public debate

Starting from about the second half the eighteenth century, a public debate on English language and grammar arose, fuelled by an increased awareness regarding the state of the language and the social importance of ‘polite speech’. This is illustrated by a dramatic rise in the number of grammars being published from the 1760s onwards (see Tieken-Boon van Ostade 2008a). The publication of Priestley’s grammars falls squarely within this period. This section is concerned with how much Priestley was involved in the normative climate in which both his grammar and he himself existed.

5.5.1. An English language academy

The debate concerning some form of institutionalised way of improving the English language started with the establishment of a committee for that specific purpose in the British Royal Society (see Görlach 2001: 33–34), of which the poet John Dryden (1631–1700) was a member. At the close of the seventeenth century, the author Daniel Defoe (1660?–1731) included a proposal for an English language academy in his Essay upon Projects (Defoe 1697).10 In the eighteenth century, Jonathan Swift’s (1667–1745) Proposal for Correcting, Improving and Ascertaining the English Tongue (Swift 1712) is probably the most prominent work advocating a language academy in England.

There were several dissenting voices on this issue. Baugh & Cable (2002: 268) mention John Oldmixon (1672/3–1742), though they add that Oldmixon

10 Willems (2010) gives a nice overview of the debate concerning an English language academy and its participants, compared to the French situation. She also successfully integrates the notions of discourse community and community of practice in her argument.
actually approved of the idea of an academy and that his opposition was politically motivated. Priestley made his attitude toward the founding of an English language academy, modelled after the Académie Française, perfectly clear in the preface to his *Rudiments of English Grammar*. There he wrote that regarding such "a publick Academy, invested with authority to ascertain the use of words, […] I think it not only unsuitable to the genius of a free nation, but in itself ill calculated to reform and fix a language", arguing that "it is better to wait the decisions of *Time*, which are slow and sure, than to take those of *Synods*, which are often hasty and injudicious", because "[w]hat would *Academies* have contributed to the perfection of the *Greek* and *Latin* languages? Or who, in those free states, would have submitted to them?" (Priestley 1761a: vii-viii).

Priestley’s aversion to an academy for the regulation of the language is rooted in his (theological) belief that language will naturally evolve to its perfection. In his view, an academy would work against nature and against God. From the point of view of Priestley’s politics, it is also not surprising that he was averse to the notion of a language academy. Görlach notes that “Priestley, as a moderate liberal, unsurprisingly found such a scheme authoritarian” (Görlach 2001: 36). Being a Dissenter and therefore barred from many areas of public life only accessible to those subscribing to the articles of faith of the only state-sanctioned denomination, the Anglican church, Priestley was of course likely to be especially sensitive to any issue of state control over people’s lives and behaviour.

Considering that Samuel Johnson was so much averse to many of Priestley’s ideas – if his biographer James Boswell (1740-1795) is to be believed11 – it is ironic that they had similar ideas as to an English language academy. Johnson was doubtful as to an academy’s actual contribution to the codification of the English language, given the obstinacy and anti-authoritarianism of the English language, given the obstinacy and anti-authoritarianism of the English

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11 In his *Life of Samuel Johnson* (1791) Boswell writes: “I do not wonder at Johnson’s displeasure when the name of Dr. Priestley was mentioned; for I know no writer who has been suffered to publish more pernicious doctrines” (Boswell 1791: 464).
people. His remark is quoted in Görlach (2001: 35):

That our language is in perpetual danger of corruption cannot be denied; but what prevention can be found? The present manners of the nation would deride authority (Johnson 1779: 12).

Like Priestley, Johnson saw it as being against the nation’s principles of freedom to have a state-founded academy which would dictate language use, and expressed the hope that “[i]f an academy should be established for the cultivation of our style, which I, who can never wish to see dependency multiplied, hope the spirit of English liberty will hinder or destroy” (Johnson 1755: sig. C2r). Baugh & Cable (2002: 269), who also give this quotation, argue that this attitude was prevalent in England at the time. So despite their respective differences, Johnson and Priestley used the same political argument in opposing the idea of an English language academy in Britain, as shown in the Preface of his Rudiments of English Grammar, where Priestley says: “[a]s to a publick Academy, invested with authority to ascertain the use of words, which is a project that some persons are very sanguine in their expectations from, I think it [...] unsuitable to the genius of a free nation” (Priestley 1761a: vii).

Barrell (1983) gives the absence of remarks on pronunciation in Priestley’s work as evidence of this political sensitivity with regard to what would ultimately amount to state-enforced language standardisation:

Joseph Priestley, who is rather self-consciously if rather warily democratic in his attitudes to language practice, has nothing to say in his Rudiments of English Grammar about pronunciation, a topic usually found in eighteenth-century grammars: a silence perhaps attributable to the fact that he feels unable either to recommend the dialect of the most powerful as more correct than any other, or to recommend the preservation of local language customs which, in asserting the freedom of their users, would also assert their servitude (Barrell 1983: 138–139).

Priestley’s solution to the problem of the existence of those varieties of English which could not be counted among the “best forms of speech” is that instead of state control through a language academy, English needs to be used more by those that speak it so that these forms can “establish themselves by their own superior excellence” (Priestley 1761a: vii). In that way English will more quick-
ly evolve itself toward a state of (written) perfection. And the way to wider use of the native language is greater schooling, which Priestley repeatedly pleads for in the preface to the first edition of his grammar:

The propriety of introducing the English grammar into English schools, cannot be disputed (Priestley 1761a: viii).

[We] must introduce into our schools English grammar, English composition, and frequent English translations from authors in other languages (Priestley 1761a: ix).

According to Priestley, it is exactly this kind of schooling in English that is deficient in England in the eighteenth century. He complains that "though the Grammar-school be on all accounts the most proper place for learning [English], how many Grammar-schools have we, and of no small reputation, which are destitute of all provision for the regular teaching it?" (Priestley 1761a: viii).

It is this deficiency that Priestley intends to address with the publication of his Rudiments of English Grammar. It is true that there was, as Porter (1991) notes, no real school system in England initiated or sponsored by the state at the time:

The trade in cheap improving works [...] expanded beyond recognition [...] It was easier than ever to be a successful autodidact than ever before. But people didn't need to be, for the century also saw a huge expansion in school places. This was no thanks to central or local government, which recognized little brief for teaching (Porter 1991: 160).

Borsay (2002) mentions that instead of government instituted education, there was an uncoordinated multitude of private or quasi-institutionalised initiatives, designed for the education of the lower and middle classes:

Throughout Britain the early eighteenth century saw a move to establish charity schools, but the deliberately limited level of attainment they aimed for, their obvious emphasis on social management rather than education, and declining financial support, restricted their impact [...] In Britain as a whole the key to popular and lower middle class literacy was probably a mixture of the commercial sector – comprising of thousands of small schools, such as the adventure and hedge schools in Scotland and Ireland, and the plethora of petty 'academies' advertised in the English urban press – and a strategy of self-help nurtured in chapels, clubs, and pubs (Borsay 2002: 195).

It was not until the last quarter of the nineteenth century that compulsory, state
enforced elementary school education of English became a fact (see Watts 2008: 49). The advice Priestley gave to his friend Caleb Rotheram also is an example of the importance he placed on the wider use of the English language, and how to achieve this by teaching English:

Making the scholars compose dialogues, themes &c. &c. and correcting their bad English [and making occasional remarks] I always found of most real use. Let them write fair copies of the English of many [of their lessons] 2, and omit no opportunity of making them write in their own language. This you will find pleasant to yourself, and of prodigious service to your pupils [letter to Caleb Rotheram, 18 May 1766].12

Priestley's educational suggestions must have paid off, since by 1784 Rotheram was head of the Dissenting Academy at the town of Kendal in Westmoreland (Porter 1991: 199).

It is curious to see that the emphasis on English is only present in Priestley's works on the English language, but not in his works on education. In Priestley's Essay on a Course of Liberal Education for Civil and Active Life (Priestley 1768c) and his Miscellaneous Observations Relating to Education (Priestley 1778), the word "English" is not once mentioned within a context of the need for language education in and of the vernacular.

5.5.2. The role of the grammarian

The task of the grammarian was often described as "ascertaining" and "fixing" the language (Swift 1712: 31), part of what Milroy & Milroy (1999: 22–23) call the codification stage of language standardisation (see also chapter 1). For Modern English, this took place in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. However, it appears that Priestley initially considered the English language to be fixed already, stating that "[t]he English language, in particular, cannot be said to have been fixed till about the reign of queen Ann" (1762: 179). The reign of Queen Anne (1665–1714) lasted from 1702 until her death in 1714 and so in Priestley's time the English language would have been fixed. However,

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12 As my copy of the manuscript of this letter was partly illegible, I am grateful to Simon Mills for providing me with his transcription. The passage quoted here was pieced together from his transcription as well as my own.
even though he does not say so explicitly, Priestley is here primarily concerned with the incorporation of vocabulary from foreign languages into English, by which the English language was attaining “to its maturity” in Priestley’s words (Priestley 1761a: 60). Considering the following statement in the second edition of the *Rudiments of English Grammar*, it is evident that Priestley did not consider all aspects of the English language as fixed: “our grammarians appear to me to [...] suppose the language actually fixed already, contrary to the real state of it” (Priestley 1768a: xvi). Priestley acknowledges that languages change when they are used, but in this acknowledgement he also finds a role for the language scholar. It seems that he initially felt that grammarians could take an active role in this maturation process of the English language.

This notion of an active grammarian has a parallel in Priestley’s ideas on the obligations of citizens, grounded in what Fruchtman (1973) calls Priestley’s republican millennialism:

These two Dissenters [Price and Priestley] held that the citizen, as God’s human agent, was responsible for creating the proper earthly conditions which were prerequisites for the millennium [...] The citizen’s special obligation was, then, to open political society to those conditions conducive to free inquiry and expression and intellectual exchange (1973: 31).

In a philosophy of language these “citizens”, who should not be confused with “the people” (see Fruchtman 1983: 32), are the grammarians. They should provide the right conditions for an open debate on language and grammar, as well as set the right examples to the people for its improvement. Incidentally, this also provides arguments for why Priestley would be in favour of a debate amongst grammarians, which is the topic of the next section. It is also an argument for why Priestley could be considered a prescriptivist.

In his *Course of Lectures on the Theory of Language and Universal Grammar*, Priestley appears to be an advocate of grammarians taking an active role in order to insure the improvement of language:

Languages, like all other arts which owe their cultivation [...] to men, which subsist by the use of them, and are daily subject to human caprice, cannot be expected to continue long in the same state [...] [T]hey have a kind of regular growth, improvement, and declension [...] No internal constitution can preserve
them either from the general revolutions, or the particular accidents (Priestley 1762: 168–169).

I should note here, though, that Priestley does not make it explicitly clear who is supposed to be responsible for this "cultivation". It could be grammarians or lay-people, or both. The last option, cultivation by lay people under the guidance of grammarians, seems to fit best with his philosophy of language. However, finding a place for the involvement of grammarians in the course of language change does not necessarily mean that he is unambiguously an advocate of prescriptivism. This is evident from the following passage:

While [...] their opinions are left to recommend themselves by their own weight, they do a very important service to a language: but when their decisions have the sanction of any authority, and forms of speech are adopted because recommended by them, and not on account of the reasons that might be alleged in their favour, since all men, and all bodies of men, are fallible, the interposition of their authority is in danger of contributing to establish phrases and constructions, which the more mature judgment of after ages would seem reason to correct: and though the spirit of men will assert their liberty, in rejecting what they do not approve, such undue influence may keep a language much longer in an imperfect state than it otherwise would have been (Priestley 1762: 180–181).

According to Priestley, prescriptivism had to be viewed with caution, lest it become dictatorial, and inhibit the natural progress of language.

Being the perennial teacher he was, Priestley saw the role of the grammarian as a guide to and through language, much like the natural philosopher was a guide to and through nature: “[a]ll the real service that any men, or bodies of men, can do to a language, is to analyze it into its parts, to show distinctly what are the materials and composition of it, and thereby make the whole structure of it perfectly understood (Priestley 1762: 181–182). This idea of the grammarian as a guide is already present in the first edition of the Rudiments of English Grammar, where on two consecutive pages of the preface, Priestley uses the word "exhibit" both times in relation to the intention of the grammar, which implies that his task as a grammarian is to act as a guide or teacher. It can be observed that this attitude has both descriptive and prescriptive elements.

The following performance is intended to exhibit, A view of the genuine and established principles of the English language (Priestley 1761a: iii).
[W]hat is here drawn up is intended to exhibit only the present state of our language (Priestley 1761a: iv).

In later works, Priestley displays more explicit scepticism on the role of the grammarian in a normative climate. A comment from the preface of the second edition of the *Rudiments of English Grammar* illustrates his doubts as to gaining an accurate description of the state of the English language from grammarians, or other kinds of language scholars for that matter. He argues that it “is not from the writings of grammarians and critics that we can form a judgement of the real present state of any language, even as it is spoken in polity conversation” (1768a: xii). This passage also clearly shows Priestley’s stance concerning the role of the grammarian in determining what is correct language. It is also illustrated by another, from the preface of the second edition of the *Rudiments of English Grammar*:

[O]ur grammarians appear to me to have acted prematurely in this business, and to have taken a wrong method of fixing our language. This will never be effected by the arbitrary rules of any man, or body of men whatever (1768a: xvi).

This naturally raises the question of what Priestley’s own point of view on this matter was. He is actually quite clear about his own pronouncements on the correctness of some feature of the language. He says that “[w]henever I have mentioned any variety in the grammatical forms that are used to express the same thing, I have seldom scrupled to say which of them I prefer; but this is to be understood as nothing more than a conjecture, which time must confirm or refute” (Priestley 1768a: xvi-xvii). Priestley’s prescriptivism is discussed more fully in chapter 6. It appears that his point of view entails the notion that his prescriptions, and presumably those of other grammarians and critics as well, should be regarded as being temporary and conjectural until “all-governing custom shall declare in favour of the one or the other” (Priestley 1768a: xviii). This remark, however, illustrates that Priestley was working in a tradition of normative grammar, and that he was aware that he was part of the process of codification of the English language.
So did Priestley actually have a method of fixing the language, or did he think the language could not or should not be fixed at all? The following passage regarding the shortcomings of Hume’s usage illustrates Priestley’s opinion of the general concern – even preoccupation – with grammar, and the intense public debate on the topic that followed from it:

We have infinitely greater things before us; and if these gain their due share of our attention, this subject, of grammatical criticism, will be almost nothing. The noise that is made about it, is one of the greatest marks of the frivolism of a great many readers, and writers too of the present age (Priestley 1768a: xlii-xiv).

Being a man in the pursuit of truth, Priestley must consequently have grudgingly counted himself among those occupying themselves with this “frivolism”.

5.5.3. A debate among grammarians?

In ‘Grammar Writers in Eighteenth-century Britain’, Watts (2008) suggests that the grammarians of the late eighteenth century constituted an imagined community that concerned itself with the issue of language standardisation and codification. He argues, as he did in Watts (1999), that this community has the characteristics of a discourse community:

A discourse community implies a community that of common interests, goals and beliefs rather than a community of individuals. Those common interests, goals and beliefs are revealed by oral and written discourse (in our case, of course, written rather than oral), which will construct and reproduce the discourse. Those practices can be observed firsthand in the grammars (Watts 2008: 52).

So to what extent was Priestley part of this discourse community? At first glance, it seems that he explicitly invited others to become involved in the public debate on English and grammar in the preface to the second edition of the Rudiments of English Grammar, requesting that the “candid critic will, I hope, excuse, and point out to me, any mistakes he may think I have fallen into in this performance” (1768a: xxii). This remark appears to make him an active member of this discourse community of eighteenth-century grammar writers. Indeed, it could be seen as an open invitation to form a community of practice, as suggested by Tieken-Boon van Ostade (2011: 280). Priestley was definitely
open to the idea of a shared repertoire and a joint enterprise required for such a community, as is evident from the following:

I must [...] acknowledge my obligations to Dr. Lowth [...]. I have taken a few of his examples [...] to make my own more complete. He, or any other person, is welcome to make the same use of those which I have collected. It is from an amicable union of labours, together with a generous emulation in all the friends of science, that we may most reasonably expect the extension of all kinds of knowledge (Priestley 1768: xxiii).

However, it also appears that Priestley did not actually take much part in the discourse community of the eighteenth-century grammarians. In his biography of Priestley, Schofield suggests that the grammar debate did not have a high priority for Priestley, who was at that time primarily engaged in studies of natural and political philosophy: "Priestley did not take part in the acrimonious debates between avowed grammarians (e.g. James Harris, Horne Tooke, James Pickbourne) during the latter part of the eighteenth century, perhaps because he had gone on to very different problems" (Schofield 1997: 99). Schofield's argument is given as pertaining to the "latter part of the eighteenth century", but I think, as I have also argued in chapter 2, that this was already true from the time after the publication of the second edition of the Rudiments of English Grammar in 1768. There are, for instance, no public letters by Priestley on the topic of grammar, or polemics involving him it.

Priestley's involvement in the discourse community of late eighteenth-century grammarians was marginal, which is also illustrated in the absence of grammar as a topic in Priestley's private correspondence. In the nearly 800 private letters of Priestley that I have consulted, only two are addressed to other grammarians, of which only a single one actually deals with grammar. That particular letter was dated 5 June 1769 and addressed to the grammarian William Ward (1708/9–1772), the author of An Essay on Grammar (Ward 1765) and A Grammar of the English Language (Ward 1767). It seems that Ward had presented Priestley a copy of one of his books. In the accompanying letter he referred, I assume, to Priestley's section 'Notes and Observations' in the 1768 edition of the Rudiments. Since Priestley's reply to this letter is the
only one of its kind and not very long, I will reproduce the full letter from Rutt’s edition of Priestley’s correspondence.

Sir,
I think myself honoured by the favourable mention you make of my Observations on English Grammar, and I am much obliged to you for the very agreeable present of your own performance on the same subject. I was in hopes that I should have been able to have perused your work before I wrote to you, and this expectation has been the reason of my not having acknowledged my obligation sooner; but a great variety of engagements have put it out of my power; so that I can only say, that from what I have seen of it, I think it elaborate and useful, and expect to find it much of service to me in the work I have promised to the public, on the subject of “The Theory of Language and Universal Grammar.” At present I am engaged a good deal in philosophical studies, which will for some time prevent my giving much attention to it.

I think, with you, that it is the duty of every literate Englishman to promote a thorough knowledge of the language in which he writes, and I very much admire your laudable zeal in this cause. I am really apprehensive that the genuine idiom of the English tongue is in danger of suffering by admired Scotch writers; and though I have been blamed for giving examples of them, I think I have given a satisfactory answer to the objection in the preface to the new and corrected edition of my Grammar. Near as we are, I should think myself happy in our being nearer, that I might have frequent opportunities of conferring with you upon this subject (Rutt 1831: 100–101).

It should be noted that Priestley’s comments in this letter have more to do with correctness and normativism – regarding an English, rather than a British norm for the English language – than with the actual grammar of the language. I have found no other letters to Ward in Priestley’s correspondence, nor any reference to such letters. Therefore, it seems that notwithstanding the niceties at the end of the letter, and although he had decided opinions on the subject, Priestley may have been unwilling to enter into a debate regarding the corruptions of English by Scottish writers beyond what he had said in the preface to his grammar. The letter also confirms Schofield’s remarks that Priestley’s priorities at the time lay with his scientific pursuits, his “philosophical studies”, rather than with grammar. Curiously enough, this same letter displays several of the characteristics that Watts, following Swales (1990), uses to define a discourse community (Watts 2008: 41). I will reproduce them here, with the corresponding passage from the above letter.

1. A discourse community has “a broadly agreed set of common public goals”: 
I think, with you, that it is the duty of every literate Englishman to promote a thorough knowledge of the language in which he writes.

2. A discourse community has "mechanism of communication between its members":

I think myself honoured by the favourable mention you make of my Observations on English Grammar, and I am much obliged to you for the very agreeable present of your own performance on the same subject.

I should think myself happy in our being nearer, that I might have frequent opportunities of conferring with you upon this subject.

3. A discourse community "uses its participatory mechanisms primarily to provide information and feedback":

It seems in the end, therefore, impossible to categorically deny or confirm Priestley's involvement in the discourse community of the eighteenth-century British grammarians. What we can say with certainty is that Priestley was aware of the general enterprise of codification and the climate of normativism in eighteenth-century England.

The only other grammarians that Priestley is known to have corresponded with are William Cobbett and Noah Webster. But in a turn of historical irony virtually all correspondence Priestley had with other grammarians did not concern grammar at all. In this light it is perhaps not remarkable that his references to other grammarians of the time are not about grammar either. For instance, there is reference to a Lowth in a letter to Thomas Belsham of 1803 regarding Priestley's plan to publish a compilation of all the best new translations of the books of the bible:

I want Newcome, Heath, and Horseley, and some late one of Solomon's song I forget the name. Geddes I shall frequently alter. I prefer Lowth to Dodson, but where I think the latter preferable, shall use it (letter to Thomas Belsham, 28 December 1803).

It may be that Priestley prefers Lowth's translation of Isaiah (Lowth 1778) to a later one by Michael Dodson (1732–1799) published in 1790. "Lowth" could
also refer to a work by William Lowth (1660-1732) on the prophets of the bible (Lowth 1714). The former is more likely, however, since the title page of Dodson’s translation explicitly refers to Robert Lowth’s earlier one.

5.6. Summary and discussion

In this chapter I have shown that the histories of English linguistics initially saw Priestley mainly as being of interest in the prescriptivism versus descriptivism debate. However, in recent years his position in the history of linguistics has been examined more critically and with more nuance. For Priestley, language was primarily an instrument for communication. I have also shown that Priestley’s ideas on the use of grammar books in teaching grammar, or teaching grammatical English to be more precise, evolved from an initially youthful optimism, through doubt and scepticism, to a more mature judgement of the usefulness of teaching grammar.

Priestley’s necessitarian and millenialist philosophies inform much of his thinking on the various topics with which he occupied himself. Therefore, they also should be understood in order to reconstruct his philosophy of language. Priestley believed that humanity and all its endeavours would naturally, and necessarily, work itself towards a perfect state of things. For language, this meant the attainment of a philosophical language of perfect intelligibility that would be universally understood. English as a single instance of a language, could not attain such perfection, but this was also not required as it would become as perfect as it could be, which would be sufficient.

Priestley’s ideas about an English language academy were always quite unambiguous. In fact, in the histories of the English language, it is usually he who is given as an example of those grammarians and critics who were against the establishment of such an institution. Just as he found the idea of a language academy to be unduly authoritarian, Priestley sees the role of the grammarian as someone who shows correct usage, rather than prescribes it. Of course, it is not always so easy to distinguish between the two. It is difficult to determine whether Priestley actually took a very active part in the late eighteenth-century
debate over grammar: some of his words and actions seem to indicate that he did, while others suggest that he did not.

There is an inherent risk involved in judging any writer's attitude on any topic, solely from his oeuvre of relevant works as if it were a static whole. It stands to reason that Priestley's ideas on the language and grammar changed and evolved during the time that he was to a greater or lesser extent actively engaged in the composition of grammatical works. Fortunately, his works on language and grammar were all composed within a relatively short space of time: before, during and after Priestley's six-year appointment as tutor of languages and belles-lettres at the Dissenting Academy at Warrington. The Course of Lectures on Oratory and Criticism, though composed in the early seventeen-sixties, was not published until 1777. There is no evidence that it had appeared in print before that time, like the Course of Lectures on the Theory of Language and Universal Grammar, but despite the fact that there is no ground for comparison, it is likely that his Course of Lectures on Oratory and Criticism had undergone some form of revision before publication. But even in a case like this, where the works in question were produced in a relatively short space of time, even if seen relative to the lifespan of their author, we can see an evolution in some parts of Priestley's philosophy of grammar and language. Although Priestley's various works on language had different aims and audiences, they do exhibit similar elements of an overall philosophy of language and grammar. Based on the findings shown in this chapter, the more specific issues of prescriptivism and descriptivism can be discussed in the following chapters.
6. The Norm of Correctness

6.1. Introduction
One of the main aims of this study has been to uncover the explicit and implicit norms for correctness in Priestley’s *Rudiments of English Grammar*, and how he arrived at these norms. This is the main investigation of this chapter. First, I will deal with his qualifications as a language commentator or language expert, or as suggested in the previous chapter, a proto-linguist (section 6.2). Then I will investigate his linguistic metalanguage (section 6.3) and identify the possible sources for Priestley’s norm of correctness from a socio-historical point of view (section 6.4). After that, I will look more closely at the form that his normativism took, by identifying the prescriptive and prescriptive comments in the 1761 and 1768 editions of the *Rudiments of English Grammar* and analysing the linguistic metalanguage Priestley used for these normative comments (section 6.5). Lastly, I will identify the descriptive elements in his grammar (6.6) and finish with a brief summary and a discussion of the results of the investigations in this chapter (section 6.7).

6.2. Joseph Priestley, proto-linguist?
In the discussion of his linguistic philosophy in the previous chapter, I already referred to Priestley as a proto-linguist, but what does that mean exactly? Who is a linguist in a time in which there is no linguistics? In chapter 4, I argued that Priestley’s grammars and linguistic ideas may have had considerable influence, and in chapter 5, I have shown what these ideas were and where they came from. Before I start the discussion about Priestley’s norm of correctness, I should bring forward an argument that was only implied in those two chapters and investigate Priestley’s qualifications as a grammarian.

What term do we use to accurately describe those people who are usually only loosely labelled as ‘the eighteenth-century grammarians’? To answer this
question, I will first look at two terms that have been used in discussions about the eighteenth-century grammarians: *language commentators* and *language experts*. After that, I will show that Priestley exhibits a level of linguistic awareness in his grammar that we associate with modern linguists.

### 6.2.1. Language commentators, language experts

In the introduction to *The Development of Standard English, 1300-1800* (2000), Wright implicitly equates language commentators in the eighteenth century with prescriptive grammarians:

> The eighteenth-century language commentators tended to prohibit things (like multiple negation) that had long been absent from the emergent standard anyway. Prescriptivism tends to follow, rather than precede, standardisation, so that by the time a grammarian tells us what we should be doing, we have already been doing it (in certain contexts) for centuries (Wright 2000: 3).

Jones (2006) uses the same term in a somewhat broader sense in the opening chapter of his *English Pronunciation in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries*. He uses "language commentators" as an umbrella term for just about anyone who wrote on language (Jones 2006: 5–9). This includes grammarians and other scholars of language, as well as critics, all with varying fields of interest and varying degrees of expertise. It is in this broader sense that I will now see how or whether this term applies to Priestley.

Naturally, since Priestley commented on the English language, he is a language commentator in the most literal sense of the term. However, notwithstanding the truth of this, the inclusiveness of the term limits its precision and consequently its usefulness in estimating the level of expertise of individual grammarians. The term language commentator, despite its neutral connotations, has gained too close an association to the term prescriptivist, which makes is less useful than it was intended to be. Consequently, it is now unclear as to what is actually meant by the term language commentator when it is used to refer to those commentators who are not simply prescriptivists, but cannot be called linguists without being anachronistic.
In 'The Eighteenth-Century Grammarians as Language Experts', Chapman (2008) proposes a way in which we need to look at the linguistic expertise of the eighteenth-century English grammarians. He argues that some of the grammarians were to a certain degree indeed language experts living in a non-expert society, and that they can be seen as the precursors of today’s language experts, that is linguists (Chapman 2008: 36). Modern linguists traditionally regard the eighteenth-century grammarians as amateurs and prescriptivists, who were mainly interested in usage. Chapman argues that this evaluation is the result of the application of a wrong set of standards that stems from the perspective of a modern society oriented towards specialisation and expertise. To properly assess the expertise of these grammarians, we have to shift our point of view back from our expert society to the grammarians’ non-expert society. We need to realise the following:

[T]he eighteenth-century grammarians were not language experts, at least not in the way we think of them today […] But that is an indictment of amateurishness only from today’s perspective […] we have to examine instead the qualifications of the grammarians with respect to the standards of the day (Chapman 2008: 22).

According to Chapman, explicit credentials can be used to determine whether a grammarian was a language expert. These credentials are: education, university degrees, position at a university, occupation, publications and membership of professional societies (Chapman 2008: 23). One of the grammarians that is investigated by Chapman is Priestley, whose credentials can be shown to be sufficient to qualify him for language expertise. As Chapman puts it:

Priestley is a grammarian whose reputation was relatively strong in his own day and has increased since. His credentials look good, though less typical since he came from a family of non-conformists (Chapman 2008: 28).

Let us take a closer look at Chapman’s assessment of Priestley’s credentials (Chapman 2008: 28). Regarding the criterion of education, Chapman mentions grammars schools and emphasises the linguistic knowledge gained in preparation for university, stating that “[t]he language expertise of those who were sufficiently educated to enroll in a university would largely have been their
reasonable good command of Latin and perhaps Greek” (Chapman 2008: 23). Priestley’s linguistic knowledge, however, was more extensive than this by the time he had finished his elementary and preparatory education. This is evident from Priestley’s early education, of which Schofield gives an overview in Priestley’s biography in the *ODNB*:

He learned to read and write probably at a local dame-school, but was then sent to Batley grammar school, where he learned Latin and some Greek [...] From 1746 to 1749 he went to a small school kept by John Kirkby [...] where he began his study of Hebrew and (probably from a polyglot Bible) the rudiments of Chaldee, Syriac, and Arabic. When, at sixteen, it was thought he might have to go to Lisbon for his health, he taught himself French and High Dutch (German) for service in a counting house (*ODNB*, s.v. ‘Joseph Priestley’).

Chapman mentions that although a university degree was a credential for the learned professions, the English universities did not have a rigorous curriculum and the degrees offered were not specialised. Degrees offered by Scottish universities, on the other hand, were more substantial (Chapman 2008: 24).

Priestley was unable to matriculate at one of the two English universities since he was a Dissenter, and he may not have been able to afford to be educated in Scotland. Whatever the reason, Priestley received his higher education from the Dissenting Academy at Daventry. At that time, the education provided by the leading dissenting academies in England, such as Daventry and Warrington, was often more than a match for that at the universities, according to Parker:

The Dissenting Academies were not merely institutes of university standing, they were the rivals of the universities. [...] Though at first starting practically even with the grammar schools they outstripped not only these schools in efficiency and influence, but having afterwards adopted university subjects and methods – moved to a higher plane as it were – they soon outstripped the universities also (Parker 1914: 56).

In addition, in 1764, three years after the publication of his *Rudiments of English Grammar* (1761a) and nine years after he had left Daventry Academy, Priestley was awarded a doctorate from Edinburgh University. Although Priestley was awarded the doctorate after he wrote most of his works on language, it nevertheless stands as a testament to his abilities. Priestley did not hold a position as a fellow or professor at a university, but he was engaged as
tutor of languages and belles-lettres at the prestigious academy at Warrington, which, as Parker suggests, would be at least the equivalent. Apart from this formal appointment, Priestley was occupied as a teacher for several extended periods of his professional life. During his final years in England in the early 1790s, he also taught at the dissenting academy at Hackney.

Chapman notes that it is hard to gauge the grammarians’ expertise from their published works, since “[w]ithout peer review, it is difficult to tell whether their notoriety came from the quality of their work or from the success of their sales, but at least some grammarians were more highly regarded or at least more famous than others because of their publications” (Chapman 2008: 26–27). He specifically cites Priestley as one of these notables, in addition to Robert Lowth, Samuel Johnson and James Harris (Chapman 2008: 28). As was shown in chapter 4, Priestley’s work was often compared to that of Lowth, which was not only the most popular grammar, but also the one that was most well-received by the critics. Priestley’s grammar was certainly in the same league critically speaking, if not in terms of sales.

Finally, Priestley was also a member of several scientific societies both in England and abroad. Chapman admits that, just as there were no specialised linguistic journals, there were no societies specifically dedicated to language study either, and so membership of learned societies gives us limited information as to the specific expertise of their members. However, he argues that “[m]embership in these societies tells us little about the language expertise of the fellows, but it does suggest general abilities” (Chapman 2008: 26). In the second volume of his biography of Priestley, Schofield provides an extensive list of English and international societies, besides the Royal Society of London, of which Priestley was a member (2004: 151–152).

In addition to Priestley, Chapman explicitly mentions Robert Lowth, Daniel Penning (1714/5–1767), and Samuel Johnson as examples of the limitations of using explicit credentials to determine a writer’s linguistic expertise. Chapman concludes that, though Lowth and Priestley appear to have stronger credentials
than Fenning and Johnson, the latter’s obvious expertise raises doubts about the validity of the use of explicit credentials alone:

Compared with Fenning, Lowth and Priestley have the strongest credentials, but perhaps Johnson does not. The strongest credential Johnson has is his publications, which is also the strongest credential for Fenning. This comparison suggests that the credentials tell us a little about the expertise of grammarians but not enough. The credentials confirm the reputation of Lowth and probably Priestley, but miss wildly with Johnson [...] In the absence of a more uniform system of credentials, the work of the grammarians becomes more important for evaluating their expertise (Chapman 2008: 28).

Priestley’s work on language, consisting of his school grammar and his lectures, confirms his expertise, as argued in chapter 5.

Chapman adds that another criterion for a grammarian’s expertise should be a critical engagement in the work of his peers (Chapman 2008: 29). He shows that both Lowth and Priestley show a critical awareness of existing works such as James Harris’ Hermes (1751). However, this is also the case for Fenning, who acknowledges Henry Home, Lord Kames (1696–1782) as well as both Lowth and Priestley in his work, but who is nevertheless not considered a language expert. What is also required in order to be critically engaged with the material is a serious effort to advance grammar and language study. This is where Fenning fails and helps to establish Lowth and Priestley as bona-fide language experts, while Fenning is relegated to the title of usage expert (see also Chapman 2008: 29–34). There is therefore no doubt about Priestley’s credentials as a language expert.

It is not surprising that there were no professional linguists in the eighteenth century, and those who wrote on the English language came from very different fields of interest, as noted by Görlach:

A striking feature of 18th-century writers on English is the authors’ biographical diversity. Few lexicographers and grammarians were professionals (including teachers, but no university professors) [...] Lowth and John Wesley were churchmen [...] Priestley was a scientist and a politician [...] Cobbett a ploughboy, soldier and politician, and Benjamin Martin a mathematician, instrument maker and general compiler. And many members of the leisureed classes, including the landed gentry, took a lively interest in the grammar of English and general linguistics (Görlach 2001: 25).
This assessment of Priestley's occupations is interesting as he was not so much a politician,\(^1\) but first and foremost a Dissenting minister, leading congregations at Nantwich, Leeds, Birmingham and Hackney in England, and later in Philadelphia and Northumberland in America. In addition, during his ministries in England, he was usually employed as a teacher to his congregation, which led him to write a school grammar in the first place. In a sense, being a grammarian as well as a teacher, Priestley can be called a professional.

As I have already noted in chapter 2, Swiggers was probably right when he argued that Priestley was not "a scholar specifically interested in language study" (Swiggers 1994: 37f), but this does not mean that he did not have any expertise on the subject. Priestley, being literally a 'language commentator', as well as a language expert along the lines of Chapman's criteria, can be seen as a precursor to both notions of the usage expert and the language expert. Of course, this more general expertise is precisely what it meant to be a grammarian in a non-specialised society such as eighteenth-century England.

6.2.2. Priestley's linguistic awareness

Swiggers's (1994) study is in a way a discussion of Priestley as a proto-linguist, based on his *Course of Lectures on the Theory of Language and Universal Grammar* (1762). What I will do in this section is analyse Priestley's *Rudiments of English Grammar* (1761a, 1768a) to the same purpose. In this section I will give some examples of Priestley's linguistic awareness that have equivalences in, or that we associate with modern linguistics.

As an example of this, we may consider Priestley's awareness of the existence of regional variation, and its connection to linguistic change, which is apparent from several remarks in his grammars. Even though he was a Yorkshireman himself, Priestley does not make much use of the knowledge of this dialect that he must have had. He refers to Yorkshire features only twice in his grammar, shown in the following:

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\(^1\) Having read most of Priestley's letters on various subject, including politics, in which he usually claimed not to take part, I suspect that he would have been amused at being called a politician.
It is indifferent, in some cases, whether we use a word in the singular, or in the plural number [...] They went their ways. Matthew. We should now say, went their way; but in the Yorkshire dialect, it is still, went their ways (Priestley 1768a: 66).

It is remarkable that we have one single instance of a proper imperative mood, in the first person plural; but I believe it is not known except in the Yorkshire dialect. It is gâ, which signifies let us go (Priestley 1768a: 110).

He makes a distinction between English and Scottish, as for example in the following passage in his discussion of the construction behoved to be, as quoted below:

But as this signal revolution in the criminal law behoved to be galling to individuals, unaccustomed to restrain their passions, all measures were taken to make the yoke easy. Law Tracts, vol. 1. p. 96. that is, were necessarily galling, or could not but be galling. I think this construction, which is by no means English, is peculiar to Scotland (Priestley 1768a: 111).

Although Priestley worried about the influence of Scottish, as evident from this letter to William Ward quoted in chapter 5, these kinds of remarks regarding Scottish English are usually not taken any further.

It seems that Priestley did not regard regional variation as a particularly interesting topic to discuss, at least not within the context of a school grammar. He made only a single passing reference to the connection between historical and regional variation:

Formerly the d, which terminates participles preterite, was often dropped, when the verb ended in e. They are confederate against thee. Psalms. This form of the participle is still common among the Scots. They engaged the bishops to pronounce Gaviston excommunicate, if he remained any longer in the kingdom. Hume’s History, vol. 2. p. 341. The word situate is often used, and especially by lawyers, for situated. Milton sometimes uses this form, as elevate for elevated (Priestley 1768a: 123).

He furthermore discusses the gradual incorporation of foreign loanwords and their slow grammaticalization in the section 'Notes and Observations' of the second edition of his grammar:

Words derived from foreign languages often retain their original plural terminations; as, Cherubim, phænomena, radii, beaux. But when foreign words are completely incorporated into our language, they take English plurals, as epitomes. Addison. When words of foreign extraction are, as it were, half incorporated into the language, they sometimes retain their native plurals, and
sometimes acquire those of the English. Thus some persons write criterions, others criteria (Priestley 1768a: 58).

Semantic divergence of words of foreign origin, leading to doublets of meaning, is also noted by Priestley in the same edition of his grammar:

Some foreign words both retain their native plurals, and acquire the English, but they are used in different senses. This is the case with the word index. We say indexes of books, and indices of algebraic quantities (Priestley 1768a: 58).

Another example of semantic divergence is the creation of doublets in nouns, where the meaning of one is literal and the meaning of the other figurative. Priestley describes these as follows:

When there are two derivatives from the same word, they are apt to slide, by degrees, into different meanings; a custom which tends greatly to enrich a language. Thus we use the word adhesion in a literal sense; as when we speak of the adhesion of the lungs to the pleura; and we use the word adherence in a figurative sense only; as when we speak of the adherence of a people to their prince, or to a cause. We also use the word exposure in a literal sense, and exposition in a figurative one (Priestley 1768a: 144).

He seems also to have been aware that a similar form of divergence was present in words that were not loans from Latin or French, but native English ones. An example of this is the existence of multiple plural forms of nouns, such as brothers and brethren:

In some cases we find two plurals in use. The word brother is an example of this; for we both say brothers, and brethren; but the former is used of natural relations, and the other in a figurative sense; as men and brethren. The word die, which makes dice when it relates to gaming, makes dies, in the plural number, when it relates to rain (Priestley 1768a: 65).

The existence of doublets in comparatives, which sometimes extends to the superlative form, is another example Priestley gives of this phenomenon, as in the following two passages, where he discusses what he considers to be the comparatives of late and old, respectively:

Sometimes the comparative of late is written latter, as well as later, and, I think, we use those two comparatives in different senses. The latter of two, I fancy, refers either to place or time, whereas later respects time only (Priestley 1768a: 75).

The adjective old is compared two ways. We both say older, and oldest; and likewise, elder, and eldest; but use seems to have assigned to them different
acceptations; for older, and eldest seem to refer to priority of rank or privilege, in consequence of age; whereas older and oldest, respect the number of years only (Priestley 1768a: 76).

Priestley’s use of the phrase “I fancy” in the first passage suggests that this should not be seen as a rule but as nothing more than his own interpretation of the difference in usage of these two words. He also notes a kind of divergence in strong verbs, where there is an alternative weak inflection that carries a different, specific meaning. He illustrates this specialisation with the verb to hang in the following passage:

Different participles of the same verb are sometimes used in different senses. Thus we say, a man is hanged; but, the coat is hung up (Priestley 1768a: 125).

In addition, Priestley noticed that in some instances semantic divergence was still in progress, and that the very existence of the variants in the language was indication of this change in progress:

We say, expert at, and expert in a thing [...] We say, disapproved of, and disapproved by a person. [...] It is no improbable, but that, in time, these different constructions may be appropriated to different uses (Priestley 1768a: 155).

Some of our participles seem to have been more irregular formerly than they are now; as, besides the example abovementioned, Spencer writes shrift for shrieked (Priestley 1768a: 123).

This is the same thing as the modern notion of the existence of such variants as an indication of a possible change in progress in sociolinguistics. We thus see that Priestley shows his linguistic awareness across a range of features, but particularly with regard to variation in usage.

6.2.3. Priestley’s limitations as a proto-linguist

On occasion, Priestley betray the limitations of his knowledge of the English language, as for instance in the following passage from his discussion of prepositions in the ‘Notes and Observations’ of the Rudiments of English Grammar:

Sometimes a is put for in. But the Bassa detains us till he receives orders form Adrianople, which may probably be a month a coming. Lady Montague’s Letters, vol. 1. p. 147. i.e. in coming (Priestley 1768a: 169).

Priestley seems to confuse a with the wrong preposition, since it is now
generally considered a weakened form of *on* when used with a present participle (see Rissanen 1999: 217). This was not unusual, however, as other grammarians had made the same mistake (Sundby et al. 1991: 91). For both editions of his grammar, Priestley used John Ward's *Four Essays Upon the English Language* (1758) as a source for a list of irregular (and strong) verbs. Apparently, he did not consider the contraction of *-ed* forms into *-t* to be irregular. At the end of this extract, he makes a normative comment on the use of these contractions, saying that “this contraction is not admitted in solemn language, except in verbs which end in *l*, *ll*, or *p*; as creep, crept, feel, felt, dwell, dwelt” (Priestley 1768a: 53). These exceptions related in fact to those verbs that we now call strong verbs.

### 6.3. Priestley’s linguistic metalanguage

The specific vocabulary used in the metalanguage, and the way in which these words are grouped, are illustrative of the implied norms in his grammar. In this section, I will investigate the metalanguage used in Priestley’s *Rudiments of English Grammar*, in order to uncover these norms. One of the things that is often referred to in discussions of Priestley’s norms is his adherence to the force of custom, with which I will start. After that, I will continue with a description of the norms of correctness inherent in Priestley’s metalanguage when he refers to spoken and written language, and to different styles.

#### 6.3.1. The force of custom

Priestley’s awareness of and insistence on the force of custom is the aspect of his grammar that is probably most commented on by scholars with in discussions of eighteenth-century grammars. It is also the basis for his reputation as a descriptivist. One of the senses of *custom* is that of “[a]n established usage which by long continuance has acquired the force of law” (*OED*, s.v. ‘custom’). It is this sense, which Johnson also gives in his *Dictionary* (1755 Vol1, s.v. ‘custom’) that seems to be the one Priestley uses. So what does Priestley mean by the word *custom* as linguistic metalanguage when it comes to specific
features in English? To investigate this, I digitised the first and second editions of Priestley's *Rudiments of English Grammar* (1761a, 1768a) and searched them for the word *custom* using WordSmith 5.0 (Scott 2008a). This yielded fairly specific collocations, which are summarised in Table 6.3.1. A similar search for the word *usage* returned no hits.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>collocation</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>custom authorizes it</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>custom hath [...] appropriated</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>custom has so formed our ears</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>custom has made the examples [...] easy</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>custom has not decided</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>custom obliges us</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.3.1. Collocations of the word *custom* in Priestley’s *Rudiments of English Grammar* (1761, 1768).

It is striking that all the instances in Table 6.3.1 come from the 1768 edition of the *Rudiments of English Grammar*. This suggests that the appeal to the force of custom in Priestley’s grammar does not really start until the publication of the second edition.

What these collocates share is that *custom* is not represented as an inanimate or abstract thing, but that it has an agency in some sense. This is indicated by Priestley’s use of active verbs collocating with *custom* as the subject, even though these verbs normally take animate subjects. In some passages, we find a personification of the notion of *custom* as something which can make decisions in matters of grammaticality, correctness or usage. The collocations of *custom* with the verbs *appropriate* and *decide* are examples of this. The agency and personification of *custom* seems to be an indication of the idea that custom can operate independently and with a considerable degree of authority. Like a grammarian, custom can even prescribe usage, as in the collocation with the verb *oblige*. We thus see that in Priestley’s grammar, *custom* indeed has a force that needs to be reckoned with.
6.3.2. Speech and writing

Priestley’s grammar also shows that there are different norms for speech and writing. In the section ‘Observations on Style’ in the 1761 edition of his grammar, Priestley starts out with a general statement to this effect: “as writing is a permanent thing, it is requisite that written forms of speech have a greater degree of precision and perspicuity than is necessary in colloquial forms, or such as very well answer the purpose of common conversation” (1761a: 45). He adds the following footnote, in which he states the matter even more strongly: “[t]he ease of conversation seems, in some cases, to require a relaxation of the severer laws of Grammar [...]. For instance, who, in common conversation, would scruple to say, "who is this for;" [...] rather than, whom is this for” (1761a: 45f–46f).

We can expect that these different norms are exemplified by different sets of collocations with words such as conversation, speech and writing. In order to determine how Priestley uses these terms and precisely what he means by them, I have searched the 1761 and 1768 editions of the Rudiments of English Grammar for these three words. The collocations that these terms form are summarised in Table 6.3.2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>search term</th>
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<tr>
<td>conversation</td>
<td>common (4), polite (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>speech</td>
<td>familiar (2), colloquial (2), written (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>writing</td>
<td>(6), familiar (2)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.3.2. Collocations of the words conversation, speech and writing in the meta-language of Priestley’s Rudiments of English Grammar (1761, 1768).

An example of an uncollocated occurrence of conversation is given below, where we see that it does not collocate with an evaluative term such as common, familiar or polite:

(1) The preposition with is also sometimes used in conversation, to express a degree of quality something less than the greatest; as, They are with the widest (Priestley 1768a: 76).
The words *conversation* and *writing* usually appear by themselves, without any specific collocation, which suggests that these concepts were clear and straightforward, as indeed they are now. The clusters that they form also show fairly clearly that writing and speech were perceived as separate modes, with separate sets of values attached to them. The words that refer to spoken language, *conversation* and *speech*, are mostly associated with words *colloquial*, *common* and *familiar*. See for instance examples (2) to (5):

(2) We also use of instead of *on or upon*, in the following familiar phrases, which occur chiefly in *conversation*: *to call of a person*, and *to wait of him* (Priestley 1768a: 159–160).

(3) In some very familiar forms of *speech*, the active seems to be put for the passive form of verbs and participles [...] *The books continue selling, i.e. upon the sale, or to be sold* (Priestley 1768a: 111).

(4) [T]his harsh termination *est* is generally quite dropped in common conversation (Priestley 1768: 115).

(5) [I]t is requisite that written forms of speech have a greater degree of precision and perspicuity than is necessary in colloquial forms, or such as very well answer the purpose of common conversation (Priestley 1761: 45).

What these collocations show is that according to Priestley, the norms of grammar are dependent on the mode of language, i.e. whether it is speech or writing. It is not that writing is necessarily related to formal language, but that speech is related to informal or colloquial language.

This division between spoken and written language is also found in Priestley's *Lectures on Oratory and Criticism* (Priestley 1777a). In this text, the word *conversation* collocates primarily with the word *common* as well.

### 6.3.3. Style

Priestley was acutely aware of the fact that what we now call style was an important factor in determining grammaticality, acceptability or correctness of utterances. In sociolinguistics, style is defined as follows:

[A] variety of language, which is associated with social context and which differs from other styles in terms of their formality. Styles can thus be ranged on a continuum from very formal to highly informal or colloquial (Trudgill 2003: 129).
I have searched the 1761 and 1768 editions of Priestley’s *Rudiments of English Grammar* for the words *colloquial*, *grave*, *familiar*, *formal*, *polite*, *solemn*, *solemnity* and *style* in order to find out how Priestley uses these terms and what he means by them. I have chosen these words because they either surfaced in the analysis regarding *speech*, *conversation* and *writing* in 6.3.2 as being part of Priestley’s metalanguage, such as *common*, *polite* and *familiar*, or because they were synonyms or antonyms of these words, such as *colloquial*, *formal*, *grave* and *solemn*. In addition, all these words are used to describe different styles. The inclusion of the word *style* was an obvious choice since it is what this section deals with. We cannot assume that the words Priestley uses in his linguistic metalanguage had exactly the same meaning as they do today, so it is useful to find out what their definitions were. I have taken their definitions from Johnson’s *Dictionary* (1755), in which *colloquial* is not given a separate entry, so the definition of the noun *colloquy* from which it is derived is used instead:

**Colloquy** [...] Conference; conversation; alternate discourse; talk.

**Common** [...] 3. Vulgar; mean; not distinguished by any excellence [...] 6. Frequent; usual; ordinary.

**Familiar** [...] 2. Affable; not formal; easy in conversation. [...] 4. Well known; brought into knowledge by frequent practice or custom. [...] 5. Well acquainted with; accustomed; habituated by custom. [...] 6. Common; frequent. 7. Easy; unconstrained.

**Formal** [...] 1. Ceremonious; solemn; precise; exact to affectation [...] 2. Done according to established rules and methods; not irregular; not sudden; not extemporaneous. [...] 3. Regular; methodical. [...] 5. Depending upon establishment or custom.

**Grave** [...] 1. Solemn; serious; sober; not gay; not light or trifling. [...] 3. Not showy; not tawdry; as, a *grave suit of clothes*.

**Polite** [...] 2. Elegant of manners.

**Solemn** [...] 3. Awful; striking with seriousness. [...] 4. Grave; affectedly serious.

**Solemnity** [...] 5. Gravity; steady seriousness. [...] 6. Awful grandeur; grave stateliness; sober dignity.
STYLE [...]. 1. Manner of writing with regard to language. [...] 2. Manner of speaking appropriate to particular characters.

Only the definition of the word style explicitly refers to its relation to language, but the other words also had their connections to language. For instance, as argued in chapter 1, politeness had a close relationship to language, and because of this, so did terms related to polite, like common and familiar. The collocations of these terms are summarised in Table 6.3.3.

<table>
<thead>
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<td>common</td>
<td>conversation (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>familiar</td>
<td>form(s) (5), style (5), phrase(s) (5), speech (3), very (3), expression(s) (2), become (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>formal</td>
<td>style (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>grave(st)</td>
<td>style (3)</td>
</tr>
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<td>polite</td>
<td>conversation (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>solemn</td>
<td>style (3)</td>
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<tr>
<td>solemnity</td>
<td>peculiar (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>style</td>
<td>familiar (5), formal (2), grave(st) (3), solemnity (3)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.3.3. Collocations in the stylistic metalanguage in Priestley’s *Rudiments of English Grammar* (1761, 1768).

Priestley uses colloquial in a similar way as he uses the word familiar, as in the following example, in which he uses them both:

(6) We have one word, which is used as a verb in one single construction, but which is very unlike a verb in other respects; I had as lief say a thing after him as after another. Lowth’s Answer to Warburton. i.e. I should as soon chuse to say. This is a colloquial and familiar phrase, and is not often found in writing (Priestley 1768a: 110).

In this example, we see that colloquial and familiar, being contrasted with writing, appears to be implied as occurring mainly in conversation.

The words grave, formal and solemn collocate almost exclusively with the word style, which itself also frequently collocates with the word familiar. It seems that Priestley uses the word style when referring to matters of linguistic propriety rather than to matters of grammaticality, as in the following example:
(7) Where this double genitive, as it may be called, is not necessary to distinguish the sense, and especially in grave style, it is generally omitted. Thus we say, It is a discovery of Sir Isaac Newton, tho' it would not have been improper, only more familiar to say, It is a discovery of Sir Isaac Newton's (Priestley 1768a: 71–72).

Priestley gives no straightforward preference for either construction, but points out how they differ stylistically. In addition, grave also collocates with writing, as in the following example:

(8) The pronouns you, and your are sometimes used with little regard to their proper meaning; for the speaker has just as much interest in the case as those he addresses. This style is ostentatious, and doth not suit grave writing. Not only your men of more refined and solid parts and learning, but even your alchymist, and your fortune-teller, will discover the secrets of their art in Homer and Virgil. Addison on Medals, p. 32 (Priestley 1768a: 82).

Johnson’s definition of familiar appears to refer primarily to conversation. The following example also shows how Priestley also contrasts writing with conversation as well as grave with familiar:

(9) In many cases, articles are omitted in common conversation, or in familiar style, which seems to have a propriety in writing, or in grave style. At worst, time might be gained by this expedient. Hume’s History, vol. 6, p. 435. At the worst might have been better in this place (Priestley 1768a: 153).

The fact that he uses the conjunction or to link “common conversation” with “familiar style”, and “writing” with “grave style” can be seen as an indication that familiar is to be associated with conversation and grave with writing. Although there is apparently no style that could be called grave conversation, there is a style that could be called its inverse: familiar writing. The phrase “very familiar writing” in the following example stands out because of its incongruity with the tendency just described:

(10) With respect to the use of figures it is observed that the orthographical figures are not used with approbation, except in very familiar writing, or verse (Priestley 1761a: 37).

This example also illustrates a specific linguistic feature in which Priestley shows his awareness of the importance of style. These “orthographical figures” (Priestley 1761a: 37) are discussed under the joint heading ‘Of Figures’, where he discusses figurative language and the use of apostrophes to replace letters as
in the case of *aphæresis, syncope* and *apocope*. One example of apocope is the shortening of *though* to *tho*. Since Priestley almost exclusively uses *tho* for *though* in his personal correspondence, we may perhaps conclude that from Priestley’s point of view private letters are a form of very familiar writing.

A recurring linguistic feature discussed in eighteenth-century grammars is the stricture against preposition stranding, or ending a sentence with a preposition. Here, Priestley reasonably enlists the notion that the setting in which the utterance is made is a relevant factor. Regarding the positions of the prepositions *of* and *to*, he says that the stranded position is a “situation they [i.e. prepositions] naturally incline to, where they favour the easy fall of the voice, in a familiar cadence; and from which nothing but the solemnity of an address from the pulpit ought to dislodge them; as in any other place they give too great a stiffness and formality to a sentence” (Priestley 1761a: 51). From this comment one might conclude that Priestley, contrary to the general vogue of the time, actually proscribes preposition fronting and prescribes preposition stranding in most contexts. Indeed, he provides a good example by using *to* in the stranded position himself.² Tieken-Boon van Ostade has noted that Lowth did the same thing in his grammar a year later, which she takes as a kind of linguistic joke, and as an indication of his nuanced view of this rule (Tieken-Boon van Ostade 2006a: 545–546; 2010b: 79–80). I think that Priestley did not mean it as a joke, but rather chose to illustrated the naturalness of a stranded preposition in this context.

In the ‘Examples of English Composition’ appended to the 1761 edition of the *Rudiments of English Grammar*, Priestley notes the existence of a special style that is used to address God, which is characterised by the use of archaic forms which “seem to give a peculiar solemnity to an address to the divine Being” (Priestley 1761a: 68), but which are no longer acceptable in ordinary speech or writing. Another special style observed by Priestley in the second edition of his grammar is one which can only be used felicitously by one specific

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² Priestley’s preposition placement in his private correspondence is examined in chapter 9.
speaker, namely the monarch. One of the features of this “style of a king” (Priestley 1768a: 88) is the use of the majestic plural (Priestley 1768a: 96).

Some proscriptions in the grammar are not categorical, but limited to the style of a specific genre, making it technically a feature of a genre rather than style. Priestley argues that the use of who for which is allowed in the case of a personification, but that “in the style of history, there can seldom be a propriety in it” (Priestley 1768a: 98). Apparently, the genre of the history required a more formal style than other genres (see also Priestley 1761a: 58). Although it was formal style, it should not be ornate, but written in a “plain historical style” (Priestley 1768a: 137).

6.4. Sources of correctness
In this section I investigate the socio-historical origins of Priestley’s norm of correctness. Was it based on a particular genre or text type, was it a spoken or written norm, based on the usage of particular people, a particular class of people, was it based on a norm that existed elsewhere already, or was it a speculative and constructed form, based on an idealised notion of English?

6.4.1. The climate of normative grammar
As I have shown in chapter 5, both Priestley’s descriptivism and his prescriptivism have been the subject of much discussion. The climate of normativism at the time and the discussion of the English language in this context in late eighteenth-century Britain were dealt with in chapter 1. This discussion was perhaps mediated more through the popular press than explicitly discussed in ‘professional’ circles. As I have written in chapter 5, Watts (1999, 2008) argues that the eighteenth-century grammarians formed a discourse community. To what degree this discourse community actually shaped the climate of normativism in England is harder to determine. Percy’s (2008, 2009) investigations of the role of the Monthly Review and the Critical Review in the rise of eighteenth-century prescriptivism suggest an answer: that
the popular press provided an important forum on which at least part of the
discourse of this community was carried out. She concludes:

[S]ome important developments may be correlated with the appearance of
periodicals that exclusively reviewed contemporary books. The reviews
disseminated and very likely affected trends in the development of both the
English language and of its codifying texts [Percy 2008: 142].

These contemporary books included works on grammar, as I have shown in
chapter 4. Hence, I will consider the various sources of influence on those
grammar books, specifically on Priestley’s *Rudiments of English Grammar.*

6.4.2. Text type and norms

How normative a text needs to be depends to a certain degree on the text type
studied. Text types, such as private letters, newspaper articles or novels, are
defined by “their linguistic form, irrespective of genre categories” (Biber 1991:
70). Gørlach defines text type as follows:

A text type is a specific linguistic pattern in which formal/structural
characteristics have been conventionalised in a specific culture for certain well-
defined and standardized uses of language so that a speaker/hearer or writer/
reader can judge: a) the correct use of linguistic features obligatory or expected
in a specific text type [...] b) the adequate use of the formula with regard to
topic, situation, addressee, medium, register, etc.; c) the identification of
intentionally or inadvertently mixed types, or their misuse; d) the designation
of the text type (Gørlach 2004: 105).

Priestley’s *Rudiments of English Grammar* (1761a, 1768a) is a rather different
text type than his *Course of Lectures on Oratory and Criticism* (1777a) and
*Course of Lectures on the Theory of Language and Universal Grammar* (1762).
The former belongs to the text type of school grammars, which is an instructive
kind of text, while the latter two belong to the text type of university lectures,
which are more theoretical in nature. They are also aimed at different
audiences, the school grammar being aimed at younger and less advanced
students than the lectures. These differences are also reflected in the
vocabulary used in these different text types.

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3 See also Nummi & Pallander-Collin’s (2008) discussion of the text type of letters, in which the
relation between text type and style is investigated.
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Compared to the data in Table 6.3.3, we find that only the collocation of *familiar* with *expression(s)* is also present in the *Course of Lectures on Oratory and Criticism*. The other words, except *grave*, do not appear at all. In the *Course of Lectures on the Theory of Language and Universal Grammar* only the terms *formal* and *polite* occur a few times, but not in the same collocations as those in Table 6.3.3. The difference in text type and audience can explain why the specific vocabulary Priestley uses in the *Rudiments of English Grammar* is largely absent from the two courses of lectures he composed for use at Warrington Academy. Another feature that appears to be typical of the text type of school grammars is the use of deontic modal auxiliaries indicating prescriptive and descriptive metalanguage, and I will deal with this in chapter 7.

6.4.3. The appeal to usage and custom

As mentioned in chapter 5, Priestley is usually seen as an exception among the eighteenth-century grammarians because of his attention to usage or the *force of custom* as a norm for correctness. The following quotation from the *Course of Lectures on the Theory of Language and Universal Grammar* illustrates Priestley’s position:

> Allowed forms of speech have no natural, but only an arbitrary preference to those which are disallowed. In language every thing is regulated by mere custom, and in things that have no internal excellence, we should only consider the use to which they are applied (Priestley 1762: 226).

There is, however, an interesting problem with this statement and it lies in the clause ”things that have no internal excellence”. This notion is not elaborated by Priestley, but seems to me to refer to forms or expressions that have an internal logic to them. The last sentence also seems to imply that if there is internal excellence, whatever that may be, we should not only consider usage, but other things as well. These other things presumably are such concepts as logic or analogy, which were often seen as counter to the force of custom (Hussey 1995: 152–153, Baugh & Cable 2002: 280–281).

Judging from the normative comments taken from his grammar, which I will deal with in section 6.5, there seems to be a difference between Priestley’s
ideas on speech and writing. To investigate this more closely, I looked at the
discussions of various grammatical features in Priestley’s grammar to try and
determine which of them invoked the force of custom and which give a rule.
Then I looked whether they referred to speech or writing, making a separate
category for the instances in which this was either not specified or unclear from
the context. An example is Priestley’s discussion of preposition stranding in the
first edition of the *Rudiments of English Grammar* (see also above). In this
discussion, Priestley invokes the force of custom, stating that “words of such
frequent occurrence as of and to are prevented from fixing themselves at the
end of a sentence; though that be a situation they naturally incline to” (1761a:
50), and he refers to speech: “where they favour the easy fall of the voice, in a
familiar cadence” (1761a:50). The results are summarised in Table 6.4.1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>grammar</th>
<th>discussion invokes</th>
<th>discussion refers to</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Rudiments of English Grammar</em></td>
<td>force of custom</td>
<td>writing</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1761</td>
<td></td>
<td>speech</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>unspecified/unclear</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>total</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>rule</td>
<td>writing</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>speech</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>unspecified/unclear</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>total</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Rudiments of English Grammar</em></td>
<td>force of custom</td>
<td>writing</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1768</td>
<td></td>
<td>speech</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>unspecified/unclear</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>total</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>rule</td>
<td>writing</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>speech</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>unspecified/unclear</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>total</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.4.1. Invocation of the force of custom and rules in the *Rudiments of English
Grammar* (1761, 1768).

From these results, it seems that when he refers to writing, Priestley is more
ready to formulate rules, rather than rely on the force of custom, but where speech is concerned, he shows a preference for invoking the force of custom over setting rules. It should be noted that although for the majority of the normative strictures it could not be determined whether they pertained to either speech or writing, all of these strictures were illustrated with written sources. An example can be found in Priestley’s discussion of number agreement between subject and verb in the second edition of his grammar. He writes the following:

It is a rule, that two distinct require the verb to be in the plural number [...] But, notwithstanding this, if the subjects of the affirmation be nearly related, the verb is rather better in the singular number [...] If the terms be very nearly related, a plural verb is manifestly harsh (1768: 183-184).

This passage does not specifically refer to either speech or writing. However, this discussion is illustrated with a quotation from “Hume’s History” (1768: 184).

6.4.4. Existing rules of grammar
In some instances, Priestley mentions explicitly that he is using a rule which previously had been given by someone else, such as Samuel Johnson or, in the case of the second edition, Robert Lowth. I will show that he does this for mainly two reasons: to avoid charges of plagiarism by acknowledging the source of the rule, or to voice his disagreement with the rule, which is more often the case. Priestley acknowledges his debt to Johnson in the preface to both the 1761 and 1768 editions of his grammar (see chapter 3). Where he adopted Johnson’s rules or observations, he mentioned this explicitly, as is shown in the following two passages:

(11) Q. Are which, what, and whether, declinable? A. No. Except whose may be said to be the poetical genitive of which [...] Notwithstanding this observation, which is Mr. Johnson’s, many good authors in prose make whose the genitive of which: “Pleasure whose nature.” Hume (Priestley 1761a: 11).

(12) The auxiliary verb shall reverts to its original signification in its conditional form, when if, or any other particle expressing uncertainty, is prefixed to it. I should go, means I ought to go; but if I should go, means if it happen that I go. This observation is Mr. Johnson’s (Priestley 1768a: 129).
In these passages, Priestley makes no judgement on Johnson’s rules. However in the following passage, he criticises Johnson for what he perceives to be a shortcoming in Johnson’s grammar:

(13) Mr. Johnson assigns no conjunctive form to the preter tense: but the analogy of the language seems to require that both the tenses be put upon a level in this respect (Priestley 1768a: 117).

Priestley also acknowledges his use of Lowth’s grammar for his own second edition. Such references usually only occur when Priestley disagrees with him, as in the following instance:

(14) The word means belongs to the class of words which do not change their termination on account of number; for it is used alike in both numbers. Lest this means should fail, Hume’s History, vol. 8, p. 65 Some persons, however, use the singular of this word, and would say, lest this mean should fail, and Dr. Lowth pleads for it; but custom has so formed our ears, that they do not easily admit this form of the word, notwithstanding it is more agreeable to the general analogy of the language (Priestley 1768a: 64).

Note Priestley’s use of a hedge in the closing part of the following passage (“which may, perhaps, be owing to...”) as a negative politeness strategy, in order to mitigate his criticism of Lowth:

(15) There is still a greater impropriety in a double comparative, or a double superlative. Dr. Lowth thinks there is a singular propriety in the phrase most highest, which is peculiar to the old translation of the psalms. But I own it offends my ears, which may, perhaps, be owing to my not having been accustomed to that translation (Priestley 1768a: 78).

The passage below also refers to a disagreement with Lowth, though it seems to be restricted to the spoken mode:

(16) When the pronoun precedes the verb, or the participle by which its case is determined, it is very common, especially in conversation, to use the nominative case where the rules of grammar require the oblique. [...] This form of speaking is so familiar, that I question whether grammarians should not admit it as an exception to the general rule. Dr. Lowth says, that grammar requires us to say, Whom do you think me to be. But in conversation we always hear, Who do you think me to be (Priestley 1768a: 107).

This passage further illustrates that Priestley’s outlook on language was rather more descriptive, which is also the underlying cause of his criticism of Lowth’s grammar. I suspect that Priestley found that Lowth placed too much value on
analogy and not enough on actual usage. In a few instances, Priestley’s
disagreement with the rules of another grammarian is not made explicit. The
following passage, regarding the proper use of comparatives, is an example of
this:

(17) The word *lesser*, though condemned by Mr. Johnson, and other English
grammarians, is often used by good writers (Priestley 1768a: 75).

By using the word “other” in this passage, Priestley implicitly distanced himself
from these *English grammarians*, including and perhaps especially Lowth.4

Priestley did not scruple to criticise contemporary grammarians, and his
disagreement with other grammarians primarily seems to be with Robert
Lowth. He does not appear to have bothered as much with other grammars or
grammarians – such as Wallis and Harris for instance – even though we know
that he was familiar with them, possibly because their work is less relevant for
a school grammar. I think that this attention to Lowth is an indication that he
took Lowth’s grammar more seriously than he did others, which is also
implicitly suggested by Hodson (2008). It is hard to say whether this was
because he did not consider the other grammars worthy of such attention,
whether he simply did not have enough time to study them, or whether it was
that Lowth’s grammar was more prominent and more well received, both
critically and commercially. I suspect that it was a combination of all these
factors.

6.4.5. *The best authors*

Eighteenth-century grammars, and Priestley’s is no exception to this, often
made reference to the ‘the best authors’ or ‘the best writers’ as models of
correctness. It is, however, rarely made explicit exactly who these writers are –
one has to look at the examples in order to find out. So who are named as
examples when Priestley speaks of ‘the best authors’? Who does he consider to
be the norm or grammatical correctness? His general attitude to the authority

4 Lowth also condemned the use of *lesser* in his grammar, referring to the remark by Johnson that it
was “a barbarous corruption of *Less*” (Lowth 1762: 43f).
of the best authors is voiced in his *Course of Lectures on the Theory of Language and Universal Grammar*:

In modern and living languages, it is absurd to pretend to set up the compositions of any person or persons whatsoever as the standard of writing, or their conversation as the invariable rule of speaking. With respect to customs, laws, and every thing that is changeable, the body of a people, who, in this respect, cannot but be free, will certainly assert their liberty, in making what innovations they judge to be expedient and useful (Priestley 1762: 184).

In the 1761 edition of the *Rudiments of English Grammar*, Priestley does not provide fully referenced examples of correct usage, but only gives generic examples. However, it has a section called ‘Examples of Composition’ (Priestley 1761a: 64–92), which can be said to exemplify Priestley’s notion of the best writers, Priestley introduces them with the remark that “[t]he following pieces are collected from our most celebrated English writers, for the exemplification of both the rules of *Grammar*, and of the *Observations on Style*” (Priestley 1761a: 65). In the introductory passage to these examples, Priestley specifies the nature of the attributes that make them examples of good English:

Short as these pieces are it will be easy to discern in them the graceful ease of Addison, the masculine freedom of Bolingbroke, the delicacy of Hume, the vigorous yet correct expression of Swift, and the elaborate exactness of the author of the Rambler (Priestley 1761a: 66).

Hence, the ‘best writers’ quoted in the 1761 edition of the *Rudiments of English Grammar*, taken from the section ‘Examples of Composition’, are the following: Joseph Addison (1672–1719), Henry St. John Bolingbroke (1678–1751), David Hume, Samuel Johnson, Alexander Pope (1688–1744), William Shakespeare (1564–1616), Jonathan Swift and Edward Young (*bap.* 1683, d. 1765). More generally speaking, the authors associated with the *Bible*, Robert Dodsley’s *Preceptor*, Johnson’s *Rambler* and Addison & Steele’s *Spectator* are also models of correctness. These writers are not necessarily all from Priestley’s own time, and he also refers to earlier authors.

The 1768 edition of the *Rudiments of English Grammar* does not contain the section on composition that the 1761 edition has, but it does include referenced examples throughout. These examples are largely confined to the section ‘Notes
and Observations’, which takes up about two thirds of the total volume of the
grammar. The other third, which is taken up by the grammar proper, has only
generic examples (or examples that may have a specific source, but which are
never referenced), just like that of the first edition. The following authors are
quoted specifically and explicitly as examples of correct, proper or elegant
English in the 1768 edition of the *Rudiments of English Grammar*: Bolingbroke,
Arthur Young (1741–1820), Adam Ferguson (1723–1816), James Harris, David
Hume, Samuel Johnson, Lady Mary Wortley Montague (*bap.* 1689, *d.* 1762),
Alexander Pope, Adam Smith (*bap.* 1723, *d.* 1790), Tobias Smollet (1721–
1771), Jonathan Swift, and *The Critical Review* and *The Spectator*. The following
are examples of such references:

(18) Sometimes nouns are elegantly converted into verbs without any change at all.
(*Priestley 1768a: 31*).

(19) There seems to be a peculiar elegance in a sentence beginning with a
conjunctive form of a verb. *Were there no difference, there would be no choice.*
Harris’s three treatises, p. 208 (*Priestley 1768a: 116*).

A list of the best authors in Lowth’s *Short Introduction to English Grammar*
(1762) was compiled by Tieken-Boon van Ostade (1997: 452). The authors on
that list who are not merely criticised are: Joseph Addison, John Dryden (1631–
1700), John Milton (1608–1674), Alexander Pope, William Shakespeare,
Edmund Spenser (1552–1599) and the *Bible*. Tieken-Boon van Ostade notes
that, aside from being given as models correctness, most of the quotations from
many of the writers quoted were actually criticisms of their usage (1997: 452).
When we compare Priestley’s list of the ‘best writers’ with those that will be
given as examples of ‘bad English’ in section 6.6.5, we see that Priestley also
uses the same writers as examples of both correct and bad usage. I have
summarised Priestley’s sources for correct English, together with those given
by Lowth in the first edition of his *Short Introduction to English Grammar*
(1762), in Table 6.4.2 below.
Table 6.4.2  The 'best authors' in Priestley's *Rudiments of English Grammar* (1761, 1768) and Lowth's *Short Introduction to English Grammar* (1762, 1763).

As can be seen in Table 6.4.2, there is some overlap between the authors named by Priestley and Lowth, with one significant difference: the authors Lowth named were all dead when the grammar was published, whereas Priestley also quoted living authors. There is, moreover, a remarkable consistency in the referenced authors between the 1761 and 1768 editions of Priestley's *Rudiments of English Grammar*: Bolingbroke, Hume, Johnson, Pope

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5 The reference is specifically (and only) to Young's *The Adventures of Enmera; or The Fair American* (1767)
and Swift all occur as models of correctness in both editions of Priestley’s grammar. Of the cooperative works, it is the Spectator which occurs in both editions, although one of the principal authors associated with it, Joseph Addison, is found only in the first edition. Both the Critical Review, and Smollett, its editor, are introduced in the second edition. This may be illustrative of the increased importance of the popular press in the discussion of the norm of correctness, as well as an influence on the norm itself.

A relatively smaller amount of space is allocated to the usage of ‘the best authors’ in the second edition of the Rudiments of English Grammar, compared to the amount of space allocated to showing incorrect or improper use. Compared to the first edition, which focuses more on (textual) models of correct language use, the second edition focuses more on showing incorrectnesses in usage. This is supported by the great increase in normative comments in the second edition compared to the first. In this, it seems that Priestley was influenced by Lowth, as I shall demonstrate in section 6.5.

In her study of the influence of the Spectator on the English language, Fitzmaurice (2000) argues that the social and literary importance of that periodical resulted in the eighteenth-century grammarians using it as a model for good English – and for bad English as well – saying that “the prescriptivists use the cultural weight and literary reputation of The Spectator as an index of social prestige, and pay attention to the language of the periodical in consequence” (Fitzmaurice 2000: 195). Priestley was no exception, and both the Spectator itself, as well as several of the writers associated with it, such as Addison, Pope, Swift and Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, are featured in Table 6.4.2. Priestley’s idea of the best authors fits very well with the received notion in the eighteenth century of who ‘the best authors’ were. Clearly, Priestley was a product of his time; he was in touch with the current literature, and had perhaps even adopted some ideas of who the ‘best authors’ were, whether consciously or not, from other grammarians. The ‘best authors’ and other generally recognised sources of good English, such as the Spectator, were part
of the shared body of knowledge of the eighteenth-century grammarians’ discourse community.

6.4.6. Social class

Tieken-Boon van Oostade argues that Lowth, because he was a social climber, did not base his linguistic norm – which he propagated in his grammar – on that of the middle class from which he originated, but on that of the upper class, “such as he perceived that norm to be” (2006a: 551). She also mentions that Lowth was geographically and socially mobile, which in terms of social network analysis is characteristic of people who function as bridges between networks, and who are therefore more likely to be linguistic innovators. Like Lowth and many other grammarians, Priestley makes uses the work of ‘the best authors’ as a model for good, correct English, as well as an example of what is to be avoided. But unlike Lowth, Priestley’s does not appear to aspire to or model himself and his grammar on an upper-class norm. Fitzmaurice (2000) identifies the cultural and linguistic standards of the Spectator, which I have shown Priestley shared, with eighteenth-century middle-class English values. She writes that “the journal’s extraordinary popularity both during and well after its lifetime, and its considerable cultural authority in matters of politeness for many middle-class English men and women, made it one of the centrally important texts of the early eighteenth century” (Fitzmaurice 2000: 195).

Priestley seems to have identified himself with the middle class, as being the most happy as well as the most useful in English society. Porter quotes Priestley as having said that “there appears to be much more happiness in the middle classes of life who are above the fear of want, and yet have sufficient motive for a constant exertion of their faculties” (cited in Porter 1991: 84). The identification with middle-class values was also articulated in an unambiguous manner by Priestley’s wife Mary, who is quoted as saying “I find the conduct of the upper so exactly like that of the lower classes that I am thankful I was born in the middle” (Gibbs 1965: 88). Indeed, the pride she took in being middle class is evident when one considers that she said this to her husband’s then-
employer, William Petty, the Earl of Shelburne. It is not unlikely that Priestley, rather than adopting an upper-class norm, looked to the educated middle classes – to which he himself and most of his acquaintances belonged – for his norm of linguistic correctness and polite speech.

6.4.7. Scientific writing

The relationship between Priestley’s descriptivism and his scientific activities is not unproblematic (see Hodson 2006: 64), but it is not irrelevant either. The concept of empiricism is a relevant aspect in Priestley’s way of thinking about everything, whether it was science, politics or language. It falls beyond the scope of this study to make a complete investigation of the relationship between Priestley’s grammar and Late Modern English scientific writing, but I will give two examples of norms of correctness from his grammar that are related to ideals concerning the language of science.

The source for many of the Royal Society’s prescriptions for scientific English throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was Robert Boyle (1627–1691), one of the great natural philosophers of the seventeenth century (see Gotti 1996, 2001). The following is but one of Boyle’s many prescriptions on proper scientific language. It is taken from his posthumously published collected works, in which he wrote that “where our design is only to inform readers, not to delight or persuade them, perspicuity ought to be esteemed at least one of the best qualifications of a style” (Boyle 1744, Vol.1: 195). Priestley ends the section on style in the first edition of the *Rudiments of English Grammar* with a similar call for sense concerning the use of language in general. He writes that “we ought rather to aim at perspicuity and strength of expression, than exactness in the punctilios of composition” (Priestley 1761a: 61). The importance of the notion of perspicuity, which became part of the ‘plain style’ of the Royal Society, is clear from both quotes. Priestley’s caution against the use of *figures* (Priestley 1761a: 37) is also a part of the proper style of scientific prose, as shown by Gotti (2001: 229) in his study of the emergence of the new format for experimental essays in Early Modern English. All in all,
Priestley’s membership of the Royal Society of London and his close familiarity with its *Philosophical Transactions*, both as a reader and a contributor, make it not unlikely that the ideas behind the plain style would be reflected in his work on language.

### 6.5. Priestley’s normative strictures

While normative strictures are usually grouped together under the term *prescriptions*, I have found it useful to make a distinction between *prescriptions* and *proscriptions* in Priestley’s strictures. The former indicate that which is correct and ought to be adhered to, the latter that which is incorrect and ought not to be used. The following two are examples of proscriptive comments from the grammar:

(20) As the article [a] always implies one, it can **never** be used with words in the plural number (Priestley 1761a: 7f).

(21) The preposition *among* always implies a number of things; and, therefore, **cannot** be used in conjunction with the word *every*, which is in the singular number (Priestley 1768a: 168).

And the following two comments, one with and one without a modal auxiliary, are examples of prescriptive ones:

(22) When we simply *foretel*, **we use shall** in the first person, and *will* in the rest [...] but when we promise, threaten, or engage, we use *will* in the first person, and *shall* in the rest (Priestley 1761a: 22).

(23) Q. What is the correspondence of a verb and its subject? A. They **must** have the same number, and person (Priestley 1768a: 41–42).

I have counted the number of normative strictures in the 1761 and 1768 editions of Priestley’s grammar, both prescriptive and proscriptive comments, and summarised the results in Table 6.5.1 below. The strictures themselves are listed in Appendices 6.1 to 6.4. The number of prescriptive comments in the second edition seems low compared to the number of proscriptive comments. This difference is a result of what is counted as a prescription and what is not. This is a problem that I will address in the following section.
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\[
\begin{array}{|c|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
 & 1st edition (1761) 92 pages & & 2nd edition (1768) 200 pages & \\
 & N & N/# pages & N & N/# pages \\
\hline
proscriptions & 13 & 0.14 & 79 & 0.40 \\
precriptions & 13 & 0.14 & 23 & 0.12 \\
total & 26 & 0.28 & 102 & 0.51 \\
\hline
\end{array}
\]

Table 6.5.1. Pro- and prescriptions in the *Rudiments of English Grammar* (1761, 1768).

We can see from Table 6.5.1 that the 1768 edition of Priestley’s grammar is definitely more normative in general than the 1761 edition. This was in some way already indicated by Bryan (1923):

In 1761, Joseph Priestley, the great scientist, published his *Rudiments of English Grammar*, and in 1768 reissued it with the addition of a very considerable body of "Notes and Observations for the Use of Those Who have made some Proficiency in the Language"; it was particularly in these "Notes and Observations" that he discussed the propriety of forms and constructions about which there might be question (1923: 383).

However, the normative nature of Priestley’s grammars has not really been explored in greater detail, probably due to his reputation as a descriptivist. I will try to rectify that oversight here.

6.5.1. Normative comments, normative metalanguage

I have already noted that it is hard to determine which comments are actually prescriptions. It is sometimes equally hard to separate prescriptions from proscriptions. This is evident, for example, from Priestley’s treatment of prepositions (Priestley 1768a: 154–169) in the section ‘Notes and Observations’ in the second edition of his grammar:

Many writers affect to subjoin to any word the preposition with which it is compounded, or the idea of which it implies; in order to point out the relation of the words in a more distinct and definite manner, and to avoid the more indeterminate prepositions of, and to; but general practice, and the idiom of the English tongue, seem to oppose the innovation. Thus many writers say averse

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6 The number of pages can be used to provide a normalisation of the raw scores, albeit a slightly crude one, because both editions are the same duodecimo size and have roughly comparable margins, line spacing and font sizes.
from a thing [...] But other writers use averse to it, which seems more truly English [...] An attention to the latent metaphor may be pleaded in favour of the former example, and this is a rule of general use, in directing what prepositions to subjoin to a word [...] But this rule would sometime mislead us, particularly where the figure has become nearly evanescent (Priestley 1768a: 156–157).

A proscriptive comment against the use of one preposition in a certain situation is often coupled to a prescriptive comment for another preposition to be used in the same situation. The following is an example of this:

(24) Thus we would naturally expect, that the word depend would require from after it; but custom obliges us to say depend upon, as well as insist upon a thing. Yet when we use the word where the figure was manifest, we should use the preposition from; as the cage depends from the roof of the building (Priestley 1768a: 157).

The prescriptive comments are clearly stated in this example, but there appear to be implied proscriptive comments as well. When one is required to do one thing, it is automatically implied that one should not do another. Whether the two types of comments prescriptive and proscriptive, can actually be seen as two separate types of comments is a question to which there does not appear to be a straightforward answer.

In some cases, the difference between a proscriptive and prescriptive comment can be as little as a matter of syntax. Negative declaratives are especially problematic in this sense. It may be no more than the difference between putting the negative at clause or phrase level. The following comment, using negation at clause level, is an illustration of this:

(25) When the nominative case is put after the verb [...] no other word should be interposed between them (Priestley 1768a: 176).

Considering the use of the modal auxiliary should here, this can be seen as a prescriptive comment. However, consider rephrasing the same comment with the negative particle at phrase level, as shown below:

When the nominative case is put after the verb, another word should not be interposed between them.

It now makes a clearly proscriptive comment rather than a prescriptive one. I must add, though, that the combination of a deontic modal with a negative
particle appears to be mainly exemplified by the modal should. One of the uses of should in Late Modern English, besides that “in contexts indicating [...] epistemic possibility” (Rissanen 1999: 235), was as a deontic modal, indicating what ought to be (see Visser 1973: 1636–1637). This modal indicates that it is undesirable that something is the case and that it ought to be what is mentioned instead. In other words, should implies both prescriptive and prescriptive. For this reason, I make no distinction between prescriptive and proscriptive uses of deontic modal auxiliaries in chapter 7, in which I quantitatively evaluate the prescriptiveness of Priestley’s grammar in relation to Lowth’s by the use of deontic modals in their normative metalanguage. A similar argument can be made for the use of negatives in Priestley’s discussion of particles (Priestley 1768a: 193–200). I would therefore advocate to regard the two kinds of comments as different aspects of one normative comment.

Something as small as the use of the word even can be seen as part of the normative vocabulary. For instance, in Priestley’s discussion of the correct use of the nominative and oblique cases in the 1768 edition of the Rudiments of English Grammar, we find the following comment:

(26) Contrary, as it evidently is, to the analogy of the language, the nominative case is sometimes found after verbs and prepositions. It has even crept into writing (Priestley 1768a: 102).

This seems to suggest that since writing is supposed to “have a greater degree of precision and perspicuity” (Priestley 1768a: 45) than speech, this error is even less acceptable in writing than it is in speech. The phrase “crept into writing” is used several times by Priestley. It assumes that these errors have their origin in speech and are then transferred to writing, incidentally implying the primacy of spoken language.

The results from this section allow us to formulate some general features of Priestley’s normative metalanguage. Priestley often made use of the semi-modal verb ought to as a hedge in order to reduce the prescriptive force of his strictures, while on the other hand, straightforward prescriptions were often made with the deontic modal auxiliary must. When proscriptions required
hedging, which appears to have been the case fairly often, Priestley most often used the verb *seem* to do so. On the other hand, in his proscriptions, the construction *had better* is a recurring hedge (see also 6.5.4).

The use of critical comments by the grammarian, such as those investigated by Sundby et al. (1991) and Wolf (2005), is a different kind of metalanguage. Interestingly, this kind of metalanguage is largely absent from Priestley’s *Rudiments of English Grammar*. The words *error* and *solecism* – which are not at all uncommon words to be used in the proscriptions of eighteenth-century grammars – to not occur in Priestley’s grammar at all. Might this be an indication of Priestley’s descriptivism, or at least why he has been designated as a descriptivist?

### 6.5.2. Priestley’s proscriptions

Following the list of 35 (54 including subdivisions) proscriptions (Tieken-Boon van Ostade 2006a: 553–555) in the footnotes of the first edition of Lowth’s *Short Introduction to English Grammar* (1762), I have compiled a similar list of Priestley’s proscriptions in the 1761 edition of the *Rudiments of English Grammar*. With thirteen entries, this list (given in Appendix 5) is quite a bit shorter than Lowth’s. It should be noted that of these thirteen proscriptions, a fair number, certainly the last six, refer to matters of style rather than grammaticality. Indeed, different uses in different styles or settings were regularly noted by Priestley (see also section 6.3).

The 1768 edition constituted a considerable enlargement of the first edition of 1761. In the preface to the 1768 edition, Priestley acknowledges the influence of Lowth’s grammar on his *Rudiments of English Grammar*:

> I must, also, acknowledge my obligations to Dr. Lowth, whose *short introduction to English grammar* was first published about a month after the former edition of mine. [...] I have taken a few of his examples (though generally for a purpose different from his) to make my own more complete (Priestley 1768a: xxiii).

I have compiled a list (see Appendix 6) for this edition see whether Lowth’s influence is visible. The 1768 edition of Priestley’s grammar contains as many as eighty prescriptive comments, which is over six times as much as in the first
edition in absolute numbers. Compared to the relative sizes of the two editions, the 1761 edition has 0.14 proscriptions per page, while the 1768 edition has 0.4 proscriptions per page. Although smaller than the difference in absolute numbers, this is still a very large relative increase in the number of prescriptive comments.

Lowth’s influence therefore went beyond the borrowing of only “a few examples” and may explain the much greater number of proscriptions in the second edition of Priestley’s grammar. In order to ascertain this, I checked which proscriptions also occur in the first edition of Lowth’s Short Introduction to English Grammar (1762), which are twenty in all. They are marked with an asterisk in Appendix 6. Compared to the total number of proscriptions in the 1768 edition, a relatively small number of them coincide with those in Lowth’s, where Priestley may have found them. So rather than blindly incorporating Lowth’s normative strictures into his own grammar, it is more likely that Lowth’s grammar encouraged Priestley to be more critical towards his own work, and to his attitude towards grammar in a more general sense. As a result, the second edition of his grammar saw a great increase in prescriptive comments compared to the first.

In her discussion of Priestley’s descriptivism, Hodson argues that Priestley’s prescriptivism did not change significantly between the 1761 and 1768 editions of the Rudiments of English Grammar:

[It is not the case that the 1768 edition represents a move towards a more prescriptive position [...].] Taken as a whole, the 1768 Preface shows Priestley offering a more robust version of the ideas contained in his 1761 Preface, not a retraction or significant modification of them (Hodson 2006: 78).

Hodson does not discriminate between prescriptions and proscriptions, and possibly groups both of them together under the former term. As the quotation shows, this assessment is primarily based on what Priestley says in the prefaces to the two editions of his grammar. However, as was shown above, the number of prescriptive comments greatly increased from the 1761 edition to
the 1768 edition. Hence, Priestley’s position definitely became more pro-
scriptive. In the following, I will discuss the changes in his prescriptions.

6.5.3. Priestley’s prescriptions

The previous section shows that the second edition of Priestley’s *Rudiments of
English Grammar* has many more proscriptions than the first. To complete the
picture of the normative aspect of Priestley’s grammars, I now turn to the
prescriptions in the 1761 and 1768 editions *Rudiments of English Grammar*.
Lists of all these the prescriptions are given in Appendices 7 and 8.

The 1761 edition has thirteen comments that are clearly prescriptive whilst
the 1768 edition has twenty-three, which comes down to 0.14 and 0.12
prescriptions per page respectively. As with his proscriptions, the list is
increased in size compared to the first edition, though not to the extent as that
seen with his proscriptions, as the number of prescriptions per page actually
decreases from the 1761 to the 1768 edition. The 1768 edition of Priestley’s
grammar consists of three main parts: the preface, the section ‘Rudiments of
English Grammar’, which is the grammar proper, and the section ‘Notes and
Observations’, which actually constitutes the largest part of the book. The
preface and the grammar proper contain very few prescriptions; the ones I
found in either of these two sections (six out of twenty-three) are marked with
a double dagger in Appendix 8.

It should be noted that it is much harder to determine what constitutes a
prescription than what constitutes a proscription. This is also illustrated by the
length of the comments on prescriptions compared to the ones on pro-
scriptions. The comments on prescriptions regularly double as their definitions and
they also appear to be generally longer. Prescriptions are indicated quite
clearly by the use of imperative or deontic modal auxiliaries such as *must, ought
to* or *should*, as shown in the following example:

(27) Different relations, and different senses, **must** be expressed by different
prepositions; *the* in conjunction with the same verb or adjective (Priestley
1768a: 154).
Without providing a detailed quantitative analysis, it seems as though the section 'Observations on Style' contains the highest number of deontic modals of the whole book. However, declarative or affirmative sentences without deontic modal auxiliaries constitute a problem. They can be precisely what they are, descriptions worded in simple declaratives, but they can also be prescriptions, especially if the reader chooses to read them as such. Many of the rules in the grammar proper are of this kind, such as the following example:

(28) There are three degrees of comparison: the **POSITIVE**, in which the quality is barely mentioned; as **hard**: the **COMPARATIVE**, which expresses the quality somewhat increased, and is formed by adding [r] or [er] to the positive; as **harder**; and the **SUPERLATIVE**, which expresseth the highest degree of the quality, by adding [st] or [est] to the positive; as **hardest** (Priestley 1768a: 8).

I have chosen not to count the simple declaratives as belonging to this category, unless the prescriptiveness of the comment is obvious.

**6.5.4. The strength of Priestley's normative comments**

From the preceding sections it would seem that, despite his reputation as a descriptivist, Priestley was much more of a prescriptivist than his reputation has warranted. It is useful to take a closer look at the language that Priestley uses in these pre-/proscriptions. An evaluation of this language in his normative strictures will give a better indication of their pre-/proscriptive strength. This should help to form a more accurate picture of Priestley as a normative grammarian.

A measure of the strength of a normative comment is whether or not its assertion is mitigated in some way. Hedges are linguistic devices used to "represent a weakening of a claim through an explicit qualification of the writer’s commitment" (Hyland 1998: 351). In the framework of involvement and detachment in discourse (Chafe & Danielewicz 1987: 109), which evaluates the author’s personal involvement with the text and its audience, hedges are considered features of detachment. Thus, hedges are linguistic elements that are usually employed to either directly mitigate the strength of the assertion, or to increase the psychological or rhetorical distance between the writer and
what is claimed in the text. The mitigating kind of hedge is often a lexical element, while discourse strategies such as the use of impersonal constructions, are used to put the writer at greater psychological or rhetorical distance from the text. Lexical hedges cover a wide range of word types. They can be adverbs, such as *apparently, generally, possibly* and *perhaps*; full verbs, such as *suggest*; epistemic and deontic modal verbs, such as *should* and *must*; or semi-modal, such as *ought to*.

Tieken-Boon van Ostade argues that Lowth occasionally hedged his normative strictures by the use of *ought to* (Tieken-Boon van Ostade 2010b: 83). Priestley uses *ought to* in the same way as Lowth, of which the following passage, in which Priestley discusses the forms of the past tense and past participle forms of verbs is an example:

(29) As the *paucity of inflections* is the greatest defect in our language, we **ought to**
[...] make a *participle* different from the *preterite* of a verb; as, a book is
*written, not wrote*; the ships are *taken, not took* (Priestley 1768a: 123).

The occurrence of the verb *seem* is more interesting because its use in the *Rudiments of English Grammar* is a good illustration of the difference between prescriptive and proscriptive language. Priestley’s discussion of the use of singular verbs with nouns that are plural in form but singular in meaning is an example of this.

(30) The word *news* is also used both in the singular and plural number. [...] But [...] the singular number *seems* to be more common, and is therefore to be preferred (Priestley 1768a: 65).

Priestley uses *seem* to hedge many of his proscriptions, but he does not use it in his prescriptions. Another example is found in Priestley’s discussion of directional adverbs in the section ‘Notes and Observations’:

(31) The adverbs *hence, thence*, and *whence*, imply a preposition; for they signify, *from this place, from that place, from what place*. It *seems*, therefore, to be improper to join a preposition along with them, because it is superfluous; yet the practice is very common (Priestley 1768a: 133–134).
Priestley’s prescriptive comments on the other hand, do not show this prominent use of seem. His prescriptions are often given without hedging by the use of the modal verb must, for instance. The following is an example of this:

(32) Q. Suppose there be two subjects of the same affirmation, and they be both of the singular number? A. The verb corresponding to them must be in the plural (Priestley 1768a: 42).

I should note that the question-and-answer format that Priestley uses in this passage is also a factor in assessing the strength of Priestley’s normative comments. This format is only used in the grammar proper, which has a more prescriptive character than the section ‘Notes and Observations’, which is more proscriptive. However, this division is not categorical as the section ‘Notes and Observations’ also contains unambiguously prescriptive comments, such as that quoted above (Priestley 1768a: 154). The use of modal verbs in pre-/prospective and descriptive language is explored in a more quantitative manner in chapter 7, where I will also deal with the differences between the above-mentioned sections in the grammar and their respective normative characters.

We sometimes do find the verb seem used in prescriptions, but this is usually a case where the comment is actually not unambiguously prescriptive (see also above) and may even have a partly prescriptive interpretation. Priestley’s discussion of the use of that for so much, so great or such a (Priestley 1768a: 91–92) is an example of this:

(33) In all these cases, however, it should seem that the common construction is generally preferable (Priestley 1768a: 92).

Also note the use of the modal verb should in combination with seem in this example. It appears that Priestley hedged his pre-/proscriptions where he felt that they could not be presented as absolute rules.

6.5.5. Examples of ‘bad English’

The inclusion of examples of bad English in a grammar was a new phenomenon in the eighteenth century. It was introduced by Ann Fisher (1719–1778) in the
third edition of her *New Grammar, with Exercises of Bad English* (1753) and quickly became popular and commonplace into English grammars (Rodríguez-Gil 2003: 184). In the preface to the first edition of the *Rudiments of English Grammar*, Priestley says that he would not include examples of incorrect English in his grammar: "[a]n Appendix would have been made of examples of bad English; for they are really useful; but that they make so uncouth an appearance in print" (Priestley 1761a: xi). This statement was also included in the expanded preface to the second edition, and indeed no such appendix is present in either edition. However, Priestley did not scruple to include many examples of grammatical errors or inconsistencies from established authors in the second edition. It is possible that the argument which had refrained him from doing so in the first edition no longer applied, since other grammars, such as Lowth’s *Short Introduction to English Grammar*, had done so without being respected any less for it. The first edition of the *Rudiments of English Grammar* only refers to David Hume and the *Tatler* (more specifically, *Tatler* No. 160). Examples of incorrect grammar and/or usage in the second edition of the *Rudiments of English Grammar* were taken from a much greater number of authors. I have listed them in Table 6.5.2 below.

The list of authors and sources of incorrect usage is much more extensive than that of examples of good, elegant or polite usage (Table 6.4.2). In section 6.4 I noted that all the sources from which examples of good English were taken, are also sources for examples of incorrect grammar or usage. It seems that these authors and works formed the core of Priestley’s corpus of contemporary English usage, just as Lowth’s sources had for the *Short Introduction to English Grammar* (see Tieken-Boon van Ostade 1997). These sources are also among the most frequently referred to works and authors in other eighteenth-century grammars (Sundby et al. 1991).

Table 6.5.3 below shows those sources, ranked as they appear in Sundby et al. (1991: 35), that are also cited in Priestley’s *Rudiments of English Grammar*. 
Table 6.5.2. Sources of ‘bad’ English in *The Rudiments of English Grammar* (1768).

As we can see from Table 6.5.3, Priestley’s corpus of English shows a great deal of overlap with that of other grammarians. The authors cited by Lowth, for instance, all appear in the top twenty in the list in Sundby et al. The great overlap in names between Tables 6.5.2 and 6.5.3 is not a complete coincidence, since both editions of Priestley’s grammar were among those used to compile the list. However, it is telling that of the fifteen most often cited sources in Sundby et al., which make up the bulk of all citations, only three are not cited in

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7 This is especially true in the case of David Hume. Priestley is responsible for more than half the critical comments on Hume’s language listed in Sundby et al. (1991: 35). He indicates that he did not seek to specifically criticise Hume but referred to him so often because he happened to be reading Hume’s work at the time (Priestley 1768: xiii). However, I suspect that Priestley read Hume quite critically to begin with, probably due to Hume’s (atheist) philosophy. The question remains why Priestley, like Johnson, was so concerned with these glibberics to begin with.
Priestley’s grammar. The works cited by Priestley therefore also represent the core of the normative corpus used by the discourse community of eighteenth-century grammarians.⁸

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>rank in Sundby</th>
<th>source</th>
<th>citations in Sundby</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Jonathan Swift (1667–1745)</td>
<td>224</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>New Testament</td>
<td>221</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>David Hume (1711–1776)</td>
<td>214</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Joseph Addison (1672–1719)</td>
<td>177</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Alexander Pope (1688–1744)</td>
<td>155</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>The Spectator</td>
<td>149</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Old Testament</td>
<td>130</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>John Dryden (1631–1700)</td>
<td>97</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>John Milton (1608–1674)</td>
<td>90</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>Clarendon (Edward Hyde, 1st Earl of) (1609–1674)</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>Bolingbroke (Henry St. John, Viscount) (1678–1751)</td>
<td>64</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>John Locke (1632–1704)</td>
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<td>18</td>
<td>Tobias Smollett (1721–1771)</td>
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<td>23</td>
<td>Samuel Johnson (1709–1784)</td>
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<td>26</td>
<td>James Harris (1709–1780)</td>
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<td>29</td>
<td>Laurence Sterne (1713–1768)</td>
<td>16</td>
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<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>Mary Wortley Montagu (bap. 1689, d. 1762)</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>39</td>
<td>William Shenstone (1714–1763)</td>
<td>9</td>
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<tr>
<td>58</td>
<td>Arthur Young (1741-1820)</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td>67</td>
<td>George Colman (1732–1794)</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>71</td>
<td>Adam Ferguson (1723–1816)</td>
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<tr>
<td>72</td>
<td>William Blackstone (1723–1780)</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>91</td>
<td>Edward Wortley Montagu (1713–1776)</td>
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<tr>
<td>116</td>
<td>Malachy Postlethwaite (1707?–1767)</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>134</td>
<td>John Newbery (bap. 1713, d. 1767)</td>
<td>2</td>
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</tbody>
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Table 6.5.3. Most cited sources in eighteenth-century grammars (in Sundby et al. 1991: 35) also cited in Priestley’s Rudiments of English Grammar (1761, 1768).

Johnson wrote that he would refer only to dead authors in his Dictionary of the English Language (1755) in order to retain an objective view of the material he used:

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⁸Priestley himself is also part of the literary canon of the eighteenth-century. He is number thirty-eight on the list in Sundby et al. (1991: 35), being cited nine times.
My purpose was to admit of no testimony of living authours, that I might not be
mised by partiality, and that none of my cotemporaries might have reason to
complain; nor have I departed from this resolution, but when some perfo-
mance of uncommon excellence excited my veneration, when my memory
supplied me, from late books, with an example that was wanting (Johnson
1755: sig. B2').

Indeed, most of the authors cited in the Dictionary were dead at the time it was
published (Reddick 2010: 209). And whereas Lowth might have had scruples
about exposing living authors out of delicacy (see Tieken-Boon van Ostade
2006a: 544), Priestley had not, as is evident from the life dates in Table 6.5.3.
On the contrary, he gives his reasons for referring to living authors in the
introduction to the 1768 edition of his Rudiments of English Grammar:

I think there will be an advantage in my having collected examples from
modern writing, rather than from those of Swift, Addison, and others, who
wrote about half a century ago, in what is generally called the classical period of
our tongue. By this means we may see what is the real character and turn of the
language at present; and by comparing it with the writings of preceding
authors, we may better perceive which way it is tending, and what extreme we
should most carefully guard against (Priestley 1768a: xi).

Thus, Priestley decided to use different authors than, for instance, Lowth or
Johnson, in order to show what was happening in the English language at the
time, rather than to show what had been the case half a century earlier.

6.6. Priestley’s descriptivism

As discussed in sections 5.2 and 7.2, Priestley has traditionally been regarded
as one of the few descriptivists among the eighteenth-century English
grammarians. And, as was also mentioned in these sections, this reputation has
in more recent times been re-evaluated, if not challenged outright. Especially
Hodson (2006) puts Priestley’s descriptivism into its proper perspective. As I
have shown in section 6.5, there is indeed good reason to question Priestley’s
descriptivism. In this section I wish to show – perhaps somewhat superfluously
– that descriptivism did indeed play a part in Priestley’s approach to grammar.
To illustrate the descriptive nature of Priestley’s grammar more specifically, I
will look at some of the descriptions or rules in the 1761 and 1768 editions of
Priestley’s *Rudiments of English Grammar*. First I will look at the rules for the use of the modal auxiliary verbs *shall* and *will*. Then I will shortly discuss Priestley’s view on the use of *be* or *have* with the past participles of mutative intransitive verbs. To conclude I will show some passages of Priestley’s grammar in which he is, in my opinion, at his most descriptive.

### 6.6.1. The rules for *shall* and *will*

Tieken-Boon van Ostade (1985) notes that the rules for the use of *shall* and *will* were first articulated by John Wallis in his *Grammatica Linguae Anglicanae* (1653: 94–95), and that in eighteenth-century grammars “most rules seem to be mere translations of Wallis’s” (Tieken-Boon van Ostade 1985: 125–126). Priestley’s description, given below, indeed looks like a close translation of Wallis’s:

> Q. What is the use of the auxiliary verbs *shall* and *will*? A. Use hath, of late, varied, and, as it were, interchanged the sense of them: for when we simply *foretel*, we use *shall* in the first person, and *will* in the rest; as *I shall*, or he *will write*; but when we *promise*, *threaten*, or *engage*, we use *will* in the first person, and *shall* in the rest; as *I will*, or *he shall write* (Priestley 1761a: 22).

This is not so surprising, since Priestley was familiar with Wallis’s work, and in fact included a discussion of Wallis’s philosophical grammar in his *Course of Lectures on the Theory of Language and Universal Grammar* (Priestley 1762: 298–301). It is therefore possible that Priestley did use Wallis’s grammar when he wrote the *Rudiments of English Grammar*, but failed to acknowledge it as a source, both in the first and subsequent editions. There is unfortunately no way of finding out whether Priestley read Wallis’ grammar before or after the composition of the 1761 edition of the *Rudiments of English Grammar*. The introductory sentence to the rule (“Use hath, of late…”) seems to indicate that Priestley described current usage, which was a undergoing change from an earlier paradigm. However, Tieken-Boon van Ostade argues that “it seems likely that he is merely referring to the paradigms *shall/will/will* and *will/shall/shall*” (Tieken-Boon van Ostade 1985: 131). The description of this inversion is also present in Lowth’s *Short Introduction to English Grammar*
(Lowth 1762: 59f; 1763: 62f). Priestley does not mention this inversion in the second edition of his grammar, but merely states the rule:

Q. What is the use of the auxiliary verbs *shall* and *will*. A. When we simply *foretell*, we use *shall* in the first person, and *will* in the rest; as *I shall*, or *he will write*, but when we *promise*, *threaten*, or *engage*, we use *will* in the first person, and *shall* in the rest; as *I will*, or *he shall write* (Priestley 1768a: 37).

Perhaps he felt that reference to the origin of the rule would introduce an unnecessary complication in a school grammar. According to Tieken-Boon van Ostade, Wallis based his rule on usage because he, “as a result of his refusal to use Latin grammar as a basis for a description of English, had had to turn to English as it was actually used at the time” (Tieken-Boon van Ostade 1985: 138). In adopting Wallis’s description, if he did so, Priestley’s rule is actually descriptive as well, albeit by proxy of late seventeenth-century usage rather than that of the eighteenth century. Priestley was aware of the deviant use of the auxiliaries *shall* and *will* in Scottish English, which he describes in the 1768 edition of the *Rudiments of English Grammar*:

> The Scots still use *shall* and *will*, *should* and *would*, as they were formerly used in England; i.e. in a sense quite contrary to that in which they are used with us at present [...] We will next show what those difficulties were, under which our commerce laboured under the reign [sic] preceding that; and, lastly, we will give a short account how those advantages arose, of which we have been since possessed. Preceptor [...] By such gradual innovations the king flattered himself that he would quietly introduce episcopal authority. Hume’s History (Priestley 1768a: 129–130).

Priestley mentions that the Scots use these auxiliaries with the *sense* rather than the *form* being the opposite of what is used in southern English. It appears that he was not so much of a descriptivist as to be able to resign himself to the fact that Scottish usage was no more than what he had already said it was: an older paradigm that had previously also been in use in southern English. He wrote that *shall* in the third person may denote the simple future in colloquial usage and in fixed expressions:

In several familiar forms of expression, the word *shall* still retains its original signification, and does not mean to promise, threaten, or engage, in the third person, but the mere futurition of an event; as, *This is as extraordinary a thing as one shall ever hear of*. This sense is also retained by our best writers in the
gravest style. Whoever will examine the writings of all kinds, wherewith this antient sect hath honoured the world, shall immediately find, from the whole thread and tenor of them, that the ideas of the authors have been altogether conversant, and taken up with the faults and blemishes, and oversights, and mistakes of other writers. Swift. It should seem then that both the words shall and will might be substituted for one another in this passage (Priestley 1768a: 130–131).

Apparently, in these stylistic contexts earlier usage was retained, and shall and will were still mutually interchangeable. Priestley also described a third and separate use of shall in the first person in questions:

When a question is asked, the verb shall, in the first person, is used in a sense different from both its other sense. Shall I write, means, Is it your pleasure that I should write. Will, in the second person, only reverts to its other usual sense; for, Will you write, means, Is it your intention to write (Priestley 1768a: 131).

Lastly, Priestley noted that the use of will as a main verb was still possible, which it no longer is in Present Day English: “[w]hen the word will is no auxiliary, but is used by itself, to express volition, it is inflected regularly, like other verbs” (Priestley 1768a: 131). Priestley’s choice of examples shows the importance he placed on the study of contemporary language. While Johnson described both eighteenth-century and earlier usage (Tieken-Boon van Ostade 1985: 129), Priestley’s examples in his discussion of shall and will are all from eighteenth-century sources: Addison, Hume, Preceptor, Swift and ‘Conduct of the Whigs and Tories Examined’ (by an anonymous author in the Gentleman’s Magazine, Vol. 33, Aug 1763).

In his An Essay on Grammar, William Ward (1765), showed a unique approach to the rules for shall and will in the sense that rather than stating which auxiliary to use with which person, he described the “conditions to be fulfilled for the use of either auxiliary” (Tieken-Boon van Ostade 1985: 133–134). Ward sent Priestley a copy of a grammar,† probably in the spring of 1769, for which Priestley thanked him in a letter dated 5 June 1769 (Rutt 1831: 100–101). I therefore assume, that Priestley probably did not know of Ward’s rules

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* This could have been either Ward’s Essay on Grammar (1765), or his Grammar of the English Language (1767).
for *shall* and *will* at the time of composition of the 1768 edition of the *Rudiments of English Grammar* and could not have used it.

6.6.2. Be or have with past participles of mutative intransitive verbs

Mutative intransitive verbs are verbs that describe movement, or a change of state or situation (Rydén & Brorström 1987: 9), as shown with the verb *arrive* in the following example from Priestley’s correspondence:

(34) I write to inform you that I and my wife are just safely **arrived** at Sandy Hook, and expect to be at New York before Midnight (letter to John Vaughan, 3 June 1794).

Although in Present Day English the only auxiliary option with the past participles of most of these verbs is *have*, in Late Modern English both the auxiliaries *be* and *have* could be used (see Rissanen 1995: 213). In fact, the Late Modern period saw a change in progress from a paradigm in which *be* predominated to one where *have* was the dominant auxiliary (see Rydén & Brorström 1987 and Kytö 1997).

Priestley mentions the subject for the first time in the 1768 edition of his *Rudiments of English Grammar*, where he does his reputation as a descriptivist credit. He makes no pronouncement of preference for either *be* or *have*, but argues that though strictly speaking *be* may be more appropriate, the choice of auxiliary should be determined by the context:

> It seems not to have been determined by the English grammarians, whether the passive participles of verbs neuter require the auxiliary *am* or *have* before them. [...] I think we have an advantage in the choice of these forms of expression, as it appears to me, that we use them to express different modifications of the sense. When I say, *I am fallen*, I mean at this present instant; whereas, if I say, *I have fallen*, my meaning comprehends, indeed, the foregoing; but has likewise, a secret reference to some period of time past, as *some time in this day, or in this hour, I have fallen*; implying some continuance of time, which the other form of expression does not (Priestley 1768a: 127–128).

From the quotation above, it appears that Priestley advocates the use of *be* in a context of immediacy or recentness and the use of *have* in a context of duration or pastness. In chapter 9, I will return to this topic and discuss Priestley’s own usage of auxiliary selection with mutative intransitive verbs.
6.6.3. Other descriptions

There are several other instances where Priestley is purely descriptive. In these instances, he does not give any rules, but merely observes what happens in the language, without adding an opinion on whether such usage is correct or incorrect, proper or improper. Priestley was aware of the fact that the choice between a singular or plural verb form was problematic in the case of collective nouns. In the first edition of the *Rudiments of English Grammar*, he describes this as follows:

*Q.* Suppose the noun be a collective, or one that signifies many particulars under a singular form? *A.* The verb, in that case, may be either singular or plural; as the people says, or the people say (Priestley 1761a: 33).

In this case Priestley's attitude of not advocating either option was descriptive and perhaps even permissive. One passage in the first edition of his grammar shows Priestley's awareness of the pervasiveness of figurativeness in everyday language. Is this a foreshadowing of Lakoff & Johnson's ideas on metaphor in everyday language (Lakoff & Johnson 1980), albeit without the insights related to the structure of the language? He puts it as follows:

For the forms of expression that are not, ultimately, more or less figurative, are much fewer than is generally apprehended. Let a person, for his satisfaction, take a passage at random, from any author whatever, and analyze the words of it, and it will be found that few of them were, in all their parts, originally affixed to the ideas they now represent (Priestley 1761a: 53).

As there is no rule or stricture here whatsoever, this passage can be hardly anything but a straightforward description of contemporary usage. Priestley discussed the use of *may* as part of a positive politeness strategy. So although there was no theoretical framework for this until more than two hundred years later, its existence was known. He made the observation: "[i]n asking a question, the auxiliary verb *may* is sometimes used without any regard to its general meaning, but only, as it were, to soften the boldness there might be in an inquiry; as, *How old may you be*" (Priestley 1768a: 132).

In section 6.4, I touched upon the references Priestley makes to other language specialists, particularly Johnson and Lowth, when he either adopts
their rules or observations, or disagrees with them. The following comment regarding the conjugations of the subjunctive form of the verb *to be* contains a reference to Johnson, but contains no evaluation on the correctness or propriety of his rule: “[c]onjunctive form of the present tense. *If I be. If we be. If thou be* [...] Mr. Johnson says *beest*” (Priestley 1768a: 20).

Whereas the rule “add *s* to the singular” for pluralisation of nouns was already generally known in the eighteenth century, Priestley notes the occasional use of “-*s* for the same purpose without referring to a confusion with the genitive form, used for the plural.

> Sometimes we find an apostrophe used in the plural number, when the noun ends in a vowel; as *inamorato’s, toga’s, tunica’s, Otho’s, a set of virtuoso’s.*

Addison on Medals (Priestley 1768a: 57)

In this case, Priestley observed a variant usage and described it without expressing an opinion as to its grammaticality or appropriateness.

### 6.7. Summary and discussion

In this chapter, I have shown that Priestley was more than a mere grammarian. Using explicit credentials, following Chapman (2008) it can be shown that Priestley qualifies for the title of language expert. Investigating Priestley’s linguistic awareness and his metalanguage brought into light specific, technical, and accurate linguistic aspects to his expertise, which are typical of the kind of insights we associate with modern linguistics. Taking these things into account, Priestley can rightly be called a proto-linguist. Eighteenth-century norms of linguistic correctness were ultimately created by a (discourse) community of grammarians, to which Priestley also belonged. This community used the newly risen, and rising, popular press as a forum, from which to discuss the climate of normativism. The origins of Priestley’s norms of correctness appear to have lain with the educated middle class, as exemplified intellectuals like David Hume and the authors involved with *The Spectator* for instance. In this he differs from Lowth.
Priestley uses different types of linguistic metalanguage for proscriptive and prescriptive comments. Even though it is sometimes hard to distinguish between the two, what we see is that Priestley often uses different verbs with proscriptions than he does with prescriptions. He often made use of the semi-modal *ought to* make hedged prescriptions, using the deontic modal *must* when hedging was not required. When proscriptions required hedging, he often used the verb *seem*. Like many of his contemporaries, Priestley also used well-known authors – often referred to by grammarians as the ‘best writers’ – as examples of bad English. Interestingly, he also often used the same authors as examples of correct and proper English. Finally, Priestley’s descriptivism has been demonstrated by studying two sets of ‘rules’: those for the use of *shall* and *will*, and those for the use of the auxiliary *be* or *have* with the past participles of mutative intransitive verbs.
7. The Grammars of Priestley and Lowth Compared

7.1. Introduction
The following remark from Priestley’s *Rudiments of English Grammar* seems a fairly typical example of the kind of prescriptive comment we have come to expect in an eighteenth-century English grammar book: “[w]e should now say, *went their way*; but, in the Yorkshire dialect, it is still, *went their ways*” (Priestley 1768a: 66). In chapter 6, I showed that Priestley’s *Rudiments of English Grammar* contains both prescriptive and descriptive elements. In this chapter, I wish to address the question of how prescriptive and how descriptive Priestley’s grammar was. To this end I will perform a quantitative analysis of the prescriptive and descriptive language in Priestley’s *Rudiments of English Grammar* compared to Lowth’s *Short Introduction to English Grammar*. A quantitative analysis of prescriptivism can provide a fresh perspective on the relationship between the different grammars and will present a more subtle understanding of the linguistic ideas of their authors.

In the same chapter I also discussed Priestley’s use of modal auxiliaries in his prescriptive language. Deontic and epistemic modal auxiliaries seem to be indicative of prescriptive and descriptive language, as shown in the following two examples from the grammars of Priestley and Lowth respectively:

1. Q. Suppose the noun to be a *collective*, or one that signifies many particulars under a singular form? A. The verb, in that case, *may* be either singular or plural (Priestley 1761a: 33).

2. “It is the case of some, to contrive false periods of business, because they may seem men of dispatch.” Bacon, Essay xxv. We *should* now make use of *that* (Lowth 1763: 99f).

I will therefore analyse the use of modals in the grammars of Lowth and Priestley by way of a corpus based approach. First, I will show how the perspectives of modern linguists on prescriptivism have changed from the twentieth to the early twenty-first century, particularly in relation to the two grammarians.
around whom this chapter revolves (section 7.2). This discussion partly reiterates the argument I made in chapter 5. Where prescriptive and descriptive attitudes are concerned, these two grammarians have been regarded very differently by scholars of the history of the English language, as I shall illustrate as well. After that, I will reintroduce the use of modal auxiliary verb forms as indicators of prescriptive and descriptive language and describe a new method of analysis (section 7.3). I will then give the results of the analysis and their interpretation (section 7.4). Before concluding, I will discuss the results in theoretical and sociohistorical contexts (section 7.5), and end with a summary and discussion (section 7.6).

7.2. Historical perspectives on Priestley and Lowth

For most of the twentieth-century, historical linguistics by and large believed that the English grammars published in the second half of the eighteenth century were predominantly prescriptive, and that true descriptive grammars were rare. Priestley’s place in studies of the time has already been discussed in chapter 5. In many of the same works, Lowth is represented as the most visible proponent of eighteenth-century prescriptivism. Tieken-Boon van Ostadé (2000b: 876) notes that Lowth’s prominence in the field is exemplified by the fact that, besides Noah Webster, he is the only eighteenth-century grammarian listed in the Oxford Companion to the English Language, despite the great popularity of other grammars such as those of John Ash and Lindley Murray. Baugh & Cable claim that “Lowth was […] much more conservative in his stand, a typical representative of the normative and prescriptive school of grammarians” (Baugh & Cable 2002: 274–275), and Leonard notes that “Johnson and Lowth are but unwilling witnesses to the force of custom” (Leonard 1929: 141). Priestley was usually seen as representing the “lone voice” of descriptivism in the predominantly prescriptivist English eighteenth century.

A noteworthy exception to this view was presented by Bryan (1923: 383), who counted Priestley and Lowth among the founders of English prescriptive grammar. This work preceded by a few years the highly influential works of
Leonard (1929) and Baugh (1935) and was therefore unaffected by the subsequently evolving doctrine of Priestley and Lowth as diametrical opposites that these works helped establish. This stereotypical view of Priestley and Lowth has endured until at least far into the late nineteen seventies, as shown in chapter 5.

According to Azad (1989), however, Priestley and Lowth were not that different from each other as grammarians, and he argued that "[t]he difference in tone between Lowth and Priestley is not a substantial divergence in linguistic theory but rather a disagreement on the role of the grammarians" (Azad 1989: 153–154). He finds Priestley not to be the descriptivist he had been made out to be, nor Lowth a mere prescriptivist:

[W]e can see that Lowth is as ‘descriptive’ as he is ‘prescriptive’ in his grammatical purposes. It is inadequate to say that Lowth [...] paid only lip-service to the Horatian dictum while ignoring its real spirit and import (Azad 1989: 139).

Azad argues that the labelling of grammars as either prescriptive or descriptive was not precise enough, saying that "[w]hat has become clear is the inadequacy of the ‘prescriptive-descriptive’ model on linguistic thought during this period" (Azad 1989: 220).1

Without diminishing the importance of the work of the early twentieth-century scholars, we may now realise that because their technical resources were comparatively limited, their analysis remains to a certain extent impressionistic. The availability of electronic resources such as Eighteenth Century Collections Online (ECCO) and an ever increasing store of historical corpora of private genres such as letters and diaries enable present-day scholars to carry out research on primary texts on a scale unavailable – perhaps even unimaginable – to their twentieth-century predecessors. Partly as a consequence of these technical developments the received view regarding Lowth and Priestley has become increasingly contested in recent years.

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1 Expressed in an unpublished doctoral dissertation, Azad’s ideas have not been generally available and have only been given wider attention in Hodson (2008).
Tieken-Boon van Ostade has shown that the prescriptivism for which Lowth has been censured was not primarily the result of a personal predilection towards correctness, observing that "Lowth's current status is that of an icon of prescriptivism which results from a misunderstanding of his aims and motivations in publishing his Short Introduction to English Grammar" (Tieken-Boon van Ostade 2010b: 74). She goes on to mention that Lowth's initial motivation in writing the grammar was to have an instructive text for his son. In other words, the grammar was initially intended for private, not public use. After Lowth's publisher Robert Dodsley (1704–1764) got involved, the project and the grammar entered the public domain and it became better suited to the learned than to young children.

Hodson (2006: 60) suggests that the concepts of prescriptivism and descriptivism are in essence constructs of twentieth-century academia, stranded on the shores of linguistics by the launch of Ferdinand de Saussure's Cours de Linguistique Générale (1916). Hodson argues that although Priestley is usually represented as a descriptive grammarian, there are reasons to question this representation. She notes that "for Priestley there is simply no contradiction between believing that some forms of language are better than others, and believing that such forms will establish themselves by common consent without the adjudications of grammarians" (Hodson 2006: 66-67). Beal astutely observes that prescriptivism and descriptivism are not the opposite parts of a dichotomy, but that "eighteenth-century grammarians had a range of motives for writing their grammars, and that these and later grammars, far from being uniformly 'prescriptive', would be better described as occupying different points on a prescriptive-descriptive continuum" (Beal 2004: 90).

The grammars of Priestley and Lowth would have a place near opposite ends of such a continuum, with Lowth's on the prescriptive and Priestley's on the descriptive end of it. If Priestley and Lowth are really so different in their normativism, this should be reflected in the use of prescriptive and descriptive metalanguage in their grammars. A quantitative analysis of prescriptiveness and descriptiveness in their grammars will help to refine their positions on this
continuum, and provide a clearer notion of how the two grammars relate to one another. If they are indeed at opposite ends of such a continuum, a quantitative study should show this and also give an indication of its scope. In addition, if it appears that the grammarians do not occupy such clearly distinct positions on this prescriptive-descriptive continuum, then this has important consequences for the way in which we need to view the general distinction between prescriptive and descriptive grammars and grammarians.

7.3. Analysing grammars
The traditional approach to assessing prescriptivism in grammars has been to study the grammarians’ use of explicit prescriptive and proscriptive evaluations. These would, for instance, include terms such as barbarous, harsh or solecism. Examples of this approach are the Dictionary of English Normative Grammar (Sundby et al. 1991) and Wolf’s analysis of the metalanguage of English grammars from the Early and Late Modern periods (Wolf 2005). This chapter also investigates the metalanguage of the grammars of Priestley and Lowth, but does so in a different way, by analysing their use of modal auxiliary verb forms.

7.3.1. Modals as indicators
The main reason for choosing modal verbs as indicators of prescriptive, proscriptive or descriptive language is that, being less salient, their use perhaps represents a less conscious choice by the author than the use of evaluative terms such as those included in traditional approaches. The reason for this is that the choice of a specific evaluative noun phrase is primarily based on its denotation, whilst the choice of a verb form entails more of a functional consideration. It can be assumed that these verb forms represent the grammarian’s prescriptive or descriptive attitude more faithfully than explicit normative evaluations.

It can be assumed that the modal auxiliary verb forms used as indicators in Late Modern English have at least a significant semantic overlap with their
counterparts in Present Day English. For example, the verb *ought to* is defined in Johnson's *Dictionary* as follows:

*Ought*. verb imperfect. [...] 1. Owed; was bound to pay; have been indebted. [...] 2. To be obliged by duty. 3. To be fit; to be necessary [Johnson 1755, Vol.2, s.v. 'ought'].

The *Oxford English Dictionary* has the following definition:

As a modal auxiliary. Expressing duty or obligation of any kind; originally used of moral obligation, but also in various more general senses, expressing what is proper, correct, advisable, befitting, or expected. (*OED*, s.v. 'ought').

The similarity of these definitions is evident. What is of most interest here is that, throughout his *Dictionary*, Johnson himself uses *ought to* almost exclusively in the modern sense, which fits best with the definition under 2 "to be obliged by duty". This seems to confirm that the meaning and use of *ought to* as a modal verb has not changed dramatically in two hundred years. Myhill (1995: 162) observes that there was a rise in the use of *ought to* expressing weak obligation in nineteenth-century American English, and Biber et al. (1998: 209) found that there was comparatively little use of *ought to* before 1800. Despite these later changes in usage, neither Priestley's grammar nor Lowth's make any note of the use of *ought to* as a semi-modal auxiliary. The fact that both grammarians appear to use *ought to* in more or less the same sense as we do now seems to indicate that although it was used as a deontic semi-modal expressing weak obligation, there was little salience of its function as such.

Vorlat considers the use of deontic modals to be an indicator of prescriptivism in Lindley Murray's *English Grammar, Adapted to the Different Classes of Learners* (1795). She notes that "[i]f to all the preceding data one adds Murray's overwhelming use of deontic modals in the wording of the rules, [...] there is no denying the prescriptive character of the *English Grammar*" (Vorlat 1996: 168). Vorlat goes on to cite the forms *ought to, must and should* as specific indicators of the prescriptive character of Murray's grammar. However, she does not consider the use of other modals in prescriptive language, or their use in descriptive language. Extrapolating from her approach, I will assume that the
use of the deontic modal auxiliaries _ought to, must, should_ and also _would_ is indicative of prescriptive language, as in the following examples:

(3) I might with better reason contend, that it _ought to_ be “his descending,” because it is in Greek ... in the Genitive; and it would be as good Grammar, and as proper English (Lowth 1763: 116f).

(4) Different relations, and different senses, _must_ be expressed by different prepositions; the’ in conjunction with the same verb or adjective (Priestley 1768a: 154).

(5) The third Person or thing spoken of being absent and in many respects unknown, it is necessary that it _should_ be marked by a distinction of Gender (Lowth 1763: 31).

(6) The singular number _would_ have been better than the plural, in the following sentence, _putting our minds into the disposals of others_. Locke (Priestley 1768a: 67).

As I have noted in chapter 6, Tieken-Boon van Oostade (2010b: 83) argues that Lowth’s use of _ought to_ is not strongly prescriptive and can be seen as a kind of hedge, used to mitigate the force of the stricture. I have also discussed some aspects of Priestley’s use of hedges in his grammar in chapter 6. While it is true that both _ought to_ and _would_ are less strongly prescriptive than _must_ and _should_, they are nonetheless instances of prescriptivism. Though the grammarian may be less certain of his claim, there would be no need for the use of a hedge if they were not prescriptions to begin with. I will therefore count the use of all these modals as an indication of prescriptive language and not make a distinction between modals that are more or less strongly prescriptive. The use of deontic _cannot_ is taken as indicative of prescriptive language, as in the example below:

(7) Adverbs expressing _similitude, or manner, cannot_ be so formed from Nouns (Lowth 1763: 137).

Alternatively, the use of epistemic _may_ and _might_ can be said to present the reader with options for a particular use. In using them, the author allows the reader to decide which of these is correct, most acceptable or most true to actual usage, instead of making that decision for the reader. Seen in this way,
the use of these two modals can be said to indicate descriptive language, as shown in the following two examples:

(8) Some verbs have two participles preterite, which may be used indifferently; as to load; he is laden (Priestley 1768a: 17).

(9) Originally, this form of expression might have been designed to express ridicule (Priestley 1768a: 79).

These seven modal auxiliaries, i.e. cannot, may, might, must, ought to, should and would, are analysed as the primary indicators for prescriptive, proscriptive and descriptive language. For any particular modal verb form, its collocations are noted in order to ensure that that particular verb form is the one with the right sense.

7.3.2. Control items

In order to ensure the validity of using modal auxiliaries as indicators of prescriptive and descriptive language, I also counted the instances of the verbs require and seem (see also section 6.5.4). I consider require to be indicative of prescriptive and seem of descriptive language, as illustrated in the following two examples:

(10) Fraught seems rather to be an Adjective than the Participle of the Verb to freight, which has regularly freighted (Lowth 1762: 71).

(11) Two nominative cases singular require the verb to be in the plural number (Priestley 1761a: 32).

In chapter 6, I have shown that in Priestley’s grammar the use of seem often indicates a hedged prescription. However, this is not its exclusive usage and it might also indicate descriptive comments, as in the example (10). So in addition to the frequencies of occurrence of the seven modal auxiliaries mentioned above, I also included the ones for these two items. They are secondary indicators of prescriptive and descriptive language and should be seen and used as control items for the modals.
7.3.3. Grammar corpora

The use of modal verb forms as indicators of prescriptive and descriptive language will be analysed in the first and second editions of Priestley’s *Rudiments of English Grammar* (1761a, 1768a) and the first and second editions of Robert Lowth’s *Short Introduction to English Grammar* (1762, 1763). I will analyse these editions to unearth any developments between them. To enable a quantitative analysis, I have created machine-readable corpora for these four grammars by rekeyboarding them into plain text files. This yielded the following corpora, summarised in Table 7.3.1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>corpus</th>
<th>grammar</th>
<th>edition</th>
<th>number of words</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Priestley1761</td>
<td><em>Rudiments of English Grammar</em></td>
<td>1761</td>
<td>13,749</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Priestley1768</td>
<td></td>
<td>1768</td>
<td>28,485</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lowth1762</td>
<td><em>Short Introduction to English Grammar</em></td>
<td>1762</td>
<td>21,631</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lowth1763</td>
<td></td>
<td>1763</td>
<td>25,537</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7.3.1. Sizes of the corpora of Priestley’s *Rudiments of English Grammar* (1761, 1768) and Lowth’s *Short Introduction to English Grammar* (1762, 1763).

Only the authors’ own texts were retained: front matter, quotations, tables, illustrations and examples taken from other authors were not included.

7.3.4. Statistical analyses

The corpora were analysed using the concordance function of *WordSmith 4.0* (Scott 2004), a commercial software package for corpus analysis. The frequencies of the primary and secondary indicators were counted and tested for statistical significance. I calculated the $\chi^2$ (chi-squared) statistic to determine the level of significance of any difference between the frequencies of occurrence of two items. Since $\chi^2$ tends to become inaccurate when used to calculate statistical significance for items with low frequencies of occurrence (see Rayson *et al.* 2004: 3), the $G^2$ (log-likelihood ratio) statistic was used to

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2 The analyses in the following chapters use *WordSmith Tools 5.0*, which had not yet been released when the analysis in this chapter was performed.
determine significance instead, when both the individual scores of an item were less than 10. The variables involved in the calculation of the $\chi^2$ and $G^2$ statistics are given in Table 7.3.2 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>corpus 1</th>
<th>corpus 2</th>
<th>total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>frequency of feature</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>b</td>
<td>a+b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>frequency of feature not occurring</td>
<td>c</td>
<td>d</td>
<td>c+d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>total</td>
<td>a+c</td>
<td>b+d</td>
<td>N=a+b+c+d</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7.3.2. Contingency table for chi-squared and log likelihood tests.

From the values in this contingency table, the chi-squared statistic is calculated as follows:

$$\chi^2 = \frac{N(ad-bc)^2}{((a+b)(c+d)(a+c)(b+d))},$$

while the $G^2$ is calculated in the following way:

$$G^2 = 2 \cdot \frac{(a/\ln a + b/\ln b + c/\ln c + d/\ln d)N - (a+b)\ln(a+b)-(a+c)\ln(a+c)-(b+d)\ln(b+d)-(c+d)\ln(c+d))}{N\ln N - (a+b)\ln(a+b)-(a+c)\ln(a+c)-(b+d)\ln(b+d)-(c+d)\ln(c+d)}. $$

After statistical testing, differences found between scores are either non-significant (p>0.05), significant (p<0.01), or weakly significant (p<0.05).

**7.4. Results**

**7.4.1. The grammars of Priestley and Lowth**

The normalised frequency scores of both the primary and secondary indicators mentioned for the first and second editions of the grammars are summarised in Table 7.4.1, normalised per ten thousand words. Using the figures from Table 7.4.1, the grammars were compared to each other and differences were tested for statistical significance.
Table 7.4.1. Primary and secondary indicators of prescriptivism and descriptivism in Priestley1761, Priestley1768, Lowth1762 and Lowth1763.

Table 7.4.2 contains the results of this statistical comparison of both the grammars and their editions with each other. The shaded boxes indicate that the corresponding texts are the same and therefore cannot be compared. Boldface indicates that these items occur significantly more often in the text given in the corresponding row, than in the text in the corresponding column.

Table 7.4.2. Differences in occurrence of *may, might, must, ought to, require, seem, should and would* in Priestley1761, Priestley1768, Lowth1762 and Lowth1763.

Table 7.4.2 shows that *ought to* occurs significantly more often in Lowth1763 than in Priestley1768. A dash indicates that there were no significant differences between the texts associated with that box for any of the indicators, which is the case, for instance, between the first editions of the grammars. As can be seen in Table 7.4.2, at most four out of a total of nine indicators show a significant difference when any two texts are compared. This indicates that
there is actually not much difference between the grammars of Priestley and Lowth, or between the first and second editions of either grammar. Lowth’s 1762 and 1763 editions do not even show any differences at all. This confirms Chapman’s claim that “Lowth is not as prescriptive nor Priestley as descriptive as they have been made out to be” (2008: 33). Generally speaking, Lowth tends to use the indicator of prescriptivism ought to more often than Priestley, who in turn shows a greater tendency to use the indicators of descriptiveness might and seem. On the other hand, Priestley uses the indicator of prescriptivism should more often than Lowth, which does not fit a prescriptive-descriptive dichotomy. So far, what we can observe is that, based on these indicators, Priestley seems somewhat more prescriptive than has been previously assumed. Consequently, further analysis seems to be required.

If we think of prescriptivism and descriptivism as diametrical opposites, it follows that it is possible for an instance of prescriptive language to negate an instance of descriptive language. If they are represented as lying on a linear continuum instead, then we can entertain the more accurate notion that they are either closer or further apart. However, neither of these conceptualisations offers a satisfactory interpretation for the results found so far. So what place on the prescriptive-descriptive continuum can we allocate to the grammars of Priestley and Lowth? Since instances of prescriptive and descriptive language cannot physically cancel each other out, it is likely that they cannot do so conceptually either. Consequently, it seems useful to view prescriptivism and descriptivism as being independent from one another rather than as diametrical opposites. Seen in this way, they can be more advantageously represented in a two-dimensional continuum rather than in a linear one, with prescriptivism and descriptivism being the two dimensions.\footnote{Using the same argument above, proscriptiveness can be seen as an independent third variable, the prescriptive indicator cannot is not included. Ideally, in a complete representation, a third orthogonal axis would have to be included in the graph, thereby representing proscriptiveness, descriptiveness and proscriptiveness in a three-dimensional graph. However, not to unduly complicate matters, I have restricted myself to the visual representation of prescriptiveness and descriptiveness.} This can be done by simply
adding up the frequencies of occurrence of the primary indicators of prescriptive language from Table 7.4.1 and dividing them by the number of indicators used. The resulting positions of the grammars are plotted in a graph, and the same is done for the descriptive indicators. The results of the calculations mentioned above are plotted in Figure 7.4.1, which shows a two-dimensional plane in which prescriptiveness is plotted against descriptiveness.

![Graph](image-url)

Figure 7.4.1. Prescriptiveness and descriptiveness of Priestley1761, Priestley1768, Lowth1762 and Lowth1763 by modal auxiliaries.

Statistically speaking, none of the texts is actually significantly different from the other, although Priestley’s grammar appears to be more descriptive than Lowth’s. We can interpret the graph more readily by considering a diagonal line, starting outward from the origin, bisecting the plane as indicated. Below the diagonal, we would expect to find grammars in which prescriptive language predominates. Conversely, above the diagonal, we would expect to find grammars in which descriptive language predominates.
In the context of a prescriptive-descriptive dichotomy between Lowth and Priestley, we would expect to find Lowth’s grammars below and to the right of the diagonal and Priestley’s above and to the left of it. However, Figure 7.4.1 shows that this is not the case: all the texts occupy more or less the same area, along the diagonal or slightly above it. This means that as far as modal auxiliaries are concerned, prescriptiveness and descriptiveness are more or less in balance in these grammars. In addition, none of the four versions of the grammars appear in the prescriptive area below the diagonal. This indicates that none of the four grammars is predominantly prescriptive, which is especially surprising in the case of Lowth, from whom we are led to expect prescriptivism. At first glance, and as was expected, Priestley does appear to be more descriptive than Lowth, but this difference is not statistically significant and therefore does not warrant the great difference in their reputations. It should be noted that this conclusion is only based on the use of modal auxiliaries. An analysis such as this cannot replace an analysis of the use of evaluative terms, such as in Sundby et al. (1991). Indeed, it should not be used to replace but to supplement such studies.

A similar graph to that of Figure 7.4.1 can be made by plotting the normalised scores of the control indicators: require and seem, indicating prescriptive and descriptive language respectively. The result is shown in Figure 7.4.2 below, which acts as a control for Figure 7.4.1 and shows the same general tendency. All four grammars lie in the area above and to the left of the diagonal, just as in Figure 7.4.1, which means that they all appear in the area of the graph that represents texts which are more descriptive than prescriptive.

In short, all four grammars are about equally prescriptive and descriptive, and only Priestley1768 is significantly more descriptive than Priestley1761, Lowth1762 and Lowth1763. Sundby et al. suggest that the second edition of Priestley’s grammar was more prescriptive than the first (1991: 38), but this is not found in the present analysis.
7.4.2. The grammars proper versus notes

The above analysis shows that a comparison of both authors and editions yields hardly any significant differences in prescriptiveness and descriptiveness in the first and second editions of the two grammars. To find further evidence for the idea that the grammars are not so different after all, I decided to examine the texts of the grammars more closely. Hussey notes that Lowth gives examples of errors by well-known authors in the footnotes of his grammar (Hussey 1995: 154). Tieken-Boon van Ostade (1997: 452; 2006a: 544) found that actually the majority of Lowth’s prescriptions are to be found there. Similarly, Vorlat (2007: 501) found that the main text of the Grammar of the English Tongue (Brightland & Gildon 1711) is basically a translation of entire chapters of the French Port-Royal grammar, Grammaire Générale et Raisonnée (Arnauld & Lancelot 1660), with the authors’ opinions in the footnotes. This division between grammar and notes is typographically made even more explicit in Priestley1768. For the
second edition of his grammar, Priestley collected all the footnotes from the first and put them into a separate section at the end of the second edition along with additional comments (see Hodson 2008 for a more detailed study of the differences between the two editions of Priestley’s grammar).

This division between the grammar proper and the notes is typographically marked by the division on the title page, where the two parts are separated into title and subtitle: “The Rudiments of English Grammar [...] with Notes and Observations” (Priestley 1768a: iv). This typographical distinction is repeated in the text itself by the use of a half-title (Priestley 1768a: 57) introducing the ‘Notes and Observations’ (see also 6.5.3). In addition, Priestley himself also refers to the two parts of the work with different terms, something which he did not do in the first edition. He refers to the grammar proper as the “rudiments” in the preface, where he says: “I have retained the method of question and answer in the rudiments, because I am still persuaded, it is both the most convenient for the master, and the most intelligible to the scholar” (Priestley 1768a: vi). These “rudiments”, as Priestley calls this part of the book, are by and large the same as the grammar of the first edition, as he indicates on the same page: “[t]hese materials [the Rules and Observations], therefore, I have [...] subjoined them to the former grammar” (Priestley 1768a: vi).

The grammars of Priestley and Lowth can therefore both be seen as containing two separate texts in either edition. There is the grammar proper, the part of the book that gives such features as the definitions of the parts of speech and the conjugation of verbs, and there are the notes made by the author, consisting of the footnotes in both Lowth1762, Lowth1763 and Priestley1761, and the ‘Notes and Observations’ in Priestley1768. The grammars proper appear to be rather similar in content and manner of expression, and fit nicely into the received form of the genre. This is not surprising, since the two grammars proper are in fact rather similar. In a systematic inventory of seventeenth and eighteenth-century English grammars, based on the systems of parts of speech they adopted, Michael classifies both grammars as belonging to the Latin system (Michael 1970: 225–228, 231–232). If indeed the notes, rather
than the grammars, express the author’s opinions, they should turn out to be less systematically uniform and less similar than the grammars. To investigate this, I divided each edition of the grammars into two sections: the grammar proper and the notes, creating a total of eight texts. The sizes of the resulting sub-corpora are given in Table 7.4.3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>author</th>
<th>grammar</th>
<th>edition</th>
<th>number of words</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Joseph Priestley</td>
<td><em>Radiments of English Grammar</em></td>
<td>1761</td>
<td>11,246</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1768</td>
<td>9,398</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert Lowth</td>
<td><em>Short Introduction to English Grammar</em></td>
<td>1762</td>
<td>16,160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1763</td>
<td>17,764</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7.4.3. Sizes (number of words) of the sub-corpora of Priestley1761, Priestley1768, Lowth1762 and Lowth1763.

Figures 4.2.1 and 4.2.2 indicated that the four grammars analyses are rather uniform when it comes to prescriptiveness and descriptiveness. If indeed these two aspects are found in separate sections of the grammars, as suggested above, then an analysis of the use of prescriptive and descriptive language in these sections could illustrate this. The frequencies of occurrence for the primary and secondary indicators were counted and the resulting normalised frequency scores are given in Table 7.4.4 below.

The sub-corpora were compared to each other and the results tested for statistical significance. The results of this analysis are summarised in Table 7.4.5 below. The shaded boxes in this table indicate that a comparison between the corresponding text could not be made. As in Table 7.4.2, items in boldface occur more in the text given in the corresponding row than in the text in the corresponding column, and a dash indicates that there were no significant differences between the texts associated with that box for any of the indicators.
Table 7.4.4. Frequency of occurrence /10,000 words of modals in grammar sections and notes sections of Priestley1761, Priestley1768, Lowth1762 and Lowth1763.

For example, Table 7.4.5 shows that *ought to, require, should, seem* and *would* occur significantly more often in the notes than in the grammar proper of Priestley1768. Similarly, it shows that *ought to, require* and *seem* occur significantly more often in the notes of Lowth1762 than in the grammar proper of the same edition. Table 7.4.5 seems to confirm that the grammar proper and the notes constitute two separate texts with rather different styles. This is shown most clearly by a generally more frequent use of modals in the notes compared to the grammars proper. Between two and five indicators show statistically significant differences between these two sections in all four cases.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Priestley 1761 grammar</th>
<th>Priestley 1761 notes</th>
<th>Priestley 1768 grammar</th>
<th>Priestley 1768 notes</th>
<th>Lowth 1762 grammar</th>
<th>Lowth 1762 notes</th>
<th>Lowth 1763 grammar</th>
<th>Lowth 1763 notes</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Priestley 1761 grammar</td>
<td>require, seem, ought to, would</td>
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<tr>
<td>Priestley 1761 notes</td>
<td>require, seem</td>
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<tr>
<td>Priestley 1768 grammar</td>
<td>ought to, require, should, seem, would</td>
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<td>Priestley 1768 notes</td>
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<td>Lowth 1762 grammar</td>
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<td>Lowth 1762 notes</td>
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<td>Lowth 1763 grammar</td>
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<td>Lowth 1763 notes</td>
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Table 7.4.5. Differences in occurrence of *may, might, must, ought to, require, seem, should* and *would* in main texts and notes of Priestley 1761, Priestley 1768, Lowth 1762 and Lowth 1763.

The most noticeable item in this table is the indicator of prescriptive language *ought to*. Whenever notes and grammars proper are compared, *ought to* occurs more often in the notes, and whenever the two grammarians are compared, *ought to* occurs more often in Lowth’s. Both these findings are expected within the context of a prescriptive-descriptive dichotomy. However, it is also obvious
that where the other indicators are concerned, there is no clear pattern of division.

Generally speaking, Priestley uses the indicator of descriptivism may more often than Lowth, but he also uses the indicator of prescriptivism must more often. Instead of a division between prescriptive and descriptive language, it may be that what we are dealing with is rather a matter of difference in authorial style, where Lowth seems to heavily favour ought to and Priestley tends towards using must more often. Lowth’s favouring of ought to may well indicate, as Tieken-Boon van Ostade (2010b: 83) suggests, a tendency to hedge his prescriptions.

As with the analysis of the grammars in their entirety, the positions of the two sections in the two editions of the grammars can be shown visually in a two-dimensional graph. Similar to that analysis, this can be accomplished by dividing the sum of the frequencies of the indicators by the number of indicators used. For the same reasons mentioned above, the prescriptive indicator cannot is not included here. The results of these calculations are plotted in Figure 7.4.3 below, which again shows a two-dimensional plane in which prescriptiveness is plotted against descriptiveness.

Figure 7.4.3 shows a fairly clear division between the grammars proper and the notes, especially in the case of Lowth. The notes of Lowth1762, Lowth1763 and Priestley1768 are all significantly more prescriptive than the corresponding grammars proper. This can be seen as evidence that these texts are rather different and may even be said to constitute different text types. Figure 7.4.3 also shows that the grammars proper are all very similar and that the distinction between Priestley and Lowth is predominantly present in the notes. The two editions of Lowth’s grammar proper are even so similar that they occupy the same place in the graph.
Figure 7.4.3. Prescriptiveness and descriptiveness of grammar and notes sections of Priestley1761, Priestley1768, Lowth1762 and Lowth1763 by modal auxiliaries.

In other words, the notes appear to bear the voice of the author much more clearly than the grammars, which are rather unremarkable in that respect. Priestley’s notes appear to be at the same time more descriptive and more prescriptive than his grammar proper, and the same appears to be true for Lowth’s notes. Priestley’s notes appear slightly above the diagonal and Lowth’s slightly below it, which indicates that Priestley is more descriptive than prescriptive in his notes and Lowth more prescriptive than descriptive. It should be noted that this graph does not show that none of the differences between these are actually statistically significant.

Analogous to Figure 7.4.2, a second graph can be drawn by plotting the normalised scores of the control indicators require and seem. The result is shown in Figure 7.4.4 below, which shows the same general tendency as Figure 7.4.3.
Figure 7.44. Descriptiveness and descriptiveness of grammar and notes sections of Priestley1761, Priestley1768, Lowth1762 and Lowth1763 by control items.

The grammars proper appear more or less separate from the notes: the grammars are all piled into one corner of the graph and the notes are further away, extending outward more or less along the diagonal starting from the origin of the graph. All four grammars show significant differences between the grammars proper and the notes, but again there are no significant differences between the texts of the different authors. Only the notes of Priestley1768 show a weakly significant difference (p<0.05) when compared to those of Lowth1762 and Lowth1763.

Generally speaking it seems that when the texts of Priestley's and Lowth's grammars are examined in more detail, there appear to be stylistic differences between the sections that contain the grammar proper and those that contain the author's notes. The grammars proper are fairly formulaic and do not show much of the voice of the individual author. The notes that accompany the
grammars are more interesting, as they show some differences in usage of modal verb forms. This is illustrated to a greater or lesser degree in Figures 7.4.3 and 7.4.4. In these graphs, the grammars proper are located closer to the origin of the graph, whereas the notes are all located further out along both axes. A location close to the origin indicates the absence of both prescriptive and descriptive language and can therefore be said to represent a relatively unmarked style. Conversely, a location further away from it in any direction indicates a more marked style, whether it be prescriptive or descriptive. As in this case the notes lie along the diagonal extending from the origin, their style appears to be about equally prescriptive and descriptive.

7.5. Theoretical issues

The results of the analyses in this study require some comments to be made regarding its implications on the concepts of prescriptivism and descriptivism as linguistic concepts, the sociohistorical context of the grammars and the subject of these eighteenth-century grammars as a text type.

7.5.1. Prescriptive, descriptive, or normative

As Hodson (2006: 68) argues, the concepts of prescriptivism and descriptivism had little meaning in an eighteenth-century context and would appear alien to grammarians of that time. This idea provides an insight to why we find no clear-cut differences in the grammars of Priestley and Lowth when it comes to prescriptive and descriptive language. The results presented in section 7.4 show that these grammars are neither completely prescriptive, nor completely descriptive. Rather than being a dead end, this observation is a starting point which allows us to begin to explain their similarities. With respect to seventeenth-century grammars, Vorlat argues that the distinction between prescriptive and descriptive grammars is insufficient, and adds a third category, normative, which is defined as under (2) in the following:

(1) descriptive registration of language, without value judgments […] (2) normative grammar, still based on language use, but favoring the language of one or more social or regional groups and more than once written with a
pedagogical purpose; (3) prescriptive grammar, not based on usage but on a set of logical (or other) criteria (Vorlat 1979: 129).

Vorlat’s distinction between descriptive, normative and prescriptive grammar is also applicable to eighteenth-century grammars (see also Tieken-Boon van Ostade 2000b: 885–886). However, her distinction between prescriptive and normative grammar has not always been generally accepted. The equation of normative grammar with prescriptive grammar, as exemplified in Baugh & Cable (2002: 274–275) is at times also perpetuated in modern sociolinguistics, as in the Glossary of Sociolinguistics (2003), where it says in the definition of ‘prescriptive’ that “[a]nother word for prescriptive is normative, since proponents of this point of view believe that norms of ‘correct’ usage should be adhered to” (Trudgill 2003: 107).

It seems productive, however, to adopt Vorlat’s three-way distinction, as this allows us to categorise the grammars of Priestley and Lowth more accurately as being primarily normative rather than prescriptive or descriptive. Whether they described or prescribed, Priestley and Lowth both lived in a time in which the general outlook on the English language was normative, and they took an active part in the codification of that norm themselves (see also Tieken-Boon van Ostade 2000b: 877, and chapter 6 above). Thus, the term normative can be said to refer to a more general ideology, and the terms descriptive and prescriptive refer to specific practices in expressing that ideology. Taking this distinction into consideration, the similarities in their grammars that were found in this study now look a lot less curious.

7.5.2. The use of grammars
When labelling grammars as prescriptive, descriptive or normative, it seems useful to make a distinction between the intent of the author-grammarian, and the effect that a grammar has in the real world, on the public and on the codification of the language. This includes the way in which a grammar is used after it has been made available to the public. Unfortunately, this means that Vorlat’s neat division needs to become more fuzzy, which does not make the use of the
terms descriptive, normative and prescriptive any easier. To clear matters up a little, I would say that it is altogether possible that neither Priestley nor Lowth had the intention to be prescriptive or descriptive in the sense that we understand these terms, because these concepts may not have conflicted in their understanding of them. The effect of these grammars, seen in a sociohistorical context, definitely has been normative and they may even have been intended as such. A more obvious effect is that because of the way these grammars were used as sources of correct usage by individual readers, they have turned out to be prescriptive as well. In short, the use that is made of a grammar after it was published contributes to the way it is viewed by posterity. Even modern grammars that are supposed to be purely descriptive, such as the *Cambridge Grammar of the English Language* (Huddleston & Pullum 2002), which is often used and cited by linguists, inevitably acquire a prescriptive nature as soon as they are used by readers to determine correct usage, or what is perceived as such. Descriptive, linguistic grammars, like all texts, do not stand on their own. They do not exist in a vacuum, but engage in a social interaction with their readers. This interactions invariably changes the text's standing both in the community in which it finds itself and in the community from which it originated.

7.5.3. The sociohistorical context

Taking the sociohistorical context of the grammars into account, it is not so curious that Priestley seems to be more prescriptive than has usually been assumed. Even if it were to be seen as a descriptive grammar, it must be remembered that his *Rudiments of English Grammar* was first and foremost a school grammar, as indicated by the words "Adapted to the Use of Schools" in the subtitle. Leonard suggests that the reason that grammars were not more descriptive in nature is that "the eighteenth-century grammarians and rhetoricians were mainly clergymen, retired gentlemen, and amateur philosophers [...] with an immense distaste for Locke's dangerous and subversive doctrines" (Leonard 1929: 13). He does not mention, however, that it was not uncommon
for these clergymen, Anglican and Dissenters alike, to be schoolmasters or lecturers at academies or universities as well. Lowth is an exception here, but although he was never a schoolmaster, he did intend his grammar to be used in an instructive setting. Some of these men were also amateur philosophers, although Priestley could hardly have been called an amateur, as I have argued in 6.2.

7.5.4. Grammars as a text type

Considering the function of these grammars in their sociohistorical context, they are expected to be normative given the instructive genre they belong to. The textual differences of the instructive genre can be roughly illustrated by the occurrence of *ought to* in different eighteenth-century text types (see Biber 1991: 70 for a definition and Görlach 2004 for an extensive discussion of text types in the history of English). As mentioned above, Biber et al. (1998: 209) found that compared to other modal auxiliaries the semi-modal *ought to* remains relatively rare in some eighteenth-century non-instructive genres, such as news, fiction and drama. However, this study shows frequencies of occurrence for *ought to* that are comparable to those of the other modal auxiliaries, which Tieken-Boon van Ostade (2010b: 83–84) also notes in Lowth’s grammar. The explanation lies in the difference in text type of the studied texts. The frequency of *ought to* can be expected to be higher in text types belonging to the instructive genre such as school grammars and handbooks – which by their very nature and purpose require a more prescriptive style – than in the text types investigated by Biber. This is why in this chapter *ought to* is found to occur about as often as *must* and *should*, which are also typical of the prescriptive style of instructive genres. It appears that a prescriptive style, or perhaps more accurately a didactic style, can be expected of text types in an instructive genre.

It will be interesting to subject other eighteenth-century grammars to the kind of analysis used in this study in order to construct a fuller picture of the language of this text type. In addition, a study of other text types within the
genre of instructive or didactic texts could further illustrate the style of the instructive genre. Additionally, such a study will provide a closer investigation of the relationship between text type and prescriptive language. These text types might include handbooks of law or leisure such as *The Compleat Attorney's Practice in English* (Jacob 1737) or *Mr. Hayle's Games of Whist, Quadrille, Piquet, Chess, and Back Gammon* (Hoyle 1760). They might also include cookbooks such as *The House-Keeper's Pocket-Book, and Compleat Family Cook* (Harrison 1733) and *The Servant's Directory, or House-Keeper's Companion* (Glasse 1760).

As far as the use of modal verb forms is concerned, I suspect that we might find that grammars constitute a single text type within the genre of instructive texts, sharing a common style. Comparing the language of eighteenth-century grammars of the instructive text type with eighteenth-century philosophical or universal grammars or with traditionally 'descriptive' genres or text types such as travel accounts and scientific reports may also lead to further insight into how language is related to text type in a historical context.

Both the *Rudiments of English Grammar* and the *Short Introduction to English Grammar* were school grammars, written by clergymen (though of different churches) and published at the same time in presumably similar social and philosophical climates. Considering only these sociohistorical facts, these grammars can be expected to be fairly similar. How is it possible that despite all these apparent similarities they have come to be regarded — inaccurately as it turns out — so very differently, one of them as decidedly descriptive and the other as decidedly prescriptive? The reason that Priestley and Lowth have these persistent reputations for descriptivism and prescriptivism respectively is likely to be in part due to their long unquestioned sociohistorical personae: the authoritative Anglican bishop Lowth and the enlightened Dissenter and scientist Priestley. In Priestley's case this was already noted by Hodson (2006: 64). It does not seem too far-fetched an idea that these personae and the labels attached to these two grammarians have reinforced each other in the history of
English grammar to the extent that they are taken as explanations for what may primarily be not much more than differences in authorial style.

7.6. Summary and discussion

It seems that a quantification of prescriptivism indeed helps us to solidify our changing ideas about the nature of Late Modern English grammars and their authors, as well as the nature of the concepts of prescriptivism and descriptivism themselves. The findings of this study agree with Beal’s suggestion that rather than there being a dichotomy between prescriptivism and descriptivism, there is a prescriptive-descriptive continuum. But in addition to this, since in the model I have proposed prescriptivism and descriptivism can be seen as independent of each other, they can be represented in a two-dimensional continuum, rather than a one-dimensional one. Where Lowth and Priestley are concerned, it seems that there is no dichotomy between prescriptivism and descriptivism. If such a dichotomy did exist, we would expect to find clear evidence of this in plots such as Figures 7.4.1 and 7.4.2. However, it is evident that this is not the case: none of the grammars is predominantly prescriptive or descriptive. In fact, prescriptive and descriptive language use is present in more or less equal amounts in both grammars, which confirms Azad’s argument that:

It is not true to say that Lowth is ‘prescriptive’ and Priestley ‘descriptive’. We have already seem both the ‘descriptive’ elements in Lowth’s method and Priestley’s dismissal of ‘vulgar’ language and impropriety (Azad 1989: 161–162).

It seems that the differences in the use of modal verbs by these two grammarians are indicative of differences in authorial style rather than of differences in attitude towards the material, in as far as these two things can be separated from each other.

By contrasting the grammars proper with the notes in the grammars, I have shown that this text type exhibits a pattern that is particular in the sense that the difference in textual features, such as the use of modal auxiliaries, can be
used to distinguish between different text types. I have shown that such a
difference is clearly visible between the grammar and the notes in the 1768
edition of Priestley’s grammar. We can therefore regard the section ‘Notes and
Observations’ as a different text type from the text called the “rudiments”.
Another clear difference is the format of these two texts. The ‘Rudiments of
English Grammar’ are given in the same question-and-answer format as that of
the first edition, while the ‘Notes and Observations’ are not structured in that
way, but follow a more standard prose format.

According to Leonard (cited in Tieken-Boon van Ostade 2009a), the usage
guide first took form in Robert Baker’s (fl. 1770) Reflections on the English
Language (1770). Tieken-Boon van Ostade (2011: 272–277) claims that the
footnotes in Lowth’s grammar constitute a usage guide in embryonic form.
From the findings in 3.2.1 and above, we can conclude that the footnotes in the
first edition of Priestley’s grammar partly served a similar function. Perhaps the
‘Notes and Observations’ in the 1768 edition of Priestley’s Rudiments of English
Grammar can be seen an intermediate stage between Lowth’s “embryonic”
usage guide and Baker’s more mature one.

Returning to the quotation from Priestley (1768a) at the beginning of this
chapter, we can now see that it illustrates the normative nature of the text type
of instructive grammars. Rather than the terms prescriptive and descriptive,
the term normative seems best to capture the nature of the overall text type to
which Priestley’s Rudiments of English Grammar and Lowth’s Short Introduction
to English Grammar belong.
8. The Joseph Priestley Letter Corpus

8.1. Introduction
Besides investigating Priestley's role as a codifying grammarian, this study is also dedicated in part to the investigation of his idiolect and how his usage relates to the norm of correctness that he advocated in his grammar. Sociolinguistics focuses on spontaneous, unmonitored vernacular usage. In modern sociolinguistics, this usually means speech. Since there is obviously no speech of Priestley available, his private letters to his friends and family are used to reconstruct his most unguarded mode of discourse. In order to be able to perform a sociohistorical linguistic investigation of Priestley's idiolect, I have constructed a electronic corpus of his private letters: the Joseph Priestley Letter Corpus (JPLC). To start, I will briefly discuss the use of letters as sociohistorical data (section 8.2). The bulk of this chapter is dedicated to the description of how this corpus was constructed (sections 8.3 to 8.5). In the last part (section 8.6), I will demonstrate the usefulness of a letter corpus by giving a short analysis of Priestley's correspondence with word lists and keywords.

8.2. A Corpus of letters
8.2.1. Letters as data for historical sociolinguistics
There is a propriety in using private letters for the reconstruction of Priestley's idiolect, as opposed to, for instance, diaries. At first sight, diary or journal entries would seem to be a good source of data: the language is unmonitored and can be expected to be evidence of the vernacular. However, some of the linguistic features of this text type prevent it from being suited to the kind of linguistic analysis that this study sets out to do. An example is the journal that Priestley kept at Daventry Academy, decoded from its shorthand form and published in part by Rail & Thomas (1994). It shows a kind of language that is typical of the telegraphic style of the text type of diaries. Priestley's diary entry
for Thursday 9 May 1754, is an example of this. This passage shows some of the linguistic features that are characteristic of journal and diary entries: very short sentences, elision of first person pronouns and prominent parataxis.

Morning composing. Forenoon, lecture upon the larynx with Mr. Clark. After
noon, delivered my sermon in the meeting to Smithson. Miscellaneous reading, then in Wake. Drunk tea with Alexander, company Rotheram, Smithson, Jackson, Threlkeld, and Boulton. Walked with Smithson through the town and the fields. Stayed in his room a while. In my study. Composed part of my sermon upon *We are the offspring of God* (Rail & Thomas 1994: 59).

This results in a lack of logical syntactic structure within the text, which is often arranged chronologically. These features appear to make diary entries less than ideal as representations of a person’s vernacular usage. Private letters on the other hand, are a better source for vernacular usage data, as discussed, for instance, by Tieken-Boon van Ostade (2005). Consequently, Priestley’s ‘out-
letters’ (Baker 1980: 29) are a source of data that is better suited to the linguistic analyses in this study. Another reason to use letters is that there is much more data available than the journal entries could provide. These letters presumably best illustrate Priestley’s unmonitored vernacular idiolect. This is also supported by Biber & Finegan’s analysis of a number of linguistic features along “three dimensions that are associated with ‘oral’ and ‘literate’ differences in English” (1989: 489), from which they draw the following conclusion:

[L]etters are already relatively oral in the 17th century. In the 18th century, the range of letters is extended to include more literate styles, but then it contracts in the direction of more oral styles in the 19th century and evolves into the most oral styles in the modern period (Biber & Finegan 1989: 512).

Nevertheless, “Biber/Finegan (1989, 1997) show that letters as a text type contain features typical of spontaneous speech and face-to-face conversation” (Nurmi & Palander-Collin 2008: 21). Consequently, although speech and writing are two distinct modes, they do not necessarily correlate with orality and literacy. As Chafe & Danielewicz put it: “there is a great deal of overlap between speaking and writing, in the sense that some kinds of spoken language may be very writtenlike, and some kinds of written language may be very spokenlike” (Chafe & Danielewicz 1987: 84).
8.2.2. Letters as a text type

From Görlach’s (2004: 105) definition of text type, given in chapter 6, we can expect the text type private letters to have specific linguistic and paralinguistic features. Linguistic features of letters include the use of first person pronouns as a feature of involvement (Chafe & Danielewicz 1987: 105–106), the use of abbreviations and contractions, and the presence of self-corrections, discussed by Auer (2008b) and Fairman (2008) In addition, there is the use of formulaic language in the opening and closing parts of the letter, see discussions by Tieken-Boon van Ostade (1999, 2006b) and Nevala (2003). Other features include the presence of the date and place of composition in specific places in the text, the presence of a direction where the letter is to be delivered and the optional inclusion of a postscript. Paralinguistic features include such things as the presence of folds, stamps, seals and annotations.

Nevertheless, it is not easy to define the parameters of the text type letters. Traugott & Romaine consider letters as oral modes in written form. These “[o]ral modes of expression, whether spoken or written, focus on contextualized participant interaction, especially shared speaker-hearer interaction” (1985: 14). Nurmi & Palander-Collin argue that “[w]hen applying componential analysis to letters it soon becomes obvious that this may be a particularly difficult genre to classify” and that “Görlach’s analysis of letters [...] using thirteen different descriptive elements, is less successful than that of other genres he deals with” (2008: 25). General discussions of the features of the text type letters can be found in Austin (1973) and Baker (1980). More recent specifically linguistic studies of letters can be found in many of the contributions in Dossena & Fitzmaurice (2006) and Dossena & Tieken-Boon van Ostade (2008), which often touch upon with specific features of the text type, even though they do not always specifically focus on them.

8.3. Constructing the Joseph Priestley Letter Corpus

The investigation of prescriptivism and descriptivism in Priestley’s grammar in chapter 7 and the investigation of Priestley’s usage in chapter 9 are two
analysis in this study that are corpus-based. Since I am going to describe the
construction of a corpus, it is useful to take a look at some of its basic principles.
Sinclair defines a corpus as “a collection of pieces of language text in electronic
form, selected according to external criteria to represent, as far as possible, a
language or language variety as a source of data for linguistic research” (Sinclair 2005: 16). In this particular case the “pieces of language text” that con-
stitute the corpus are electronic versions of transcriptions of Priestley’s private
letters. Constructing a corpus from scratch, even a highly specialised, relatively
small corpus such as the Joseph Priestley Letter Corpus (JPLC), is rather an
involved piece of work. There is no real standard way to build a corpus, as it
varies with the content and purpose for which it is being built. However, works
such as Wynne (2005) and McEnery et al. (2006) provide very useful guidelines
on how to proceed on such an endeavour. In this section, I will first discuss the
relevant theoretical concerns of corpus construction and then describe how the
corpus of Joseph Priestley’s letters was constructed.

8.3.1. Representativeness and specialised corpora
The JPLC is an idiolect corpus of private letters, which is a specialised and a
highly focused type of corpus. This means that classic sociolinguistic variables,
such as age and social class, are not very relevant for the purpose of this corpus,
as these are primarily used to investigate variation between different authors.
Any corpus of texts used for linguistic analyses needs to be representative.
There are a few varying definitions of representativeness of corpora (see
McEnery et al. 2006: 13), but generally it means that the results of studies
based on the corpus ought to be representative of the language variety that the
corpus is supposed to describe. Representativeness is largely determined by
balance and sampling, that is “the range of genres included in a corpus [...] and
how the text chunks for each genre are selected” (McEnery et al. 2006: 13).
Neither of these two factors is without its complications. The main difficulty
with regard to balance is that “any claim of corpus balance is largely an act of
faith rather than a statement of fact as, at present, there is no reliable scientific
measure of corpus balance” (McEnery et al. 2006: 16). What is most important is that the corpus needs to be balanced within the pre-determined parameters of the content or scope of the study, as McEnery et al. argue, “the acceptable balance of a corpus is determined by its intended uses” (2006: 16). In other words, the corpus needs to be only as balanced as is necessary for it to be useful in answering the questions posed by the researcher. There is no fixed, external standard of corpus balance.

In the case of the JPLC, the matter of representativeness simply meant that the corpus had to be representative of Priestley’s language, his idiolect. I have localised nearly all of the manuscript letters written by Joseph Priestley that have come down to us and collected a great majority of them. However, not all of Priestley’s out-letters were incorporated in the JPLC, for which there were two main reasons. The first was of a practical nature: there are over six hundred extant manuscript letters. Transcription take time and effort and many rounds of corrections. Transcribing all these manuscripts and incorporating them into the corpus was too great a task given the time available for this study. The second was that using all letters would not necessarily result in a representative corpus. Including all letters may at first glance appear to guarantee the representativeness of the JPLC, but it could actually adversely affect the balance of the corpus. Priestley’s letters to his closest friend Theophilus Lindsey are an example of this. Around two hundred, or almost one third of all manuscript letters attested are addressed to this single addressee. Consequently, they could not all be included in the JPLC since that would skew the corpus towards the style Priestley adopts when writing to Lindsey.

Achieving balance with regard to text type or genre was not an issue in the construction of the JPLC, since it is solely made up out of private letters. In this case, achieving balance meant including sufficient variety of letters in the corpus, given that they were all written by the same author. The aim is to achieve as high a degree of variety in style of the letters as possible. The language used in the letter will vary depending on several variables, such the addressee, topic, formal or informal style (see 6.3.3) and time of writing.
Changes in the writer’s private situation over time can also be expected to influence his style in the more general sense of the word. In that very specific sense, the classic sociolinguistic variable of age is relevant. Therefore, in order to allow for the possibility of investigating the influence of these variables, I have included letters to as many different correspondents, on as many different topics, and from throughout the entire period of Priestley’s life from which letters were available.¹

Now let us turn to sampling as a factor in achieving representativeness. Sampling is often done by collecting so-called text chunks, which is basically a method by which sections of text are cut off at arbitrary places, based on a predetermined number of words. However, this does not guarantee representativeness, and may in fact stand in the way of compiling a representative corpus. Sinclair therefore argues for the inclusion of whole texts in linguistic corpora, saying that “[s]amples of language for a corpus should wherever possible consist of entire documents or transcriptions of complete speech events” (Sinclair 2005: 7). It is not hard to see why this should be so. Consider the use of a corpus to investigate features that are typical of the different text types that make up that corpus. Collecting random chunks precludes the possibility of analysing features that specifically belong to the text type, such as the end-formulas in letters, since exactly these features may be cut out of the text. The classic sampling techniques used for mixed corpora such as the Corpus of Early English Correspondence Extension (CEECE),² with a variety of authors of various social backgrounds, are of limited usefulness. For these reasons, full-text sampling was used for the compilation of the JPLC, which in this case meant using whole letters as samples.

¹ The variables of addressee and topic are not completely independent of each other. For instance, the letters to John Vaughan (1755–1841), who managed Priestley’s finances when he lived in America, are virtually all on the topic of money and investments, which I have grouped together under the topic ‘financial’ (the assignment of topics is discussed in section 8.4).

² The Corpus of Early English Correspondence (CEECE) was compiled from predominantly published sources by the VARIENG unit at the University of Helsinki.
With the abovementioned concerns being taken into account, it can be assumed that the corpus will be sufficiently representative for the investigation of linguistic and stylistic variation in Priestley’s idiolect. In the following sections, I will discuss the construction of the corpus and its organisation.

8.3.2. Use of manuscripts

Dury (2006), after Dossena (2004) and Lass (2004), argues for the use of diplomatic transcriptions of manuscript letters rather than printed editions in the construction of historical language corpora, stating the following as the main problems with existing published editions of correspondences:

Editors emend, modernise, alter word-divisions, regularise spelling and even 'reconstruct' a lost original by conflating various versions. Through these activities, information is lost and the historical record is falsified and confused. A historical text is a sample of a real utterance and should be treated as respectfully as a ‘witness’ or ‘informant’ (Dury 2006: 193).

Other examples of textual features that usually cannot be studied using published texts are strikethroughs and other self-corrections, since these are not always retained in the transcription. Also, variation in orthography and punctuation in the original manuscripts is often not retained in the published editions of these letters. The use of such publications for linguistic study would consequently preclude research on these features. In the creation of the JPLC, I have followed the practice advocated by Dury as much as possible. The most important choice was to use only letters in manuscript, since the edition of Priestley’s letters collected by Rutt (1831, 1832) is textually unreliable,3 as I have shown in chapter 2.

Several databases were consulted in order to find out which archives hold manuscripts related to a specific person or organisation. The website Access to Archives (A2A), which incorporates information from the National Archives and the British Library with information from other local archives throughout England and Wales, was used to locate many of the manuscripts of Priestley’s

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3 Rutt’s editions are also incomplete, as is Schofield’s collection of Priestley’s letters (Schofield 1966). I do not claim that the JPLC is complete, but as a corpus it is more representative and more balanced than if I had solely relied on letters from published editions.
letters. Additional holding archives were found by searching the footnotes of Rutt’s *Memoirs and Correspondence* (Rutt 2003) and the notes and references of Schofield’s edition of Priestley’s letters and those of his two-volume biography of Priestley (Schofield 1997, 2004). An overview of the archives in which the manuscripts were found is given in Appendix 9. If there was the opportunity and the organisation managing the archive in question would allow it, I have photographed the manuscripts. A few digital manuscripts were available for direct downloading from the internet, as colour or black-and-white images of varying quality. In the remainder of the cases, concerning predominantly archives located in the United States of America, photocopies of the original manuscripts or prints from microfilm were purchased.

### 8.3.3. Selection of letters

Selection of letters was based on the subcategory of text type, on sociohistorical and paratextual features. The subcategories distinguished were notes, private letters and public letters. Some of the manuscripts classified by the archives as letters were actually more correctly described as notes. These notes were usually written when Priestley had called on someone in person, but found them not at home. He would then leave a note, or billet, mentioning that he had called. These notes were written in the third person, and therefore usually come across as much more formal. Their linguistic features are different from true letters to such an extent that they can be said to constitute a different subcategory of this text type. On these grounds, I have excluded formal notes from the JPLC.

I have included only Priestley’s private letters, and excluded his printed correspondence, such as *Letters to the Author of Remarks on Several Late Publications Relative to the Dissenters* (Priestley 1770), *Letters to Dr. Horsley, in

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4 Photographs were taken with an Olympus µ710 digital compact camera, yielding 7.1 megapixel colour JPEG images.
5 The variety in quality of these images was considerable: while some of them were easily legible, others required the closest scrutiny in order to transcribe them.
6 Thanks to Lyda Fens-de Zeeuw for drawing my attention to the term *billet*. 
Answer to his Animadversions on the History of the Corruptions of Christianity (Priestley 1783), Letters to the Right Honourable Edmund Burke, Occasioned by his Reflections on the Revolution in France (Priestley 1791) and Letters to the Inhabitants of Northumberland and its Neighbourhood (Priestley 1799). Many of these letters seem to have been specifically written with an eye on publication. Indeed, some appear to be part of a genre of public texts that are merely epistolary in form, and should be seen as a different text type from private letters. Such letters do not represent Priestley’s unmonitored vernacular usage. An additional consideration was that most of these letters are not available in manuscript form, but have only survived in print, and were therefore not included for reasons mentioned above.

Following Sinclair’s definition of a corpus, it is not possible to choose which letters to include in a letter corpus on the basis of the linguistic information contained in them. Doing so would mean that the results of any subsequent linguistic analysis will be partly predetermined by the selection process, which naturally ought to be avoided. As McEnery et al. put it:

A corpus is typically designed to study linguistic distributions. If the distribution of linguistic features is predetermined when the corpus is designed, there is no point in analysing such a corpus to discover naturally occurring linguistic feature distributions (McEnery et al. 2006: 14).

Because it is not possible to choose which letters to include in the JPLC on the basis of linguistic factors, it will need to be done on the basis of extralinguistic ones, Sinclair’s “external criteria” (Sinclair 2005: 16). After text type, the selection of the private letters to include in the corpus was thus based mainly on sociohistorical or paratextual information (see Dury 2006: 200). This includes, for instance, addressee and date of composition. Most of the letters I collected were also included in the corpus. Only in the case of two addressees were there so many letters that a selection had to be made out of considerations of balance: in the case of the letters to Theophilus Lindsey and those to Priestley’s brother-in-law, the ironmaster John Wilkinson. A set of criteria based on paratextual features indicating unmonitored usage was used to decide which of the
letters from these two collections were to be included. A well-known method in sociolinguistic studies to elicit unmonitored usage is to get informants to tell a story about a time when they were in danger of death (see Chambers 1995: 19 for instance). The heightened emotions when telling such stories often lead to more ‘natural’ language use. I used an approach for manuscript letters based on this notion. When a selection had to be made from a large number of letters addressed to a single addressee, I have chosen to incorporate into the JPLC primarily those letters of which the content suggested heightened emotional involvement. Usually, this sort of involvement would be indicated by linguistic evidence. However, that would require the use of the very corpus I am trying to create, causing an irresolvable methodological paradox. Hence, the basis for these decisions is extralinguistic, and necessarily even somewhat impressionistic. The idea is that when emotions are stronger or when swiftly-flowing thoughts are written down the writer is exhibiting his least monitored usage. In these cases, the writer may be less concerned with the physical appearance of the letter. His handwriting may be less neat than usual, there may be more corrections, or the letter's margins may not be as properly observed as usual. It is also possible that because the writer is less attentive to changes in topic, as they flow swiftly from his mind to the paper, proper paragraphing may be attended to less, or even be completely absent. Hence, letters that were not neatly written, or contained many corrections or lacked paragraphing were selected for inclusion into the JPLC sooner than those that appeared to be more carefully composed. What they all should have in common is that the writer can be expected to pay less attention to the act of composing than usual and hence, that the language use is more spontaneous.

8.4. Composition of the Joseph Priestley Letter Corpus

The abovementioned procedure yielded a corpus consisting of 433 letters, with a total size of 208,157 words of running text. The manuscripts were transcribed as plain text files (*.txt) in unicode, which is the preferred format for use with WordSmith Tools 5.0 (Scott 2008a), the program used to analyse the corpus.
Collectively, these files make up the Joseph Priestley Letter Corpus. The files were named in the following manner: _yyy_mm_dd_ARC, which breaks down into the date plus a three-letter code for the archive from which the manuscript came. So file names will look like this: _1780_03_26. APS. This one indicates, that the letter comes from the American Philosophical Society, and has been dated 26 March 1780. 

8.4.1. Header and body text

Following standard practice in linguistic corpora, the content of the transcription files was divided into a header and a body. The body of the file contains the actual transcription of the text of a letter, while the header contains general basic information about the letter and the text in the body. The header of a corpus file consists of a series of descriptive codes with information about the text, its author, the addressee and a number of other sociohistorical and linguistic variables. The descriptive codes in the header of each document were based on so-called COCOA references, used in corpora such as the Helsinki Corpus. A more universal header type, such as those for the TEI (Text Encoding Initiative), was not used because a header of this complexity was not required for the JPLC. Therefore, the simpler COCOA references were used.

Some of the characteristics of the letters are shared by all of them, while others vary per letter. These characteristics are represented by the lines in the header, called 'fields', which consist of a field code and the corresponding field value. The field values I have used were created specifically for the JPLC. An "X" in any field indicates that this descriptor was not relevant or not available for that particular document. The field codes with their corresponding field values were put between angular brackets so that when the corpus was used with concordancing software, the program could be instructed to ignore these parts of the text in searches for linguistic features. The COCOA references allow for a large number of fields to be entered for each corpus file. In the case of the JPLC,

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7 The reverse order of this information in the file name was used for the convenient organisation of the files on a computer.
8 Information about the Text Encoding Initiative is available on their website http://www.tei-c.org.
many of these fields, particularly those relating to the author, text type, language and time period, do not change throughout the corpus. I have therefore chosen not to repeat these in every corpus file. Only the ones that varied with each letter were repeated as descriptive codes in the header of each letter. The field codes and the corresponding possible field values in the COCOA references used for the JPLC are summarised in Table 8.4.1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>code</th>
<th>description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt;B APSBVP&gt;</td>
<td>source of the text (archive and collection abbreviation)⁹</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;N LET TO BENJ. VAUGHAN&gt;</td>
<td>name of text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;M 02 MARCH 1787&gt;</td>
<td>date of manuscript</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;Y 54&gt;</td>
<td>age of author</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;E SCIENTIFIC&gt;</td>
<td>topic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;I INFORMAL&gt;</td>
<td>formal or informal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;R X&gt;</td>
<td>date received</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8.4.1. Adapted COCOA references in the headers of the Joseph Priestley Letter Corpus.

The header of a corpus file was separated from the body text by the a pair of HTML-type codes: <head> </head> at respectively the beginning and end of the header. The main reason for this is that it allows for the possibility of having the concordancing software search the text of only those letters in the corpus, whose headers match certain criteria given by the researcher. In the final text file, the header for the corpus file of the letter to Benjamin Vaughan, dated 26 March 1780, the variables of which were used as examples in Table 8.4.1, would appear in a simple text-editor as in Figure 8.4.1 below.

A corpus is, however, more than merely a simple collection of files, as already indicated by Sinclair’s (2005) definition quoted in section 8.3. What I think needs to be added to Sinclair’s definition is that these texts are also organised or organisable in specific ways.

⁹ This six-letter code was made up of a three-letter abbreviation for the archive and a three-letter abbreviation for the collection. The archives and collections, and their corresponding abbreviations are summarised in Appendix 10.
In the following I will discuss the organisation of the JPLC, starting with a brief description of the addressees of the letters.

8.4.2. Addressees

The JPLC contains letters to sixty different addressees, of which I have given a complete list in Appendix 11. The number of letters to any addressee ranges from a single letter – to the poet Anna Laetitia Barbauld (1743–1825), the bookseller Joseph Johnson, the physician William Withering, and the American Chief Justice of Pennsylvania Thomas McKean (1734–1817) for example – to as many as forty-five letters to Priestley’s brother-in-law John Wilkinson and seventy-one to his closest friend Theophilus Lindsey. These addressees come from a variety of sociohistorical backgrounds and many belong to the various, partly overlapping, social networks that Priestley was a part of. Examples are John Canton and Sir Joseph Banks (1743–1820) from the Royal Society of London; Thomas Belsham, Theophilus Lindsey and Richard Price from the community of English Dissenters; Josiah Wedgwood, Matthew Boulton and James Watt from the Lunar Society of Birmingham; some of the founding fathers of the United States of America, Benjamin Franklin, John Adams (1735–1826) and Thomas Jefferson (1743–1826); and finally John Vaughan from the American Philosophical Society in Philadelphia, of which Franklin, Adams and Jefferson were also members. The JPLC is not organised by addressee, but it is organisable in that way; since the addressee is encoded in the header of each corpus file, it is possible to instruct WordSmith 5.0 to only search letters written to
specific addressees. The Joseph Priestley Letter Corpus is organised by period, by style and by topic.

8.4.3. Period

The total period covered by the JPLC is 1762-1804. Rather than making an arbitrary division into periods of five, ten or twenty years, I have distinguished six periods, based on major changes in Priestley’s life which also correspond to changes in his domicile. Priestley’s various domiciles, connections and occupations during these periods were described in chapter 2. I have summarised the information of these six subcorpora of the JPLC in Table 8.4.2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>subcorpus</th>
<th>period10</th>
<th>domicile</th>
<th>number of letters</th>
<th>number of words</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>JPLC-1</td>
<td>1762-1767</td>
<td>Warrington</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10,168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JPLC-2</td>
<td>1767-1772</td>
<td>Leeds</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>23,060</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JPLC-3</td>
<td>1773-1780</td>
<td>Calne</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>8,290</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JPLC-4</td>
<td>1780-1791</td>
<td>Birmingham</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>44,783</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JPLC-5</td>
<td>1791-1794</td>
<td>London</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>15,033</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JPLC-6</td>
<td>1794-1804</td>
<td>Northumberland</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>106,823</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8.4.2. Subcorpora of the 6 periods of the Joseph Priestley Letter Corpus.

For instance, in 1780 Priestley quitted the employ of the Earl of Shelburne in Wiltshire and moved to Birmingham, where he soon became a member of the Lunar Society. This had a considerable effect on his social situation and his connections. In 1794 he emigrated to the United States of America to escape religious and political persecution in Britain. The emigration itself and Priestley’s subsequent settlement in the back country of Philadelphia radically changed his personal and social circumstances.

10 As I have grouped Priestley’s letter by domicile, rather than by year, some letters written in the same year belong to different subcorpora. The division is as follows: the first letter in JPLC-1 is _1767_04_21_RSL, the first letter in JPLC-2 is _1767_09_27_RSL, the last letter in JPLC-3 is _1780_09_01_APS, the first letter in JPLC-4 is 1780_11_30_RSL and the last is _1791_06_27_BCA, the first letter in JPLC-5 is _1791_07_30_PSU and the last 1794_04_09_APS, and finally, the first letter in JPLC-6 is 1794_06_03_APS.
8.4.4. Style
As discussed in section 6.3.3, the term style refers to the level of formality of a letter. The 433 letters were divided into 71 formal and 362 informal letters, 25,328 and 182,829 words running text respectively. The attribution of a style to private letters is not a straightforward matter. Both intralinguistic and extralinguistic features were used to determine whether a letter was formal or informal. The extralinguistic information used was biographical data on the relationship between the writer and the addressee. The style of a letter could, however, not always be reliably determined by biographical data about the relationship between the writer and the addressee alone. However, when taken together with the intralinguistic, textual features of a letter it was usually possible to make a definite determination of the level of formality of a letter. The intralinguistic features used to determine the style of a letter were the formulations of the salutation and the end formula.

The salutation at the top of the letter can give some indication of the formality of the letter (see Baker 1980: 48-51 for a discussion of the various salutations). Those starting with “Dear Friend” are virtually always informal in Priestley’s letters, even though this cannot be taken as a matter-of-course. The meaning of the word friend is not straightforward in eighteenth-century letters. It was used to denote interpersonal relationships based on mutual affection, just as it does today, but it could also denote a cooperative relationship based on mutual benefit (see also Tadmor 2001: 167-211). The salutation “Dear Sir” is used in both formal and informal letters, but it seems that letters which have the salutation “Sir” are always formal (see also Baker 1980: 51, Tieken-Boon van Ostade 1999: 102). However, the salutation by itself is not enough to distinguish between a formal and an informal letter.

The end formula usually best distinguishes a formal from an informal letter. Tieken-Boon van Ostade (1999: 107) has argued that the end formula “Yours sincerely”, which now seems formal to us, was an innovation in the eighteenth century and indicates an informal letter. A formal letter would have the formula “Your obedient humble servant”. Tieken-Boon van Ostade (2011: 162) argues
that another indication of the level of formality or informality of a letter is the presence of a greeting or a desire to be remembered to the addressee’s spouse or family. Indeed, such greetings are found in Priestley’s letters to his good friends such as Theophilus Lindsey, Josiah Wedgwood and James Watt. The transcription in Figure 8.4.2 below shows an example of such a request.

![Figure 8.4.2. Transcription of greetings in a letter to James Watt, 22 October 1793.](image)

The division of formal and informal letters over the six periods distinguished in the JPLC is summarised in Table 8.4.3. We can see that except for JPLC-1, which has a disproportionately high number of formal letters, the ratio of formal to informal letters in each period reflects that of the total corpus.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>subcorpus</th>
<th>period</th>
<th>formal letters</th>
<th>informal letters</th>
<th>total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>JPLC-1</td>
<td>1762–1767</td>
<td>8  62%</td>
<td>5  38%</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JPLC-2</td>
<td>1767–1772</td>
<td>13 28%</td>
<td>34 72%</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JPLC-3</td>
<td>1773–1780</td>
<td>5  21%</td>
<td>19 79%</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JPLC-4</td>
<td>1780–1791</td>
<td>15 13%</td>
<td>102 87%</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JPLC-5</td>
<td>1791–1794</td>
<td>8  19%</td>
<td>34 81%</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JPLC-6</td>
<td>1794–1804</td>
<td>22 12%</td>
<td>168 88%</td>
<td>190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JPLC</td>
<td>1762–1804</td>
<td>71 16%</td>
<td>362 84%</td>
<td>433</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8.4.3. Formal and informal letters in the six periods of the Joseph Priestley Letter Corpus.
8.5. Transcription and mark-up of Priestley’s letters

For the purpose of creating historical language corpora, Dury (2006) advocates the practice of transcribing textual features as faithfully as possible. This comprehends spacing and letter-forms, which “fall into the area of diplomatic transcription” (Dury 2006: 194). In addition, the paratextual features of a text need to be made note of in the transcription since “these features could have a pragmatic function in the interpretation of the text” (Dury 2006: 201). In this section I will describe the transcription and mark-up I have used in the creation of the JPLC.

The approach to the transcription of Priestley’s out-letters entailed two opposing considerations. On the one hand, I have endeavoured to create a transcription that was as textually as diplomatic as possible and included a sufficient amount of paratextual information, so that future analyses would not be hindered by the lack of textual or paratextual data.\footnote{The inclusion of such metadata also has the additional benefit that when analysing features such as orthography, one does not necessarily have to continuously refer back to the manuscript.} This meant that an effort was made to retain these features and to visually reproduce them in the transcriptions as much as possible. On the other hand, the transcriptions needed to be prepared in such a way that they could be electronically searched by concordancing software. In order to attain reliable results from subsequent corpus searches, a considerable degree of conformity in the transcriptions was required. In other words, a balance had to be kept between diplomacy and searchability. Examples are the transcription of hyphenated words and that of long-s, which are discussed below.

8.5.1. Transcription and mark-up

As mentioned above, the body of a corpus file contains the actual transcription of the text of the manuscript letter. The transcriptions also contain mark-up to convey paratextual features and meta-information, such as where words are underlined or struck through. The codes used to mark up the Joseph Priestley
Letter Corpus are a variation on the coding used in the Helsinki Corpus, adapted specifically for the JPLC. They are summarised in Table 8.5.1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>textual element</th>
<th>mark-up in transcription</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>new page</td>
<td>&lt;P&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>superscript</td>
<td>yyyyyyyyy &lt;as &quot;yyy=xx=yyy&quot;/&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>subscript</td>
<td>yyy&lt;sub&gt;xx&lt;/sub&gt;yyy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>interlineation</td>
<td>&lt;int&gt;xxxx&lt;/int&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>conjectural reading</td>
<td>[xxxx]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>strikethrough</td>
<td>&quot;xxxx&quot; crossed&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>strikethrough with uncertain part</td>
<td>$? crossed&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>whole word or phrase overwritten</td>
<td>&quot;xxx&quot; overwritten&gt; yyy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>letters within word overwritten</td>
<td>&quot;xxx&quot; overwrites &quot;yyy&quot;&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>illegible</td>
<td>[?]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>illegible (uncertain indication of length)</td>
<td>[?] &lt;comment&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>my comment</td>
<td>&lt;comment&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>underlined text</td>
<td>&lt;u&gt;xxxx&lt;/u&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>any long dash</td>
<td>___ (4 underscores)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8.5.1. Mark-up codes in the Joseph Priestley Letter Corpus.

There are another number of general issues that need to be addressed here. The first is that, for various reasons, the letters often contained paratextual annotations by third parties. For instance, letters were forwarded to a different address by someone other than the addressee. Alternatively, letters were annotated with the date of reception by the addressee, or with the assumed date of reception by someone archiving or editing the collection for publication many years later. Such paratextual annotations by third parties were not transcribed as they are not part of the original letter, although they are part of the manuscript as it has come down to us. These annotations contain sociohistorical and paratextual information and were only used for purposes of retrieving information about sent and received dates, postal routes or delivery times, about the identity of recipients in the case of unaddressed letters and other
information unrelated to their textual content. In addition, it was also often impossible to accurately date these annotations.

Mark-up was used to indicate orthographic features, such as the use of superscript, interlineations and underlining, as well as paratextual features such as page breaks, paragraphing and other "text-organizational" features (Dury 2006: 196). As far as possible, mark-up was not allowed to interfere with the integrity of single words. Consider for instance underlining in the manuscript, which was represented by a pair of HTML-type codes in the following manner <u> </u>. In this case, in order to avoid having to break up words with these codes, lines under words were considered to underline the entire word, even if strictly speaking the underlining in the manuscript fell just short of the end of the word.

8.5.2. Mark-up of sections of letters

Each letter contains many or all of the following sections: place, date, address, salutation, end formula, signature and paragraph. These sections were marked in the transcriptions by HTML-type mark-up, using pairs of tags for the start and end of the sections. The name of the place where a letter was composed was marked by the tags <place> </place>, and the date of composition of a letter was marked by the tags <date> </date>. The direction, usually either written on the outside of the last sheet, or on a separate sheet was marked by the tags <address> </address>. This section includes the addressee’s name and their location, plus any additional remarks by the author, such as when the letter was delivered via a third party.

Salutations were marked as a separate section with <salutation> </salutation>. The salutation usually consisted of the words "Dear Sir" or "Dear Madam", which predominated in informal letters, whilst the shorter "Sir" was used in formal letters. End formulas were marked as a separate section by <end

---

13 An additional paratextual feature is the presence of folding lines in the paper, see Baker (1989: 68–70) on the folding of eighteenth-century letters. In the absence of any postmarks – such as when a letter has been delivered by private hand – the presence of folding lines indicate that a letter is not a draft, but has actually been sent.
formula> </end formula>. This section consisted of the formula per se, such as
“1 am, Dear Sir, Yours sincerely” for example, and sometimes a preamble. The
formula per se is one of the features used to determine the level of formality of
a letter, as discussed above. The preamble was usually made up of the first part
of a sentence which closed with the end formula per se. The section containing
the signature was marked by <signature> </signature>. The signature itself
usually consisted of Priestley’s name plainly written as ”JPriestley”, usually
though not always, without separation of the initial and the surname. The name
often had a flourish after it or underneath it. The section includes both the
signature and the flourish.

Paragraphs were numbered consecutively throughout a single letter and
were marked by <p/> </p>, as for example <p03> </p03>. A new paragraph
was assumed to begin in the following places: at a line beginning with an
indention, at a line beginning without an indention at the top of a page, at a line
beginning with a long dash followed by long space, and at a long dash followed
by a long intersentential space within a line. These last two often co-occur as a
text-organisational feature (see Dury 2006: 195–196). A new paragraph was
not assumed to begin at only a long space within a line. Postscripts were
marked by <postscript> </postscript>.

Figure 8.5.1 below shows a complete transcription of the last page from a
letter to Josiah Wedgwood, dated 22 July 1781, including mark-up showing
almost all of the sections that can be found in Priestley’s letters. The only
section that is not represented in this example is the salutation, which appears
on the first page of the letter. Figure 8.5.1 shows an example of Priestley’s
signature, including a flourish underneath his name, and a postscript. We can
also see the preamble “With the greatest gratitude for your many favours” in
the end formula.

The address page usually had the writing at a counter-clockwise 90 degree
angle from the rest of the text. Where the address appeared on a separate page,
which was usually the outside of the sheet that formed the cover of the letter,
this rotation was not explicitly marked, as this was the case in most letters.
<s83> It happened unfortunately that the rotates 
crocked when I had in them the <i>clay</i> and 
the <i>flint</i> from the Appalachian mountains 
that you favours me with. I shall be 
glad of a small quantity of [earth] along 
with the <i>ground flint</i> <i>u</i> <i>j</i> <s83> <e83>
<s84> I have not yet got any <i>asbestos</i> 
or <i>clay</i> but am in hopes that some of 
your friends in London will succeed for 
me. <s84> <e84>
<s90> With the greatest gratitude for your 
many favours, I am, 

<s93> Dear Sir, 
Yours sincerely</s93></s90>

<s90> <s94>Joseph</s94></s90>

<s83> <s85> Birm. <s85> 22 July 1781</s85> <e83>

<s85> 85. Could you send me a little <i>asbestos</i> with the other things. 

<s85> <e85>

<s85> To 
Mr. <i>W-J.</i> Wedgwood 
at Newcastle 
next Newcastle under line 

<s85> <e85>

Figure 8.5.1. Transcription of a passage from a letter to Josiah Wedgwood, 22 July 1781.

This is also illustrated in the example in Figure 8.5.1. If the letter continued 
onto the address page, the rotation of the address was marked by a pair of 
HTML-type codes marking the beginning and end of the rotated text in the fo-
llowing manner <vertical/> <vertical/>. Other pieces of rotated text interspersed 
within the body of a letter were marked in the same way. Figure 8.5.2 below 
shows an example of a rotated address in a transcription of a letter to the 
physician Thomas Percival (1740–1804), where the regular, non-rotated text is 
the postscript.

In an effort to save space and paper, and also because the recipient was 
usually responsible for the cost of the postage (Baker 1980: 22), eighteenth-
century letter writers usually tried to get as much text on a sheet as possible.
Consequently, words were routinely broken off at the end of a line and continued on the next. Since an analysis of hyphenation was neither planned nor performed, this feature was not retained in the transcriptions. Words that were broken off in the manuscript were therefore transcribed in full on the line on which they began in the manuscript, whilst hyphenated compound words were retained as they appeared in the manuscript, even if modern spelling would not admit of a hyphen.

8.5.4. Spelling, punctuation and orthography

When preparing transcriptions of manuscripts for linguistic analysis, variation in spelling, punctuation and orthography needs to be considered carefully. In transcribing Priestley’s manuscript letters for the JPLC, variant spellings, such as in honour/honor, chemistry/chemistry and parcel/parcel, were retained so as not to exclude the possibility of an analysis of spelling variation in the letters. An exception was made in the case of ligatured vowels, which were transcribed with their two elements as separate characters. For example, the ligature ae in the manuscript occurs as æe in the transcription.

Punctuation was also maintained as it appeared in the original manuscript. This meant that full stops were not added to the end of a sentence if they did not appear in the original manuscript. Indentations in the manuscripts were represented by indentations of comparable length, relative to the line length of
the original manuscript. Intersentential long spaces in the manuscripts were represented by spaces of comparable length, relative to the line length of the original manuscript (see also Dury 2006: 195–196). For the sake of the searchability of the texts and ease of transcription - and also because it was sometimes just not possible - special orthography was for the most part not transcribed, but indicated by mark-up. At this point, I will discuss two of these features in a little greater detail: the use of long-s and superscript.

**Long-s**

The long-s dates back as far as the first century, where it occurred in the Old Roman Cursive script. It arrived in England via successively the Carolingian and Gothic scripts, from which it was carried over into print with the introduction of the modern printing press in England by William Caxton (1415/24–1492) in the late fifteenth century (see West 2006, 2008; Mosely 2006). Figure 8.5.3 illustrates the use of long-s in the words “happiness”, “readiness” and “Glass”, in a passage of a letter by Joseph Priestley.

![Figure 8.5.3. Joseph Priestley's use of long-s in a letter to John Canton, 14 February 1766, Canton Papers, Royal Society of London.](image)

We know that in printed works, long-s often appears in word-initial position, as for example in the word /peak (see West 2008). In Priestley’s letters, long-s never appears in word-initial position. Long-s is used almost exclusively as the first part of double -s- in word-medial or word-final position, as in the words
profesor and busines/s. In manuscript, it always appears with the long-s always ligatured to the round-s, whilst not all other letters are always written together. It is possible that the -/s/- combination is conceptualised as a kind of ‘mental ligature’ and written in a manner similar to that of the digraph long-y in Dutch, which is represented by a joined i-j digraph in manuscript. As with most other usage features, Priestley is very consistent in his use of long-s; no diachronic development, such as a change from -/s/- to -ss/-, could be found in the corpus. Manuscript long-s was transcribed as round-s, without any mark-up since an analysis of this feature was not planned.

**Superscript**

The use of superscript in occurred primarily in abbreviations. Some abbreviations with superscript that are otherwise fairly common in eighteenth-century letters are quite rare in Priestley’s letters. For example, the otherwise not uncommon contractions ye for the,13 ye and ye for this and that are completely absent from the JPLC. The contractions wth for when and with and the related wth are not at all common in Priestley’s letters. The former two do not occur at all, and the latter only four times. Among abbreviations with superscript we find personal titles, such as Mr for Mister or Master, M° for Mistress, Dr for Doctor, S° for Sir, L° for Lord, and Rev° for Reverend, used in the direction of letters as well as in the actual text of the letters themselves. The use of superscript for these abbreviations in the manuscripts was not retained as such in the transcription, but transcribed as Mr, Mrs or Dr, followed by an annotation describing the original orthography in the manuscript in the manner given in Table 8.5.1. Additionally, frequently recurring words that are typical of the text type of letters are often abbreviated with the use of superscript. These include the names of the months, Jan° for January, Feb° for February, Oct° for October, and Dec° for December, and words that recurred in end formulas, such as Serve or Serv° for Servant. Superscripting in abbreviations

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13 Tieken-Boon van Ostade (2006a: 230) notes that the form ye is strictly speaking not an abbreviation but the remnant of a spelling convention that had been around from the Middle English period.
for the names of the months occur, however, significantly much less often than abbreviations without superscript, such as Jan., Feb., Oct. and Dec. for January, February, October and December, respectively. Tieken-Boon van Ostadé (2006b: 238) also found these contractions in Lowth’s correspondence and notes that they were “in general use”. The use of superscript was also fairly common in abbreviations of place names, specifically in the dating of the letter. Birmingham was regularly abbreviated to Birm and Northumberland, Priestley’s home in Pennsylvania, was usually abbreviated to North.

Roman and Arabic numerals were transcribed as they appeared in the manuscript. Notes by Priestley in other languages, such as Latin, were not transcribed, nor were pieces of shorthand text or calculations. Their presence was, however, noted in the transcription. In manuscript, amounts of currency in pounds Sterling were often written with the signs for pounds, shillings and pence above the amounts on the same line. Figure 8.5.4 shows an example of this in the amount Priestley said he paid for a book in a letter to Benjamin Franklin.

![Figure 8.5.4. Example of currencies in Priestley's letter to Benjamin Franklin, 19 April 1771, Charles Roberts Autograph Collection, Haverford College Library.](image)

As there no transcription that looked exactly like the original manuscript could be devised for this, a simple linear transcription was used instead, which looks like the third line in figure 8.5.5 below. Amounts of currency formatted in other ways were transcribed as diplomatically as possible.

For the sake of consistency, fractions were always transcribed by a slash, regardless of the notation in the manuscript. Figure 8.5.6 below shows what a fraction could look like in manuscript.
When a fraction consisted of a whole number and a fraction, a space was placed between the whole number and the fraction, regardless of the notation in the manuscript. Consequently, \( \frac{1}{2} \) was transcribed as 1/2, and \( 1\frac{1}{4} \) was transcribed as 1 1/4 for example.

According to the description given above, this would be transcribed in the manner as shown in the last line in figure 8.5.7.

8.5.5. Strikethroughs and self-corrections

Strikethroughs and self-corrections were fairly common in Priestley’s letters,
which is a sign that these letters contain spontaneous usage. Strikethroughs and
self-corrections were transcribed as diplomatically as possible. In the case of
overwritten words – what Fairman calls “ink-outs” (2008: 198) – an annotation
was supplied, since it is obviously not possible to transcribe this diplomatically.
Figure 8.5.8 is an example of overwriting within a word, in this particular case
at the end of it.

Figure 8.5.8. Example of an ink-out in a letter to William Parker, 17 March 1795,
Benjamin Smith Barton Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

The word in the fourth line, initially written as “Leona” was corrected to
“Leone”. This is transcribed in the way as shown in Figure 8.5.9 below, where
the mark-up indicates which letter was replaced by which.

Figure 8.5.9. Transcription of an ink-out in a letter to William Parker, 17 March 1795.

When a whole word was overwritten, an annotation was supplied in the
transcription, in which the word following the annotation is the one that covers
the overwritten word. Figure 8.5.10 is an example of this.
Figure 8.5.10. Example of an ink-out in a letter to John Adams, 13 November 1794, Massachusetts Historical Society.

The third line in this extract originally started with the preposition "in", which was subsequently overwritten with the conjunction "and". Such overwritten words, or ink-outs, were transcribed in the manner shown in Figure 8.5.11, in which the mark-up only indicates the original text before it was corrected.

Figure 8.5.11. Transcription of an ink-out in a letter to John Adams, 13 November 1794.

Strikethroughs were annotated in the manner indicated in Table 8.5.1 above. The word that was struck through is indicated in the mark-up. The extract shown in Figure 8.5.12 below is an example of a strikethrough. In the fourth line, the words "form as" have been struck through.\footnote{This is an example of what Fairman calls an alteration for style, "where the struck-through and the final versions have similar or identical meanings" (2008: 201–202). Other reasons for strikethroughs identified by Fairman (2008) also occurred in the Priestley’s letters.}
The transcription of this strikethrough is shown in Figure 8.5.13.

Figure 8.5.13. Transcription of a strikethrough in a letter to Josiah Wedgwood, 18 August 1781.

8.6. Using the Joseph Priestley Letter Corpus

In this section I will show how a corpus-based approach can illustrate and even unearth the topics of a correspondence, using the Joseph Priestley Letter Corpus with the program WordSmith Tools 5.0. This program allows one to use the corpus in relatively simple ways, such as making concordances and word lists, as well as in much more complicated ones, such as creating keyword lists and much more (see Scott 2010 for a full description of the uses of WordSmith Tools 5.0).
8.6.1. Topics of correspondence

A simple word list can reveal much about the topics of a correspondence, and multiple word lists can illustrate how these topics change over time. The most frequently occurring words will usually be function words, and as such they are not very interesting for the present purpose (though they may be very much so for other purposes). Some of the content words – both nouns and verbs – will be typical of the text type of letters, while others – mostly nouns – are specific for the correspondence under investigation. The first category of content words is therefore text type dependent, whilst the second category of content words is text type independent. Some words that occur regularly are not counted in the present analysis, as they are often part of an epistolary formula. An example is the word friend, as in the following end formula “I am, with the greatest respect Dear Sir Your friend & servant” (letter to Benjamin Franklin, 21 November 1770). In other words, they are text type dependent. However, the plural form friends is not a part of this formula and can therefore be included because it is text type independent. It is these text type independent words that are of most interest here.

8.6.2. The JPLC wordlists

The most common text type independent nominal content words per period are summarised in Table 8.6.1 below. Proper nouns are excluded because, whilst they are text type independent, they usually do not inform the topic of the letter, as they occur mostly in addresses and signatures. I have added the frequencies of the words grammar and language to these wordlists in order to illustrate the relative prominence of these topics in Priestley’s letters.

We can see that there are few references to grammar and language in Priestley’s letters. There is a total of seven occurrences of the word grammar in the corpus, five refer to Priestley’s Rudiments of English Grammar, twice in JPLC-1 and JPLC-2 and once in JPLC-4. The occurrence in JPLC-4 is in reference to the republication of the grammar by Joseph Bretland (see also chapters 3 and 4).
## Table 8.6.1.
The ten most frequent text type independent nouns (raw scores and normalised frequencies) in six periods of the JPLC.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>JPLC-1</th>
<th>JPLC-2</th>
<th>JPLC-3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Warrington 1762–1767</strong></td>
<td><strong>Leeds 1767–1772</strong></td>
<td><strong>Calne 1773–1780</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N /10,000</td>
<td>N /10,000</td>
<td>N /10,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>experiment(s)</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>58.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>air(s)</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>24.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wire(s)</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>18.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vane(s)</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>16.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>electricity</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>14.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>point(s)</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>12.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>glass</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>9.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>account</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>6.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>candle(s)</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>5.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>flame / phial</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>4.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>language</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>grammar</strong></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.95</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>JPLC-4</th>
<th>JPLC-5</th>
<th>JPLC-6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Birmingham 1780–1791</strong></td>
<td><strong>London 1791–1794</strong></td>
<td><strong>Northumberland 1794–1804</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N /10,000</td>
<td>N /10,000</td>
<td>N /10,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>air(s)</td>
<td>274</td>
<td>31.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>time</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>25.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>experiment(s)</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>21.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>water</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>21.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>retort(s)</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>19.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>account</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>17.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>subject</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>15.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>heat</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>13.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iron</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>11.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>history</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>10.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>grammar</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>language</strong></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.89</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There are also not that many references to language, and even less are relevant ones. Only in three out of the twelve occurrences does the word *language* refer...
to English, occurring in two letters written on the same day, and only one of those directly refers to Priestley’s work on the English language. This seems to confirm my suggestions in chapter 2, that after the second edition had been published, Priestley was more or less finished with his grammar. From the lists in Table 8.6.1 it is obvious that many of these most frequent words are related to Priestley’s scientific endeavours, and his dedication to his pneumatic experiments is particularly well-illustrated by the data in Table 8.6.1.

In JPLC-1, Priestley’s occupation with electrical studies is well illustrated by the words relating to his experiments with electricity in the list, such as wire and electricity. Interestingly, it is the word air that is second on the list. It most frequently collocates with mephitic, in the combination mephitic air – referring to both nitrogen and carbon dioxide, which were not clearly distinguished from each other at the time. This collocation reflects Priestley’s experiments on electrical conductors, as in the following example:

(1) if we think on the subject a priori, it may not appear improbable that mephitic air (w., i.e. is remarkably different from common air in other respects) should differ from it also with respect to electricity (letter to John Canton, 29 March 1766).

This changes when Priestley was performing experiments at Leeds. In JPLC-2, the word air most frequently collocates with fixed in combination fixed air which refers to carbon dioxide. This is no surprise, since Priestley was performing experiments on the carbonation of water for use as an antiscorbutan. The following excerpt illustrates this:

(2) The last week I sent to the Lords of the Admiralty, at their request, a particular description of the method of impregnating water with fixed air, for the use of the Commanders and surgeons of your ships (letter to Dr. Lind, 11 May 1772).

In JPLC-3, the part of the corpus that represents the period at Calne, the word air most frequently occurs in the collocation nitrous air, which is nitric oxide, a compound created in Priestley’s experiments on ‘dephlogisticated air’.
(3) I am now in a very promising course of experiments on metals, from all of which I dissolved in spirit of nitre, I get first nitrous air as before, and then [...] fixed air, and dephlogisticated air (letter to Benjamin Franklin, 13 February 1776).

In the wordlist of JPLC-4, the Birmingham subcorpus, we see that water is a very frequently appearing new word. In this period, Priestley was conducting experiments to try and find out whether air was a component of water. From the clusters calculated from a concordance of the word water, we find references to Priestley’s experiments, as in the following:

(4) I almost conclude that water is the basis of all kinds of air. One of my experiments proves (on terra ponderosa) proves that it is a considerable part of fixed air, not less than one third of its weight, tho it has been thought to consist of nothing but inflammable air (letter to Josiah Wedgewood, 8 January 1788).

It is also during this period that Priestley corresponded with another famous English chemist, Henry Cavendish (1731–1810), to whom Priestley refers later in the letter from which this excerpt is taken. It was Cavendish who eventually solved the problem of the composition of water. Priestley’s letters to Cavendish are published in Jungnickel & McCormach (2001).

We can deduce from Table 8.6.1 that Priestley’s interests changed quite dramatically after the Birmingham Riots in July 1791. The words that dominate the top half of the earlier lists (JPLC-1 to JPLC-4) are almost all gone and half the most frequently occurring nouns in the JPLC-5 are new ones. Of the earlier periods only the following remain: history, time, account(s), subjects and friends. The new words in the list seem to show that Priestley begins to be worried about his family, hence the introduction of the words son and brother in the list, and his finances and location – the word funds is introduced. The following extract from one letter shows examples of all three words.

(5) Some time ago I wrote to desire you to draw on your brother for two thousand pounds, and place it in those of your funds that do not pay interest till after a certain time [...] I wish to have all my property in America, especially as I am now determined to remove thither myself, as soon as my sons have found a settlement (letter to John Vaughan, 22 August 1793).
As in the example, the words son and brother collocate most frequently with my and your, respectively. Similarly, the collocation “your brother” is mostly found in the letters to John Vaughan, who handled Priestley’s financial affairs in America, and refers to either of Vaughan’s two brothers, Charles (1759–1839) or Benjamin, who both helped Priestley in England and France. The word funds collocates primarily with French and American, illustrating that Priestley was moving money away from England in preparation of moving his family from England to France or America. The introduction of the word country, primarily referring to England in the collocation “this country”, is also not surprising considering Priestley had emigration on his mind.

(6) I think myself greatly obliged to you for your excellent treatise on Geography. We had but a very imperfect idea of America before, and it has contributed not a little to that spirit of emigration that now prevails in this country (letter to Jedediah Morse, 24 August 1793).

In JPLC-6, which represents the final period in Northumberland in Pennsylvania, we see that the word country is at the top of the list. As in the previous period, it collocates most frequently with the word this. However, now it refers to America or Pennsylvania, occurring in letters in which Priestley tells his friends back in England about the country where he now resides.

(7) There is no such thing as a made road, in all this country, and the shaking of their best carriages at the best state of the roads is incredible very great. But the next time that I write I shall be able to give you a better account of them (letter to Theophilus Lindsey, 5 July 1794).

I have shown here that we can get a fairly good idea of Priestley’s occupations at different stages in his life, merely from examining the contexts of the most frequently occurring words in the JPLC.

The recurring and increasing use of the word thing does not necessarily mean that Priestley is being vague, consciously or subconsciously, but can be attributed to the fact that he usually spelled everything and anything as two words rather than one. In the entire JPLC, the word thing occurs 252 times, collocating 104 times with every and 92 times with any. In other words, only
22% of the total number of occurrences of thing do not occur with either of these two collocations.

8.6.3. The JPLC: keywords

A list of keywords can sometimes better show the topic, or even general nature, of the texts analysed than regular word lists (see also Baker 2009: 126). These keywords were extracted from each subcorpus using the KeyWord function in WordSmith, which uses a statistical comparison to determine the ‘keyness’ of each word, based on word lists from a specimen corpus and a reference corpus. Keyness is an index of the statistical significance of a keyword. Due to the nature of the process in which this significance is calculated, many function words as well as words belonging to the text type will usually not occur in these keyword lists. However, when they do occur, they are particularly significant (see for example Scott 2008b). Although these keywords lists are statistically derived, they are indicative of the “aboutness” (Phillips 1989) of a text. In other words, keyness indicates how strongly the frequency of a word in the specimen corpus differs from its frequency in the reference corpus and “should reveal the most significant lexical differences [...] in terms of aboutness and style” (Baker 2004: 347).

In this analysis, the reference corpus was not fixed but consisted of a combination of the other five subcorpora. Thus, in order to create a keyword list for the specimen corpus JPLC-1, for instance, the corpora JPLC-2, JPLC-3, JPLC-4, JPLC-5 and JPLC-6 were combined to form the reference corpus. I have limited the keywords to nouns and adjectives, excluding proper nouns and words that are typical of the text type of letters, in the way discussed above. Table 8.6.2 below summarises the top ten keywords in each of the subcorpora of the JPLC representing each of the six periods, compared to the other five. The keyword analysis shows some differences from the regular word lists for most periods, especially for the period 1794–1804 when Priestley had moved to America.
Table 8.6.2. Top ten keywords in the six periods of the JPLC.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>JPLC-1</th>
<th>JPLC-2</th>
<th>JPLC-3</th>
<th>JPLC-4</th>
<th>JPLC-5</th>
<th>JPLC-6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Warrington</td>
<td>Leeds</td>
<td>Calne</td>
<td>Birmingham</td>
<td>London</td>
<td>Northumberland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wire</td>
<td>experiments</td>
<td>spar</td>
<td>experiment</td>
<td>sons</td>
<td>things</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vanes</td>
<td>air</td>
<td>things</td>
<td>retorts</td>
<td>go</td>
<td>copies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>experiments</td>
<td>copies</td>
<td>experiments</td>
<td>air</td>
<td>funds</td>
<td>country</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>electricity</td>
<td>battery</td>
<td>air</td>
<td>things</td>
<td>riot</td>
<td>son</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>point</td>
<td>noxious</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>water</td>
<td>seditious</td>
<td>congress</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>experiment</td>
<td>things</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>retort</td>
<td>settle</td>
<td>notes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tourmalin</td>
<td>green</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>inflammable</td>
<td>dissenters</td>
<td>thankful</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>electrical</td>
<td>colours</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>copies</td>
<td>court</td>
<td>dollars</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>glass</td>
<td>minutes</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>acid</td>
<td>riots</td>
<td>peace</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>candle</td>
<td>repository</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>iron</td>
<td>rioters</td>
<td>place</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For one, the words in them are more specific with regard to what Priestley was concerned with during a particular period, compared to the other five. The occurrence of the word *tourmalin* in the Warrington period, for instance, shows more specifically what Priestley was doing his electrical experiments with. And at Calne, Priestley was performing chemical experiments with minerals, as illustrated by the occurrence of the keyword *spar* in that part of the corpus.15

The following extract is an illustration of this:

(8) On Saturday last, late in the evening I received the box of *spar* you were so obliging as to send me, a day or two after your letter (letter to Matthew Boulton, 6 November 1775).

What a keyword analysis does not show, however, is the distribution of the words. In the case of the Calne subcorpus, *spar* though a keyword, occurs only in two of the twenty-four letters in the subcorpus. The question therefore arises then whether keyness alone is a good indicator of the topic of a correspondence. At any rate, in this case it appears to be only a good indicator of the topic of two letters.

15 The word *spar* is “a general term for a number of crystalline minerals more or less lustrous in appearance and admitting of easy cleavage” (*OED*, s.v. ‘spar’).
In the Birmingham subcorpus, the keyword *inflammable* occurs 54 times in twenty letters and collocates with *air* 49 times – though referring to air in all 54 instances – revealing that in Priestley’s pneumatic research at the time, the focus was on inflammable air (hydrogen).

(9) By the electric explosion I decompose dephlogisticated and *inflammable* air, and I find the weight of the latter in the water I get from it (letter to Josiah Wedgwood, 23 March 1783).

In this extract, Priestley describes the reaction whereby hydrogen (“inflammable air”) and oxygen (“dephlogisticated air”) combine to form water in an explosive reaction. In the subcorpus for the London period, there are no longer any keywords that reflect his scientific experiments. This indicates that these had no special priority in Priestley’s life at that time. What we do find is that the words *castle* and *head* occur quite frequently, for instance, but these turn out to be part of the address “Castle head”, which was the residence of Priestley’s brother-in-law John Wilkinson. What the keywords in JPLC-5 show even more acutely than the word list of the same period, is that Priestley was greatly worried about a small number of issues: his family, his finances, the aftermath of the riots and the deteriorating political climate for dissenters. The plight of the dissenters, for example, is the topic of three letters to the vice president of the United States, John Adams. The following extract is from one of these:

(10) Many Dissenters wish to leave a country in which they find neither protection nor redress; but they are at a loss where to go, and how to proceed [...] France being in an unsettled state, I think it very probable that some of my sons will be disposed to go to America; and if so, I shall follow them in due time (letter to John Adams, 20 December 1792).

In the following section, I will take a look at how these topics in Priestley’s letters compare to that in a more general reference corpus of eighteenth-century letters: the CEECE.

### 8.6.4. Priestley’s usage in wider context

In this section, I will compare Priestley’s usage, as exemplified by the Joseph Priestley Letter Corpus (JPLC) against a reference corpus of eighteenth-century letters. The reason for doing this is to show how the topics in Priestley’s letters
as exemplified by a wordlist of the entire JPLC compares to those in contemporary correspondences. In the past few years, the Corpus of Early English Correspondence (CEECE) has received an extension to bring it into the Late Modern English period. This extension is called the CEECE, from which I have been graciously allowed to use data from the period 1750–1800. This period coincides more or less with that covered by the JPLC. This subcorpus of the CEECE was made up of 1738 letters from 69 different eighteenth-century authors for a total of 935,817 words of running text.14

I used the KeyWord function of WordSmith to perform an analysis of the JPLC with the CEECE 1750–1800 subcorpus as a reference corpus. As in the previous two analyses, I have excluded words that are typical of the text type. I give the words that are positively key, that is, those that occur significantly more often in the JPLC than in the CEECE reference corpus, as well as the words that are negatively key, that is, those that occur significantly less often in the JPLC than in the CEECE reference corpus. In this analysis we can expect many more keywords than in the one above because there is likely a much greater difference between the specimen corpus and the reference corpus. Therefore I have summarised the first twenty keywords, rather than just the first ten, in Table 8.6.3. The keywords include nouns, adjectives and verbs, excluding proper nouns and auxiliaries.

What we can deduce from these keywords, as we could from the word lists given above, is that Priestley’s letters are primarily concerned with his work, whether they are chemical experiments or his many publications. The only two that refer to other things are the words *son* and *funds*, which we have seen to stem from especially the letters in the last two periods of the JPLC. This preoccupation with work in Priestley’s letters is confirmed when we look at the keywords that are negatively key. Priestley’s letters lack the more every-day, domestic references found in the reference corpus.

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14 I am grateful to Samuli Kaisla"inen from the VARIENG unit at the University of Helsinki for providing me with the metadata of the 1750–1800 subperiod of the CEECE.
### keywords JPLC vs. CEECE 1750–1800

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>positively key</th>
<th>negatively key</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. air</td>
<td>1. love</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. experiments</td>
<td>2. lord</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. history</td>
<td>3. pray</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. philosophical</td>
<td>4. miss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. copies</td>
<td>5. heart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. copy</td>
<td>6. poor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. inflammable</td>
<td>7. know</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. printed</td>
<td>8. king</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. water</td>
<td>9. morning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. phlogiston</td>
<td>10. tell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11. word</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12. night</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13. child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14. children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15. mother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16. home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>17. day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>18. god</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>19. man</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20. say</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8.6.3. Top twenty positive and negative keywords in the JPLC, with the CEECE 1750–1800 subcorpus as reference.

This keyword analysis confirms the lack of references to grammar and language in Priestley’s letters, even when compared to a general reference corpus. Being a grammarian, we would expect to find the word grammar as a keyword, but this is not the case.

### 8.7. Summary

The purpose of the Joseph Priestley Letter Corpus is to allow sociohistorical linguistic analyses of Priestley’s unmonitored vernacular idiolect. His private letters are considered to represent most closely his unmonitored vernacular usage. The JPLC is made up of diplomatic transcriptions of these private letters, which have been marked-up in order to preserve textual and paratextual features that cannot be directly represented in plain text format. With this information, the corpus is not only useful for sociohistorical linguistic analysis, as in the present study, but it can also be used by (social) historians. The JPLC consists of 433 letters written by Priestley between 1762 and 1804, transcribed from manuscript. It represents private letters to 60 addressees on a variety of
topics in formal and informal styles over a forty-two year period of Priestley’s life, divided into six sub-periods.

I have illustrated the value of corpus analysis with letters with a fairly simple analysis based on word lists and keywords of the JPLC itself, as well as a comparison with a broader reference corpus, can already reveal much about the topics of a correspondence. More specific linguistic analyses using the Joseph Priestley Letter Corpus are performed in chapter 9, in which Priestley’s usage is investigated, particularly to show his use of grammatical features and how these relate to the rules in his *Rudiments of English Grammar*. 
9. Priestley’s Usage

9.1. Introduction

9.1.1. Aim of this chapter

In this chapter, I will try to answer the question whether the rules in Priestley’s grammar can be traced back to his own usage. In other words, does Priestley practice what he preaches? In order to determine this, I will compare the rules in his grammar to his usage in his personal letters by way of three case studies of grammatical features discussed in the *Rudiments of English Grammar*. Detailed studies have been previously done on the contemporary discussion as well as the variation in use of these features, so that there ought to be a adequate reference for the results of the analyses in this chapter. The grammatical features are the use of the auxiliary *be* or *have* with the past participles of mutative intransitive verbs (section 9.2), the realisation of the subjunctive mood in the present and past tense (section 9.3) and preposition placement (section 9.4). All three of the features mentioned show a change in progress during the eighteenth-century, though these changes did not necessarily start and/or end in that century. For the discussion of Priestley as a descriptivist, it seems useful to investigate whether his usage was conservative or progressive compared to general contemporary usage, as well as compared to the change in progress. In order to answer this question, I will compare the results of the analyses to earlier studies for reference.

Around the same time that Priestley’s allegedly descriptive grammar was published, Robert Lowth’s allegedly very prescriptive *Short Introduction to English Grammar* (1762) also appeared. These two grammars also used similar systems of classification for the parts of speech (Michael 1970: 278) and both were very influential. As shown in chapter 7, Priestley and Lowth have often been held up as typical examples of the opposing forces of descriptivism and prescriptivism. I will therefore occasionally also compare Priestley’s rules with
those of Lowth’s for the features investigated in this chapter, as well as make occasional references to other eighteenth-century English grammars. I will conclude the chapter with some observations on syntactic variation in Priestley’s usage (section 9.5).

9.1.2. Methodological preliminaries

The method used in this chapter is similar to the precept versus practice approach used by Tieken-Boon van Ostade (1987) in her investigation of the auxiliary do in the eighteenth century, and was recently employed in Auer’s (2009) investigation of the subjunctive in eighteenth-century English and German. Auer’s definition of the precept corpus is that it “consists of a collection of meta-linguistic comments on the investigated grammatical feature” (Auer 2009: 6), and in her study the discussion of the use of the subjunctive is compared to actual usage, as represented by a usage corpus. The main difference is that in the present case both precept and practice are confined to that of a single individual, and that the precept is not so much a corpus as a number of passages from the first and second editions of Priestley’s Rudiments of English Grammar (1761a, 1768a) that give rules for specific grammatical features. Priestley’s practice, or usage, is exemplified from the Joseph Priestley Letter Corpus (JPLC).

The concordance function of WordSmith Tools 5.0 (Scott 2008a) was used to count the frequencies in all three case studies. The results were then investigated manually for the relevant contexts. Because many of the frequencies in the JPLC were rather low, the log-likelihood (G²) statistic rather than the usual chi-squared (χ²) was used to calculate statistical significance. After statistical testing, differences found between scores are either non-significant (p>0.05), weakly significant (p<0.05), significant (p<0.01), highly significant (p<0.001), or very highly significant (p<0.0001).
9.2. Auxiliary selection with mutative intransitives

In this section I explore Priestley's usage of the auxiliaries be and have with the participles of mutative intransitive verbs, as well as his treatment of this feature in his grammar. In doing so I will make use of the studies by Rydén & Brorström (1987) and Kytō (1997). An overview of the use of the auxiliary be or have with past participles of mutative intransitive verbs is given in Rydén (1991) as well as in Fischer & Van der Wurff (2006: 140–142) in the form of a very brief summary.

9.2.1. Introduction

The change from be to have as the dominant auxiliary with mutative intransitive verbs in Late Modern English has been extensively studied in a diachronic context by Rydén & Brorström (1987). Mutative intransitive verbs are verbs that denote some form of change in place or condition, such as the verbs go or become respectively. In Old English, the original function of be or have with a past participle was to denote a state. Originally in Old English, have was used with transitive verbs only, but this changed to include intransitive and mutative verbs. During the Middle English period, be was already the regular marker of perfectivity, without referring to aspect, but the use of have in the same context was slowly rising (Rydén & Brorström 1987: 16–18). After that, we also find an aspectual distinction between contexts where be is used to indicate a state and have to indicate an action or process. In general though, be remained dominant throughout the seventeenth century (Rydén & Brorström 1987: 16–17).

The two passages from Priestley's letters given as examples (1) and (2) illustrate the auxiliary variation with the mutative intransitive verb begin:

1. The last time that I heard from Mr Belsham the war was not begun, but apprehended (letter to Theophilus Lindsey, 27 August 1803).

2. I shall, however, hardly undertake more than completing, in the best manner that I can, what I have begun (letter to Theophilus Lindsey, 16 June 1798).

Rydén & Brorström found that the occurrence of have rose from 20% around 1700 to 40% at the beginning of the nineteenth century, and that the use of
have reached a “paradigmatic majority” in the first decades of that century (Rydén & Brorström 1987: 196). In Present Day English, the auxiliary have is used almost exclusively with mutative intransitives.

The discussions involving participles in Late Modern English grammars appear to focus more on the passive voice of transitive verbs than on anything regarding intransitives. James Greenwood’s (1683–1737) *Essay Towards a Practical English Grammar* (1711) is an example of this:

The *Participle* which ends in *ed* is called the *Passive Participle*, because we having in English no *Passive Voice*, that is, no distinct Ending to distinguish a *Verb* that signifies *doing*, from a *Verb* that signifies *suffering*, we make up this Want by the Help of the *Verb* *Am*, and this *Participle*, as, *I am loved, I am burned* (Greenwood 1711: 124).

It seems at first as though the eighteenth-century grammars may not be very informative regarding the choice of *be* or *have* with mutative intransitives. However, the terminology of the time must also be taken into account. The term “verbs neuter” that we find in these grammars appears to be roughly equivalent to what we now call mutative intransitive verbs, yet some of these verbs could also be used transitively, so the match is not exactly one-to-one. In his *Short Introduction to English Grammar* (1762), Lowth defines the verb neuter in terms of transitivity. He writes that “the Verb Neuter is called Intransitive, because the effect is confined within the Agent and doth not *pass over to any object*” (Lowth 1762: 45). Greenwood, on the other hand, defines the verb neuter in terms of active and passive use, arguing that “[t]he Signification of Verbs *Absolute* (or *Neuter*, which signify Action) is in a manner *Passive*: and therefore Verbs *Absolute* and *Passive* are frequently us’d for each other” (Greenwood 1711: 155). Rydén & Brorström also note Greenwood’s remarks and take them as a statement of his preference for *have* with these intransitives (1987: 208-209). However, the passage in Greenwood continues as follows:

These verbs following, *arrive, come, decay, fall, fly, go, grow, pass, return, stray, whither, run &c.* commonly take the *Passive Formation*; *I am, I was, for the Active Formation*; *I have, I had* [...] Yet after *If we say Had, instead of was*, with some of the foresaid Verbs (Greenwood 1711: 155).
It seems that in this continuation, Greenwood gives no preference for either be or have. The grammarian James Buchanan (fl. 1753–1773) seems to have advocated the use of be with mutative intransitives in his *British Grammar* (1762), although we cannot rule out the possibility that he was merely recording such usage:

Come, gone, run, set, risen, fallen, grown, withered, decayed, arrived, and such like intransitive Verbs, which have frequently the passive Signs, am, art, &c. instead of have in the Perfect Time; and was, wast, &c. instead of had in the Pluperfect; as, I am come, for I have come; I was come, for I had come, &c (Buchanan 1762: 142).

From Buchanan’s remarks, particularly from his use of the words “instead of”, it seems as though have was already the default perfect auxiliary early in the second half of the eighteenth century, and that be was reserved for mutative intransitives. The following passage in the first edition of Robert Lowth’s *Short Introduction to English Grammar* discusses neuter verbs.

The Neuter Verb is varied like the Active; but, having somewhat of the Nature of the Passive, admits in many instances of the Passive form, retaining still the Neuter signification; chiefly in such Verbs as signify some sort of motion, or change of place or condition: as, I am come, I was gone; I am grown; I was fallen. The Verb am in this case precisely defines the Time of the action or event, but does not change the nature of it; the Passive form still expressing, not properly a Passion, but only a state or condition of Being (Lowth 1762: 61-63).

From this passage, he appears to advocate the use of be with certain mutative intransitives. It seems that by the term Passive form Lowth means be + past participle, which makes his position on the subject less clear, however. Additionally, in a footnote to the above passage he appears to proscribe the use of be with mutative intransitives (see also Tieken-Boon van Ostade 2006: 553):

I doubt much of the propriety of the following examples: “The rules of our holy Religion, from which we are infinitely swerved.” [...] “The whole obligation of that law and covenant, which God made with the Jews, was also ceased.” [...] “Whose number was now amounted to three hundred.” (Lowth 1762: 631).

It seems from this that Lowth was in favour of the use of have with these verbs, which is a progressive stance in light of the change in progress. According to
Rydén & Brorström, Lowth’s proscription against the use of *be* may have made him a linguistic innovator for the change from *be* to *have* because “[s]ome late eighteenth and early 19th century grammarians, starting with Lowth 1762, express doubts about the use of *be* with (certain uses of) some verbs” (Rydén & Brorström 1987: 209). However, Tieken-Boon van Ostade (2002: 163) hedges this position and intimates that more research on actual usage is required in order to determine this conclusively.

Whatever his stance was, Lowth showed an awareness of a difference in meaning between the uses of one auxiliary or the other with mutative intransitives. Priestley’s first discussion of the subject is found in the second edition of his *Rudiments of English Grammar* (1768a), in which he does his reputation as a descriptivist credit. He makes no pronouncement in preference of either *be* or *have*, but argues that though strictly speaking *be* may be more appropriate than the incoming variant *have*, the choice of auxiliary should be determined by the context:

> It seems not to have been determined by the English grammarians, whether the passive participles of verbs neuter require the auxiliary *am* or *have* before them. [...] I think we have an advantage in the choice of these forms of expression, as it appears to me, that we use them to express different modifications of the sense. When I say, *I am fallen*, I mean at this present instant; whereas, if I say, *I have fallen*, my meaning comprehends, indeed, the foregoing; but has likewise, a secret reference to some period of time past, as some time in this day, or in this hour, *I have fallen*, implying some continuance of time, which the other form of expression does not (Priestley 1768a: 127–128).

From the quotation above, it appears that Priestley advocates the use of *be* in a context of immediacy (‘momentariness’) or ‘recentness’ and the use of *have* in a context of duration or ‘pastness’. This appears not to be very dissimilar to present-day accounts of Late Modern English usage of the variants *be* or *have* with the past participles of mutative intransitive verbs in Late Modern English, of which “the general tendency is to prefer *have* when attention is focussed on the action indicated by the verb” whilst “with *be*, the emphasis is on the state following or the result achieved by the action” (Rissanen 1999: 213).
From this admittedly very short and rather limited survey of Late Modern English grammars it seems as if Lowth was indeed one of the first grammarians to note the choice of auxiliary with mutative intransitive verbs in different contexts. Priestley did not discuss it until the second edition of his *Rudiments of English Grammar*, and since we know that he was familiar with Lowth’s grammar, it is possible that his remarks were at least partly inspired by it.

### 9.2.2. Method

In order to analyse Priestley’s actual usage, I shall look at the distribution of *be* and *have* with intransitive mutatives in his personal correspondence, as it is exemplified by the Joseph Priestley Letter Corpus. I will examine whether there are diachronic or stylistic variations in the choice of auxiliary, using the JPLC. I will also investigate the syntactic-semantic environments in which variation with *be* and *have* occurs.

Rydén & Brorström used a corpus of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century plays and letters. I will compare the findings for the JPLC to one part of their corpus of texts, namely the part that consists of letters from the period 1750 to 1800. In order to be able to compare the results from my analyses with theirs, I use a list of 155 mutative intransitive verbs (see Rydén & Brorström 1987: 228-230), which is given in Appendix 12. Although the verb *reduce* was not included in the study by Rydén & Brorström, it was added specifically for this analysis because it is fairly frequently used as a mutative intransitive verb in the JPLC. A more recent corpus-based investigation of the variation of *be* and *have* with the participles of intransitive mutative verbs is Kytö (1997), which is a long diachronic study covering the period from 1350 to 1990, and using a large multi-genre corpus of nearly 2.8 million words. Because it reports the sizes of the corpora used, Kytö’s study would appear to be more suited for a comparison with this study than Rydén & Brorström’s. However, the much longer period and the large number of text types under investigation has the consequence that, for the relatively short period and the specific text type in which I am interested, there is simply not enough data to allow for a good comparison with
the JPLC. For the period from 1750 to 1800 Kytö’s corpus has no more than a total of 30 occurrences of *be* and *have* for the genre of letters, which is too small a number to perform a quantitative analysis of syntactic-semantic environments on for instance, with any useful results. Additionally, comparisons of individual verbs will not be possible for the same reason. Hence, although the later study is in some ways more rigorously performed, I will be drawing on the study by Rydén & Brorström for a reference corpus with which to compare my data. I will, however, make some qualitative comparisons of my findings with Kytö’s study. It should be noted that Rydén & Brorström give no sizes in numbers of words for the parts of their corpus, nor for its separate parts. Therefore, comparisons between the JPLC and the part of the corpus of Rydén & Brorström that represents letters of the second half of the eighteenth century can only be done by comparing the distributions of *be* and *have* in each corpus, based on the total number of tokens.

Following Rydén & Brorström, constructions of the type subject + *have been* + past participle were not counted as instances of the use of either *be* or *have*. An example is the sentence in (3), where we can see that it not possible to say whether *have* or *be* is the auxiliary used because they are both used:

(3) I have been returned from London about a fortnight; but a variety of business has prevented me from writing to you so soon as I ought to have done (letter to Theophilus Lindsey, 27 February(?)) 1771.

Constructions where there was elision of the auxiliary were also not included in the analysis. An example of this is when the past participle was the second part of a coordination where the auxiliary occurred only in the first part (see also Rydén & Brorström 1987: 31–32). In these situations it cannot be assumed that the second part of the coordination would be made with the same auxiliary. Finally, the reduced form `-s` was not counted either as it is ambiguous, being a possible contracted form of *is* as well as of *has* (see also Rydén & Brorström 1987: 24, 32).
9.2.3. Be/have variation in the JPLC

Out of the 155 mutative intransitive verbs searched for, fifty-one were actually attested in the JPLC. The most frequently occurring mutatives in the JPLC were, in decreasing order of frequency: come, arrive, go, recover, miscarry, return, become, a/rise, advance, diminish, get, meet, remove, set, happen, break, increase, pass, and reduce. Each of these occurs at least five times in the corpus; the remaining thirty-two occur less than five times in the contexts searched for. Table 9.2.1 shows their absolute and relative frequencies of occurrence in alphabetical order.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verb</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>be /10,000</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>have /10,000</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>total N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>advance</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a/rise</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>arrive</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>1.54</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>become</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0.43</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>break</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>come</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>1.01</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>1.20</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>diminish</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0.34</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>get</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>go</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>happen</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>increase</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>meet</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>miscarry</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0.58</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pass</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>recover</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reduce</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>remove</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>return</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0.53</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>set</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>all verbs</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>8.84</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>5.96</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>308</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9.2.1. Be/have variation with the most frequently occurring mutative intransitive verbs in the JPLC.

Across the corpus as a whole, the predominance of be over have as the choice of auxiliary is statistically highly significant. The part of the corpus of Rydén &
Brorström that represents letters from the second half of the eighteenth century contains 554 tokens of *be* and 270 tokens of *have*, to a total of 814 tokens (Rydén & Brorström 1987: 232). For comparison, I have summarised the proportions of *be* and *have* in this period, the ones which immediately precede and follow it, as well as the proportions of *be* and *have* in the JPLC in Table 9.2.2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verb</th>
<th>Be</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Have</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>R&amp;B 18th century, 1st half</td>
<td>850</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>1,038</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R&amp;B 18th century, 2nd half</td>
<td>554</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>814</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R&amp;B 19th century, 1st half</td>
<td>1,078</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>2,144</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>3,222</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JPLC</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>308</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9.2.2. *Be/have* variation in three of Rydén & Brorström’s subcorpora of letters and the JPLC (data from Rydén & Brorström rounded to whole percentages).

Priestley’s overall lower proportion of *be* could suggest that his usage was slightly innovative in light of the change in progress. However, there are no statistically significant differences between the JPLC and Rydén & Brorström’s data for the second half of the eighteenth century. Their data for the first half of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries shows very highly significant differences with the JPLC. This suggests that in general Priestley’s usage was actually neither conservative nor progressive in light of the change in progress, insofar as Rydén & Brorström (1987) describe this change.

9.2.4. Sociolinguistic variables

Diachronic variation can be indicative of an effort by the author to change his usage, whether it is a conscious one or not. This could, for instance, be driven by changes in contemporary norms of correctness. There is only little evidence for diachronic variation in this feature within the JPLC. The scores for *be* and *have* in the six periods distinguished in chapter 8 are summarised in Table 9.2.3.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>JPLC-1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>184</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JPLC-2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JPLC-3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JPLC-4</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>14.0</td>
<td>10.8</td>
<td>8.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JPLC-5</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JPLC-6</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>5.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>total</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>308</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9.2.3. Diachronic variation of be/have variation with mutative intransitive verbs in the JPLC.

In JPLC-1 to JPLC-4 there is no significant difference between the use of be and have. Only in the last two periods is there a significant predominance of the use of be over have. In JPLC-5 it is very highly significant and in JPLC-6 it is significant. The only observed diachronic development is a highly significant increase of the use of be from JPLC-4 to JPLC-5, and a weakly significant increase in the use of have from JPLC-5 to JPLC-6. In both these periods, be is the dominant variable. This last development seems to reflect the general change in English, as attested by Rydén & Brorström. Indeed, Priestley’s use of have in the last period (39%) is very close to the 40% Rydén & Brorström (1987: 196) give for the beginning of the nineteenth century.

There is, however, little diachronic development overall. When this data is shown in a graph, given in Figure 9.2.1 below, we can see more clearly that that the data for the period 1791–1794 (JPLC-5) is unusual. In the period JPLC-5, there is a much greater difference between the use of be and have than would be expected considering the data in the other periods. As mentioned above, the difference is very highly significant, while there are no significant differences in the other periods, except the last. The data in this period is also responsible for the seemingly significant diachronic development in the last three periods, noted above.
The situation in JPLC-5 does not seem to fit into any overall diachronic pattern, and I have as yet no sociohistorical explanation for this. So far, it appears to be an anomaly. A comparison with Priestley’s usage in published sources for the same period might shed more light on this problem, but such an analysis falls outside the scope of this investigation. The JPLC was divided into formal and informal letters, as mentioned in chapter 8. The frequencies of *be* and *have* for these two styles are given in Table 9.2.4.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>style</th>
<th>be</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>have</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>/10,000</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>/10,000</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>formal</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>informal</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>283</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>total</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>8.84</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>5.96</td>
<td>308</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9.2.4. Variation of *be/have* with mutative intransitive verbs in formal and informal letters in the JPLC.

In the formal style there is no significant predominance of either *be* or *have* as auxiliary. In the informal style, the distribution between *be* and *have* is exactly the same as that of the entire corpus (60% *be* and 40% *have*). The predominance of *be* over *have* in the informal style is statistically significant. The
discussions by eighteenth-century grammarians and Rydén & Brorström’s study, as shown above, suggest that the shift from be to have as the auxiliary for mutative intransitive verbs should be seen as a change from above. Seen in this context, the observed pattern makes sense. However, when we compare formal and informal styles with each other, we see that there is a weakly significant preference for be in the informal style, while there is no difference between the two styles for have. This is unexpected, since one would sooner expect a greater use of the conservative variant be in formal letters and/or a predominance of the innovative, rising variant have in informal letters. The fact that the majority of the total number of letters is informal may have had an effect on the outcome of the analysis.

9.2.5. Syntactic-semantic constraints

Rydén & Brorström discuss several syntactic-semantic contexts that very strongly promote the use of have: past perfect, perfect infinitive and -ing constructions, as well as conditional, optative, iterative, durative and negative contexts (Rydén & Brorström 1987: 184-193). Examples from the JPLC of these contexts, all with have as the auxiliary, are given in (4) to (11) below. The passage in (4) is an example of the past perfect:

(4) I feel much concerned for Mr. Johnson. How unequally is justice administered! I wish he had come hither, as he once seemed inclined to do. But as his guilt [as they think it] is not great, I yet hope the punishment will be moderate (letter to Theophilus Lindsey, 1 November 1798).

A perfect infinitive is shown in (5), with the modal auxiliary could in the verbal part of the predicate:

(5) At the same time I have very little to complain of here, and much to be thankful for; and as I was under a kind of necessity of leaving England, I do not know that I could have gone to any place more eligible on the whole (letter to Thomas Belsham, 26 November 1800).

The passage in (6) is an example of an -ing construction in a progressive:

(6) As to myself, having come so far, and liking the country, I am determined to fix here (letter to John Wilkinson, 12 November 1794).
An example of a conditional context, indicated in this case by the presence of the conjunction *if*, is given in (7):

(7) If I had gone on a mistake of your [intention], it would have been kind to have apprized me of it after the first, or second time of drawing, before I had involved myself so far as I have done (letter to John Wilkinson, 3 November 1796).

The passage in (8) shows an optative context, indicated by its introduction by the interjected phrase *I believe* after the modal auxiliary:

(8) I beg your care of the indosed letters for England, and desire you would pay a bill for 300 dollars which I some time ago gave to Mr. John Cowden, and which, to my great concern, he says was not paid for want of advice, the letter of which must, I believe, have miscarried (letter to John Vaughan, 13 November 1794).

An iterative context, indicated by the use of the adverb *often*, is shown in (9):

(9) I have this day corrected for the press as far as p. 704 and shall send you to this pace some time this week but I shall dread opening you letters, often they have gone through your hands. However, find all the faults you can (letter to John Canton, 18 November 1771).

The passage in (10) is an example of a durative context because of the presence of the adverbial phrase *in the course of a year*:

(10) I think I told you that the air which I extracted from nitre, and which was, at first, wholesome and good, had, in the course of a year, become highly noxious (letter to Richard Price, 26 November 1772).

Finally, a negative context, using the negative particle, is given in (11):

(11) she burst a blood vessel and continued to spit blood perhaps two hours, but in no great quantity, and it has not returned since; so that this circumstance does not alarm me as much as her general habit (letter to Theophilus Lindsey, 2 July 1790).

I analysed the *be/have* variation with all mutative intransitives in the JPLC in these contexts, and summarised the results in Table 9.2.5 below. There was a statistically significant difference between use of *be* and *have* in only four of these contexts: the perfect infinitive, and in iterative, optative and negative contexts.
Table 9.2.5. *Be/have* variation in the JPLC in *have*-promoting synsemantic environments.

In the perfect infinitive there is a significant preference for *have*, and optative and iterative contexts have a weakly significant preference for *have*, which is as expected. However, in the other contexts there is no significant preference for *have*, and indeed in negative contexts there is actually a weakly significant preference for *be* rather than *have*, which runs counter to the pattern for this synsemantic constraint. In the remainder of contexts – those that cannot be categorised as any of the nine constraints mentioned above – there is a very highly significant preference for *be*, as in the following examples:

(12) I have written to the Duke by this conveyance; and as I hear that the packages you mention are arrived at Philadelphia, I do not doubt but I shall soon receive them here (letter to Theophilus Lindsey, 29 May 1797).

(13) We are anxious for the return of Joseph [...] He says his sister is almost [perfectly] recovered. I owe you much gratitude for your great kindness to her (letter to John Wilkinson, 17 July 1800).

This preference indicates, even though it does not prove the *have*-promoting nature of these other contexts, that these findings are problematic and that other synsemantic constrains may be more important. We may tentatively conclude, therefore, that in this Priestley's usage is either governed by additional constraints, or perhaps by more diffuse criteria than the specific synsemantic contexts mentioned above. The raw data seemed to suggest that contexts of
'pastness' or duration favour the use of *have* and those of 'recentness', or 'momentary' contexts favour the use of *be*. Based on Priestley's comments in his grammar, these are not unlikely to be the simpler constraints that may explain the results found. Consequently, these contexts were investigated further. These contexts of 'pastness' and 'recentness' are understood as being signalled primarily by the use of temporal adverbials denoting relative past or present, and in the case of 'pastness' by the use of the past perfect (also the use of *since*-clauses, expressing durative aspect). Consequently, I reanalysed the mutative intransitive verbs that occurred at least five times in JPLC (see Table 9.2.1) with regard to these contexts. The results of this analysis are summarised in Table 9.2.6.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>context</th>
<th><em>be</em></th>
<th><em>have</em></th>
<th>p&lt;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>pastness/duration</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>recentness/momentariness</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>2.07</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9.2.6. Contextual variation of *be*/*have* with mutative intransitive verbs in the JPLC.

Examples are given in the passage from Priestley's letters quoted in the following discussion, where I will investigate the most frequently occurring mutatives to try and determine what the relevant constraints for each of them appear to be. From Table 9.2.6 we can see that there is a clear division between these two contexts when we look at the mutative intransitive verbs collectively. The predominance of *have* in contexts of pastness or duration is highly significant, and the predominance of *be* in contexts of recenteness or momentariness is very highly significant. However, this is a somewhat generalised picture and for that reason I will now discuss the most frequently occurring mutative intransitives in the JPLC in more detail. In order to be able to say anything meaningful about the proportions of *be* and *have* with these verbs, I will limit myself to those verbs which occur at least ten times in the whole corpus (see Table 9.2.1). I will
briefly discuss the semantic and/or syntactic constraints of the construction of these verbs’ participles with the auxiliaries be and have. These verbs, which I will discuss in increasing order of the frequency in which they occur in the JPLC, are the following: become, return, miscarry, recover, go, arrive and come. In aid of this discussion, I have given the be/have distributions for both the JPLC and the data for the second half of the eighteenth century from Rydén & Brorström (1987) in Table 9.2.7.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verb</th>
<th>Joseph Priestley Letter Corpus</th>
<th>Rydén &amp; Brorström</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>be</td>
<td>have</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N %</td>
<td>N %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>become</td>
<td>9 82%</td>
<td>2 18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>return</td>
<td>11 92%</td>
<td>1 8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>miscarry</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>12 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>recover</td>
<td>16 89%</td>
<td>2 11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>go</td>
<td>14 58%</td>
<td>10 42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>arrive</td>
<td>31 89%</td>
<td>4 11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>come</td>
<td>21 46%</td>
<td>25 54%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9.2.7. Be/have distribution with mutative intransitive verbs in the JPLC and Rydén & Brorström, 2nd half 18th century.

BECOME

In general, Priestley’s letters show a weakly significant preference for be with the past participle of become. There is no significant difference in the use of either auxiliary with become between the JPLC and Rydén & Brorström. Priestley uses have as the auxiliary when the sense is more clearly past, as shown by the use of the past perfect in example (9) above. In addition, besides the use of the past perfect, the adverbial phrase in the course of a year indicates a context of duration. Due to the low scores, it cannot be statistically proven, but the fact that the only two occurrences of have with become are of this type may be an

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1 For the verbs begin and miscarry, Rydén & Brorström provide no separate data for the second half of the eighteenth century. The be/have distributions for these two verbs in this table are those given for the entire eighteenth century for the texts types letters and plays combined.
indication of a preference for *have* in these contexts. When the sense is obviously recent or momentary, as indicated by the use of *now* in the following example, Priestley seems to have weakly significant preference for the auxiliary *be*:

(14) I have just found, to my great surprise, that a quantity of air, which I got about a year ago from salt petre, and which was then quite wholesome, and in which candle burned perfectly well, *is now become* in the highest degree noxious (letter to Richard Price, 11 November 1772).

The tendency towards 'free variation' between *be* and *have* with *become* that Rydén & Brorström observe towards the end of the eighteenth century (Rydén & Brorström 1987: 50) could not be corroborated by the data from Priestley's letters. Instead, his usage with this verb was more likely to be constrained by the sentence's temporal reference.

*RETURN*

Although Priestley's letters show a significant preference for *be* as the auxiliary with mutative intransitives, there is no significant difference in the use of either auxiliary with *return* between the JPLC and Rydén & Brorström. In a context of momentariness or recentness, for instance when a relatively recent event is referred to, as with the adverb *just* in (15), Priestley has a significant preference for *be* as an auxiliary:

(15) William *is just returned* to us from Boston, and better than I expected (letter to Theophilus Lindsey, 12 July 1795).

In fact, in all five of these contexts found in the JPLC, *be* is used exclusively as the auxiliary. Priestley appears to favour *have* when the sense is decidedly past, as indicated by *since* in (16), which refers back to a moment in the past: *the day before yesterday*. When "since" is combined with "the day before yesterday", these two elements create a sense of duration between them:

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2 The meaning of adverb *now* is not without its complications. It denotes the present moment (OED, s.v. 'now'), but in order for *now* to do that, it must logically have a "secret reference to some period of time past" or at least to a moment in the past from which to distinguish itself.
(16) **the day before yesterday**, she coughing violently at ten times, in conse-
quence of taking something into the wind pipe, she burst a blood vessel and
continued to spit blood perhaps two hours, but in no great quantity, and it
**has not returned since** (letter to Theophilus Lindsey, 2 July 1790).

However, because there was only a single attestation of *have* with *return* in the
JPLC, the tendency toward the use of *have* in these contexts could not be veri-
fi ed statistically.

**MISCARRY**

*Miscarry* falls somewhat outside the patterns observed with many of the other
mutative intransitives due to its very specific meaning. Rydén & Brorström
found only uses with the sense ‘fail to reach the right destination’ for the part of
their corpus that covers both letters and plays of the entire eighteenth century
(1987: 132). This is also the case in the JPLC, as Priestley uses *miscarry* only
with the sense of letters being lost or delivered to the wrong place. Indeed, half
of the occurrences of *miscarry* refer explicitly to letters, of which (17) and (18)
are typical examples:

(17) As several of Mr Lindsay’s **letters** to me **have miscarried**, I fear it may be
the same with mine to you, or yours to me (letter to John Wilkinson, 30
November 1797).

(18) Mrs Rayner’s **letter** must **have miscarried**, as I have never received it
(letter to Theophilus Lindsey, 23 December 1798).

Rydén & Brorström found that the use of *have* predominates in their corpus.
The JPLC shows a similar pattern: the preference for the use of *have* as the
auxiliary with *miscarry* is significant. Indeed, the use of *be* with this verb is not
attested in the JPLC at all (see Table 9.2.7). Note that according to Rydén &
Brorström the use of *have* is dominant in this construction from the time it
emerged around 1600 (1987: 132). The possible alternative interpretation of
this construction as a transitive use would promote the use of *be*. The fact that
*have* is nevertheless preferred is indicative of the general trend towards the use
of this auxiliary. The fact that *have* is used almost exclusively as the auxiliary
with the verb *miscarry*, whilst other verbs still show much variation may be an
indication that this change occurs through a process of lexical diffusion, where a change spreads through the lexicon word by word.\(^3\)

**RECOVER**

The distribution between *be* and *have* with the past participle of *recover* in Rydén & Brorström is similar to that in the JPLC, where there is a significant general preference for *be*. As shown in (19) and (20), Priestley uses both *be* and *have* with *recover* in the sense of ‘to improve in health’:

(19) The pope **has recovered** contrary to our expectations and wishes (letter to Theophilus Lindsey, 27 August 1803).

(20) I am now returned from Philadelphia, and tho I had a long relapse into a state of very indifferent health after I informed Mr Lindsey that I **was perfectly recovered**, I am now again much better than I lately expected I ever should be (letter to Thomas Belsham, 2 April 1803).

In contexts of recentness, as exemplified by *just* in (21) there is a significant preference for *be*. Indeed, in these contexts there is only evidence of the use of *be* as the auxiliary with *recover* in Priestley’s letters:

(21) Mr Russell, who **is just recovered** from a feverish complaint that has held him a long time, is affected more than I am (letter to John Wilkinson, 4 June 1793).

The use of the past perfect, as shown in both (20) and (22) is an example that indicates a context of ‘regular’ definite pastness:

(22) He had had an ague, which was very generally prevalent in this country, the last summer, but **had recovered** very well, and even a second time after a relapse; but after those he had frequent colds and indispositions, which affected his stomach and bowels (letter to John Wilkinson, 17 December 1795).

Although *be* occurs more often with *recover*, there is no statistically significant preference for either auxiliary in the past perfect. *Be* is also the only auxiliary to occur with prepositional phrases, of which (21) is an example. However, since there were only two instances of *have* with *recover* found in all investigated

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\(^3\) *Lexical diffusion* refers to the notion in sociolinguistics that “sound changes occur word by word. [...] The first hypothesis in lexical diffusion theory is that a sound change does not occur in all words simultaneously. Rather, some environments are more conducive to the change” (Mesthrie et al 2009: 113).
contexts, it is impossible to determine whether this is a significant preference. The distinction between momentary and durative contexts does not seem to be as relevant in the case of recover. This is perhaps why there is no preference for either auxiliary in contexts of pastness or duration, although there is a significant preference for be in recent or momentary contexts.

**go**

Priestley does not generally favour either be or have with the past participle of go. He uses have about as often as in the corpus of Rydén & Brorström and be very highly significantly less. According to Rydén & Brorström, have is strongly favoured with go in conditional and iterative/durative contexts (1987: 105). The data from the JPLC does not show this particular pattern. Of the contexts mentioned at the beginning of this section, only the past perfect shows a statistically significant predominance of have over be, the latter of which is not used in this syntactic environment. It is not in iterative/durative contexts, but rather in contexts in which there is a definite sense of pastness and/or completion that Priestley favours the use of have, as in example (23):

(23) at supper time we sent to let him know that we waited for him; but word was returned that he had supped, and **had gone** to bed (letter to Theophilus Lindsey, 7 November 1801).

In contexts that are clearly recent, as indicated by use of the adverb now in (24), Priestley seems to favour the use of be:

(24) I am reduced to my vegetables, but with a prospect of good success; as all the symptoms of gall stones **are now gone** (letter to Theophilus Lindsey, 22 July 1786).

This is, however, one of those instance where it is very hard to determine whether this is an example of be + past participle or whether it is a copulative use (see also section 9.2.6 and Rydén & Brorström 1987: 24). Rydén & Brorström found that be is normally used with go + to-infinitive constructions expressing purpose (1987: 105), as in example (25). This is also the case in the JPLC, where these constructions show a weakly significant preference for be:
(25) In the winter we were very fortunate in having a man and his wife with us from England, who are now gone to settle on a farm (letter to Theophilus Lindsey, 12 July 1795).

This is incidentally also a context of recentness, as shown by the occurrence of the adverb now in example (25). Go does not occur with have as its auxiliary in these contexts. Priestley’s usage also shows a weakly significant preference for the use of have with mutative intransitives in constructions of the type come + locP/dirP (a locative or directional prepositional phrase) such as those in (26) and (27):

(26) as I was under a kind of necessity of leaving England, I do not know that I could have gone to any place more eligible on the whole (letter to Theophilus Lindsey, 26 November 1800).

(27) Yourself and M’ Lindsey as well as some others, have gone far beyond you proportion (letter to Thomas Bekham, 24 September 1803).

These phrases can denote a literal spatial direction, as in (26), or have a figurative interpretation of direction, as in (27). It could be argued that such phrases denoting movement necessarily imply duration, hence promoting the use of have as auxiliary.

**ARRIVE**

There is no significant difference in the use of either auxiliary with the past participle of arrive between the JPLC and the corpus of Rydén & Brorström. In general however, Priestley strongly favours the use of be, the greater occurrence of which in the JPLC is very highly significant. This corroborates Rydén & Brorström’s findings that “[i]n the eighteenth century be is still heavily predominant” (1987: 44) with this verb. This is not completely unexpected, since the notion of positional and motional finality inherent in arrive gives it a sense of ‘momentariness’, which would promote the selection of be as the auxiliary. Rydén & Brorström also found that negation was not a constraining factor with arrive (1987: 44), but the JPLC shows a weakly significant preference for be in negative contexts. In contexts of recentness, such as (28), there is a highly significant preference for be in the JPLC:
(28) I write to inform you that I and my wife are just arrived at Sandy Hook, and expect to be at New York before Midnight (letter to John Vaughan, 3 June 1794).

There is only one occurrence in the JPLC of have in such a context, as shown in example (29):

(29) Mr. Degruchy has just arrived with his wife, two very agreeable persons, who will add much to our society (letter to Theophilus Lindsey, 23 December 1798).

This could be a decidedly modern usage for Priestley. Even though this period of the JPLC was the only one in which the use of have increased significantly compared to earlier periods, it is hard to tell whether this use is actually due to the later date of the letter in which it occurs. There is no preference for have in contexts of pastness. The recurring construction arrive + locP/dirP occurs exclusively with be, the predominance of which is consequently very highly significant. This type, shown in (30), is not surprisingly the most frequent construction with arrive in the JPLC:

(30) The ship that Joseph went in, I hear, is arrived in America, tho I have not yet heard from him (letter to John Wilkinson, 2 December 1793).

There are no occurrences of be + arrive + temP (temporal prepositional phrase) in the JPLC. Rather, temporal relations are mostly conveyed by adverbials of time. Have does not occur frequently enough with arrive in any single context to draw any meaningful conclusions about its distribution, although there might possibly be a preference for have in negative contexts.

COME

In general, Priestley uses be less and have more with the past participle of come than is found in Rydén & Brorström. Both differences are weakly significant. Rydén and Brorström (1987: 62) report that be is the dominant alternative for this verb in the eighteenth century. However, this is not reflected in the JPLC, where there is no statistically significant preference for either auxiliary. Rydén & Brorström also found that be predominates in the past perfect, in -ing constructions and in negative contexts, and that have is favoured in optative,
conditional, durative and iterative contexts (1987: 61–63). Again, none of these
tendencies are reflected in the JPLC, where there is no significant difference
between the use of be and have in all of these contexts, each occurring about
equally often. Rydén & Brorström note a predominance of be in the collocation
*come home* (1987: 62–63). Although this particular collocation does not appear
in the JPLC, the corpus does contain eight instances of the semantically related
collocation *come hither*, where *hither* refers to the place that is home at that
moment. The only occurrence of *be* in this context is given in (31):

(31) But **being come hither**, and having, at a great risk and expence, brought my
library and Apparatus hither, tho that scheme has failed, I cannot remove
any more (letter to John Adams, 13 November 1794).

It should be noted, however, that the collocation *come hither* in the sense of
‘arrive’, as illustrated in (32), seems more strongly perfective than *come* on its
own, and consequently it could promote the use of *have* as the auxiliary:

(32) I would send you one of me, taken since I **have come hither**, but I am so
different from what I was, chiefly in consequence of wearing my hair, that
you would hardly know me (letter to Theophilus Lindsey, 29 May 1797).

Indeed, the preference of *have* in the construction with the phrase *come hither*
in the JPLC is weakly significant. Incidentally, this is also an example of *come +
locP/dirP*, which is the single most frequently occurring construction with *come*
in the JPLC. It occurs both with *be* and *have* but there is a significant preference
for the use of *have* in this construction. Another example of this construction
with *be* is given in (33):

(33) Almost all the ships expected to arrive before winter **are come** (letter to
Theophilus Lindsey, 7 November 1801).

In contexts of pastness, such as (34) where the context is clear from the con-
tinued use of the past tense, there is a preference in the JPLC for *have* which is
highly significant:

(34) What was condensed by the warm tub was mere **water**. The
inflammable air, which had no fixed air in it **had come** from the copper. The
inside was reduced to a black powder (letter to Josiah Wedgwood, 8
November 1784).
In contexts of recentness there is a no significant preference for be or have as the auxiliary with come in the JPLC.

9.2.6. Summary and discussion

Rydén & Brorström note that it is often difficult to distinguish between the function of be + past participle as copula plus adjective and that of perfective auxiliary with intransitive verb (1987: 24, 27): “The functional range of be + PP covers essentially three areas, be doing duty as (1) copula (with adjectival stative PP): he is changed ‘he is different’ (2) perfective Aux, i.e. tense marker (with intransitive verbs): he is changed ‘he has become different’” (Rydén & Brorström 1987: 24). This problematic ambiguity might also have affected actual usage and may thus account in part for the greater use of be in contexts of recentness and momentariness, though it has no effect on the use of have in contexts of pastness or duration.

Some of the results of this investigation corroborate the findings of the earlier studies. Both Rydén & Brorström and Kytö find a greater use of have in conditional contexts (Rydén & Brorström 1987: 186; Kytö 1997: 58). Kytö reports more be in the present perfect, which also indicates recentness, and more have in the past perfect, which indicates pastness (Kytö 1997: 52-53). Rydén & Brorström find a preponderance of be in the past perfect as well as in the present perfect (1987: 63), but this is not observed in the JPLC. Verb specific syntactic-semantic factors seem to play an important role in auxiliary selection with mutative intransitives. Overall scores do not show any significant preference for either be or have in the construction V + locP/dirP for instance, but there is significant variation and preference for individual verbs. An example of this is given in the discussion above, which showed that come and go show a preference for have in this construction, while arrive occurs only with be as the auxiliary.

Compared to the general be/have distribution in Rydén & Brorström’s corpus of letters from the second half of the eighteenth century (Rydén & Brorström 1987: 196) Priestley’s usage is neither conservative nor progressive.
His usage seems illustrative of the general usage of the educated, literate middle class to which he belonged, and from which Rydén & Brorström derived their data as well (1987: 215–216), judging by the authors in their corpus. As shown in the quotation in the introduction to this section, Priestley gives no prescription for any standard usage of either be or have because according to him it depends on the context which auxiliary is more appropriate with the main verb in question. This is indeed reflected in his own usage in his letters: he generally uses have when there is a more definite sense of pastness and/or duration and be when this is not the case, when the context conveys a sense of recentness or has a momentary meaning. This corresponds to the rules in his grammar. This can mean that either Priestley 'cleaned up' his usage after writing his grammar, or he described his own usage in his grammar, thus in essence being his own informant concerning matters of usage and grammaticality. The former is possible, since 95% of the letters in the JPLC – which corresponds to 93% of the total number of words – date from after 1768, the year Priestley published the second edition of his grammar. Thus, if he changed his writing after the publication of his grammar, this might not show up in the JPLC. However, I am greatly inclined to say that the latter is the case, since Priestley's usage seems too consistent to have been influenced much by writing his grammar. We can therefore conclude that with regard to auxiliary selection with the past participles of mutative intransitive verbs, Priestley lives up to his reputation as a descriptivist, and that his description reflects his own usage.

9.3. The subjunctive mood

In this section, I will explore Priestley's discussion of the subjunctive mood in his *Rudiments of English Grammar* (Priestley 1761a, 1768a) and compare his rules to his own use of the subjunctive in his letters. I will primarily make use of the studies by Auer (2009) and Auer & Tieken-Boon van Oudeste (2007).

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4 This temporary 'grammar effect' was also found in the usage of the grammarian Robert Lowth (Tieken-Boon van Oudeste 2011: 119–120, 240).
9.3.1. Introduction

Huddleston & Pullum define the subjunctive mood for Present Day English as follows: “[t]he general term subjunctive [original emphasis] is primarily used for a verbal mood that is typically associated with subordinate clauses with a non-factual interpretation” (Huddleston & Pullum 2002: 88). From Rissanen’s (1999: 227–231) brief survey of the development of the subjunctive mood in Early and Late Modern English, we can add that “[a]s in Present-Day English, the present subjunctive expresses a realisable wish (optative subjunctive) or exhortation (hortative or mandative)” (Rissanen 1999: 228).

The subjunctive mood is governed by subordinating conjunctions that introduce “clauses with a non-factual interpretation”, such as if and though. In the second edition of the Rudiments of English Grammar Priestley indicated that the verb is required to be in the subjunctive mood “after the words if, though, e’er, before, whether, except, whatsoever, whomsoever and words of wishing” (Priestley 1768a: 16) and that “[t]he conjunctive form may take place after the adverb perhaps” (Priestley 1768a: 117). As argument for the name of the term used, he says that “[t]his form, because it is rarely used but in conjunction with some or other of the preceding words, may be called the conjunctive form of the tenses” (Priestley 1768a: 16).

The subjunctive mood can be realised in one of three ways: by the use of the inflectional subjunctive, by the use of the indicative form, or by the use of a periphrastic construction with a modal auxiliary verb. I will illustrate these different realisations with examples from Priestley’s letters. The inflectional subjunctive is illustrated in (35) to (37), the use of the indicative in (38) and the periphrastic construction with a modal auxiliary in (39):

(35) If writing be the least inconvenient to you, I beg you would not give yourself the least trouble about it (letter to John Canton, 17 November 1767).

(36) I should be glad to know whether Mr Nairne have any thoughts of constructing any electrical machine on the plan that I have mentioned (letter to William Canton, 25 May 1787).

(37) If anything new of this kind come out, I hope you will send it to me (letter to Theophilus Lindsey, 12 September 1799).
(38) We have been alarmed for some time with the apprehension of a rupture with your country; but I hope there will be wisdom enough on your side of the water, tho there is little on this, to prevent it (letter to John Adams, 20 August 1793).

(39) I take the liberty to inclose my letter to Mr Stone. It is, however, so written, that no danger can arise to him from it, in whatever hands it may fall (letter to Thomas Jefferson, 29 October 1802).

It is generally accepted that the use of the inflectional subjunctive has been steadily declining since the Modern English period. I will not go into the details of this change here, but the loss of inflections in the English verb system and the rise of the use of modal auxiliaries played important parts in this decline (see Auer 2009: 62–66 for a more detailed discussion). Görlach summarises the change in the use of the subjunctive in the history of English as follows: "[t]he subjunctive had lost ground from [Middle English] times onwards, in particular since the loss of inflections obliterated its difference from the indicative; moreover, modal verbs (would, should, might) were readily available to render the necessary distinction" (Görlach 2001: 122). Huddleston & Pullum make an even more broadly sweeping statement, saying that "[a]s far as English is concerned, historical change has more or less eliminated mood from the inflectional system" (Huddleston & Pullum 2002: 172).

Priestley was aware of the decline of the inflectional subjunctive in his own time as well, and in the section 'Notes and Observations' of the second edition of his Rudiments of English Grammar, he makes refers to this development. His use of the words "neglected" and "even" in the quotation below can be seen as an indication of his disapproval of this development:

This conjunctive form of verbs, though our forefathers paid a pretty strict regard to it, is much neglected by many of our best writers [...] So little is this form of verbs attended to, that few writers are quite uniform in their own practice with respect to it. We even, sometimes, find both the forms of a verb in the same sentence, and in the same construction (Priestley 1768a: 119–120).

Indeed, an example of this very phenomenon is found in a letter written by one of Priestley's friends. A letter by Benjamin Franklin, dated 6 December 1750, written to the printer William Strahan (1715–1785) shows both the indicative
form and the inflectional subjunctive being used in a coordinated construction in the same sentence and referring to the same subject, as shown in (40).

(40) Mr. Joseph Crellius is gone to Holland and I suppose may call at London before he returns, and settle his Daughter’s Affair (Benjamin Franklin to William Strahan, The Papers of Benjamin Franklin).

Strahan may have implied repetition of the auxiliary may before settle in this sentence, which would make the construction more consistent. However, the fact is that the auxiliary is not repeated, and there is nothing in the immediate contexts to suggest that repetition of the auxiliary must be inferred. On the contrary, the predicate may call refers to a different subject – Mr. Joseph Crellius – than returns and settle, which refer to the subject he. Priestley also discusses in his grammar how the use of the inflectional subjunctive is confused with the use of auxiliary verbs: “[t]hat the conjunctive form of verbs is, however, in fact used for the auxiliary, and another form of the verb, is evident from a variety of examples” (Priestley 1768a: 119). This indicates that he was aware of the possibility of using periphrasis with modal verbs in the same context, which in some grammars is called the potential mood. It is possible that “another form of the verb” refers to the use of the indicative form in the subjunctive mood.

9.3.2. Method

Priestley’s own usage of the subjunctive mood will be investigated by looking at the occurrence of the inflectional subjunctive, the indicative form and the periphrastic construction with modal verbs in subjunctive contexts in his letters. The subjunctive contexts investigated are those where the subjunctive mood is governed by specific conjunctions. Following Auer’s study on the subjunctive in English and German in the eighteenth century, the following list of selected conjunctions that introduce subordinate clauses was used: if, though, tho’, before, whether, ere, unless, except, however, howsoever, whatever, whatsoever, whoever, whosoever, whomsoever, lest, until, till, as if, although, and so that (Auer 2009: 66). To these, I added the conjunctive ever, because it is explicitly mentioned (spelled e’er) in Priestley’s grammar.
The modal auxiliaries investigated in the periphrastic construction were the same as those in Auer, namely the core modals can, could, may, might, must, shall, should, will and would (Auer 2009: 67). First, I will investigate Priestley’s use of the subjunctive in the third person singular present tense. I will try to correlate his usage with two classic sociolinguistic variables, time and style, as well as discuss Priestley’s usage from the point of the relevant conjunctions individually. After that, I will investigate Priestley’s use of the subjunctive in the past tense, the third person singular. In this investigation, only the instances of subjunctive context with the verb to be can be analysed, as this is the only verb that shows a past tense inflection for the subjunctives that can be distinguished from the indicative in the past tense (was/were).

9.3.3 Subjunctive present

After searching the JPLC for all the conjunctions mentioned, the following results were found. To start with, the conjunctions whosoever, whatsoever, until, although, howsoever and e’er were not attested in the corpus at all, although ever was once. Additionally, the conjunctions as if, ere, except, however, whomsoever and ever did not occur with verbs in the third person singular present tense in a subjunctive context. This meant that only the following conjunctions remained for the analysis of the subjunctive: if, tho’/though, before, whether, unless, whatever, whoever, lest, till and so that.

The overall results for the analysis of subjunctive contexts with these conjunctions are summarised in Table 9.3.1 below. This shows that the indicative is the form used least in subjunctive contexts. The prevalence of periphrasis and the inflectional subjunctive over the indicative are respectively significant and very highly significant. The inflectional subjunctive appears to be the form used most, though the difference between this form and the use of periphrasis is not statistically significant.

5 Only this conjugation was investigated, as it is the only conjugation in the present tense in which the form of the inflectional subjunctive is distinguishable from the indicative form.
Table 9.3.1. The inflectional subjunctive, indicative and periphrasis in the JPLC (present tense 3rd person singular).

In order to discover whether there was a diachronic development in Priestley’s use of the syntactic options in the subjunctive mood, I analysed the use of the inflectional subjunctive, the indicative form and periphrasis with modal auxiliaries in Priestley’s letters in each period into which the JPLC is divided. The results of this analysis are summarised in Table 9.3.2.

Table 9.3.2. Diachronic variation in the inflectional subjunctive, indicative and periphrasis in the JPLC (present tense 3rd person singular).
Despite some seemingly considerable changes in the numbers from period to period, there is actually no statistically significant changes in the use of each of the three forms between consecutive sub-periods in the JPLC. Auer observes that "the functions of the subjunctive form were largely lost to the indicative" (2009: 86) and in this Priestley's usage reflects the general trend in the Late Modern English period. On the whole, the use of the indicative increases, while that of the inflectional subjunctive decreases and that of the periphrastic construction remains more or less constant. Figure 9.3.1 illustrates the overall development which is a reduction of the use of the inflectional subjunctive in favour that of the indicative form in subjunctive contexts.

![Figure 9.3.1. Proportions of subjunctive, periphrasis and indicative (3rd p. sing. present) per sub-period.](image)

As noted above, the differences between each consecutive period fall within the limits of random variation. It is possible that the time each of them encompasses individually is too short to show a development, and that a larger time

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6 The greater proportion of the indicative in JPLC-3 compared to the other periods is possibly an artefact: the result of the relatively small size of this part of the corpus.
difference may perhaps show something. When the first and last periods, JPLC-1 and JPLC-6, are compared, the increase in the use of the indicative form is significant, though the (seemingly related) decrease of the inflecational subjunctive is not. It should be noted, however, that this comparison is based on the raw scores, relative to the sizes of the two subcorpora involved, which needs not straightforwardly reflect the relative proportions of each form in these two sub-periods. JPLC-1 shows a pattern similar to that of the entire period that the corpus as a whole covers. Both periphrasis and the inflecational subjunctive occur much more often than the indicative form; the differences are weakly significant and significant respectively. JPLC-2 also shows this pattern, but with even greater statistical significance. The predominance of periphrasis over the indicative is highly significant, and that of the inflecational subjunctive over the indicative is very highly significant. As is evident from Figure 9.3.1, the picture is changed when we get to JPLC-3, where there are no longer any significant differences between any of the three forms. This is also by and large true for the remaining three periods, JPLC-4, JPLC-5 and JPLC-6, with the exception that the inflecational subjunctive is significantly more frequent than the indicative form during JPLC-4.

Table 9.3.3 contains the data regarding Priestley’s use of the inflecational subjunctive, the indicative form and periphrasis with modal auxiliaries in formal and informal letters in the JPLC. Although the overall distribution does not seem very interesting, a few remarks can be made about it.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>style</th>
<th>subjunctive</th>
<th>indicative</th>
<th>periphrasis</th>
<th>total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>/10,000</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>formal</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>11.05</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>informal</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>8.86</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>total</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>9.13</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9.3.3. Variation in the inflecational subjunctive, indicative and periphrasis in the JPLC (present tense 3rd person singular) in formal and informal letters.
Although it seems that the inflectional subjunctive is used more often in formal than in informal letters, which would be the expected pattern, no statistically significant differences could actually be found for any of the three forms: inflectional subjunctive, indicative and periphrasis. Each of these occurs about equally frequently in both formal and informal letters. In both styles, we see that the inflectional subjunctive occurs significantly more often than the indicative, significantly so in formal letters and highly significantly so in informal letters. Additionally, in the informal style, periphrasis occurs a little more often than the indicative. The difference between the two is only weakly significant, however. The subjunctive contexts occurring with the conjunctions before, lest, though, unless and whoever have too low scores, each occurring less than 10 times, to make any useful remarks about them regarding any kind of variation. I will now discuss each of the remaining conjunctions, if, tho’, whether, whatever, till and so that, separately.

**if**

Auer found that if was "the most frequently attested conjunction followed by the inflectional subjunctive" (2009: 74) and the same is true for the JPLC. The 223 occurrences of if account for 48% of all the subjunctive contexts triggered by the conjunctions investigated. The overall pattern shows that if most strongly governs the inflectional subjunctive, followed by periphrasis and lastly the indicative form. The differences in the frequencies of occurrence between them are relatively highly and very highly significant. Auer also found that "[t]he progression of if followed by the inflectional subjunctive exactly parallels the overall development of the subjunctive form" (2009: 74). As can be seen from the data presented above, the sub-periods of the JPLC are too short to show a diachronic development and a longer period needs to be looked at. However, when comparing JPLC-1 to JPLC-6, no significant differences of any kind were found in subjunctives governed by if.

In formal letters the inflectional subjunctive is significantly more frequent than periphrasis, and the predominance of the inflectional subjunctive over the
indicative is statistically very highly significant. A similar pattern is observed in the informal style, where the inflectional subjunctive is significantly predominant over periphrasis, and very highly significantly predominant over the indicative. However, the expected pattern of a greater frequency of occurrence of the prescribed form – the inflectional subjunctive – in the formal style was not observed. Indeed, just as in the overall pattern, all three forms occur neither more nor less often in the formal letters compared to the informal ones.

**THO’/THOUGH**

There is only one occurrence of *though* in a relevant subjunctive context in the JPLC. The reason for this, is that Priestley spells the word almost exclusively as *tho’* – usually with the apostrophe, though not always – and *though* occurs only seven times in the entire corpus. *Tho’/though* is the second most frequently occurring conjunction in this analysis, after *if*. Its 101 occurrences account for 22% of the total of subjunctive contexts triggered by the conjunctions investigated. The overall pattern for *tho’* is exactly the reverse as that for *if*. It appears that *tho’/though* most strongly governs the indicative form, followed by periphrasis and lastly the inflectional subjunctive. The differences between the frequencies of the inflectional subjunctive, periphrasis and the indicative form are statistically all very highly significant.

No evidence was found of a diachronic change, but there seems to be a less frequent use of the inflectional subjunctive – compared to both the indicative and periphrasis – in the later periods of the corpus than in the earlier ones. With regard to style, the overall pattern for *tho’/though* holds in both formal and informal writing, and there is no significant difference between such letters in either the inflectional subjunctive, the indicative form or the periphrastic construction. In both styles the indicative form is largely predominant, except for the formal style, where the periphrastic forms occur about as often.

**WHETHER**

With 47 instances, *whether* is the third most frequently occurring conjunction governing the subjunctive in the JPLC. Overall, the indicative form occurs about
equally often as the periphrastic construction. The inflectional subjunctive is not used significantly more than the periphrastic construction, but it does occur more often – the difference is weakly significant – than the indicative form. Unlike *if* and *tho*, there is no observable diachronic development in the use of *whether* in the JPLC. There is no variation between the formal and informal styles for each form, neither any significant variation between the three forms within either style.

**WHATEVER**

The conjunction *whatever* occurs about equally often with the indicative form as with the periphrastic construction. The inflectional subjunctive, however, occurs more often than the other forms. Its predominance over the periphrastic constructions is weakly significant and that over the indicative is highly significant. There is no demonstrable diachronic development, but it is interesting to mention that in JPLC-6, which has by far the largest number of instances of *whatever*, the use of the indicative form disappears whereas it was present in all previous periods except JPLC-1. Unsurprisingly then, the use of both the inflectional subjunctive and the periphrastic form are significantly greater than that of the indicative form in JPLC-6. There is some variation with regard to style, however. In formal letters, *whatever* occurs equally often with the inflectional subjunctive, periphrasis and the indicative form, each occurring in one third of all subjunctive contexts. In informal letters, however, there is a highly significant preference for the inflectional subjunctive over the indicative, which respectively make up 64% and 11% of all subjunctive contexts in informal letters. In addition, there is a weakly significant preference for the inflectional subjunctive over the periphrastic forms, which occurs in 25% of these contexts. The difference in frequency of occurrence between the indicative form and periphrasis is not statistically significant.

**TILL**

The conjunction *till* occurs overall about equally often with the inflectional subjunctive as it does with the periphrastic construction, while the indicative
form is used significantly less than either of the two. The same pattern is observed in JPLC-6, which is in fact the only significant difference within any of the six sub-periods as well as between them. There is only one instance of the subjunctive mood introduced by till in Priestley’s formal letters, realised by the inflectional subjunctive. However, since it is the only instance, nothing meaningful can be said about the distribution between the three forms that can carry this mood. From this low incidence in the formal style – compared to that in the informal style where there are 25 occurrences – one would almost be inclined to conclude that till is a feature of the informal style were it not that, surprisingly, the difference between the frequency of occurrence of till in the formal and informal styles is actually not statistically significant. The informal style does show a specific distribution between the three forms. The occurrences of the inflectional subjunctive and periphrasis are comparable, with no significant difference. The predominance of the inflectional subjunctive over the indicative is weakly significant and the periphrastic form also occurs significantly more often than the indicative.

SO THAT

The conjunction so that occurs about equally often with the indicative form as with periphrastic constructions in the JPLC. Interestingly, considering that the conjunction so that is allegedly subjunctive-governing, it does not occur with the inflectional subjunctive at all. The distribution between the indicative form and periphrasis varies between each period of the JPLC, and only in JPLC-2 can a significant preference for the periphrastic form be attested. As with many of the results in this section, for this conjunction there is no statistically significant difference between the use in formal and informal letters. Nor is there a significant difference in either style between the occurrence of the indicative form and the periphrastic construction. Naturally, both occur significantly more often than the inflectional subjunctive in the informal letters – which does not

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7 Priestley always writes till; neither the present-day spelling until, nor the eighteenth-century variant untill occur in the JPLC.
occur at all – although this cannot be statistically verified for the formal style due to the low incidences of the indicative form and periphrastic construction.

Of the conjunctions investigated in this section, only four are discussed by Priestley in his grammar as governing the subjunctive, namely if, though (including tho) before and whether. The inflectional subjunctive predominates only after if and whether in Priestley’s own usage. And in the case of whether, the periphrastic form is used as often as the inflectional subjunctive. If we take the periphrastic construction as a ‘proper’ subjunctive, we can add before to the comparison and subjunctive forms predominate with three of these four conjunctions rather than two. In the case of the inflectional subjunctive, present tense, it seems unlikely that Priestley’s rules were based on his own usage, as the two are too divergent.

9.3.4. Subjunctive past

In order to determine the variation between the inflectional subjunctive or the indicative with the third person singular past tense form of be in Priestley’s letters, the JPLC was searched for these forms. In the past tense, there are only two options, using the subjunctive form were, or the indicative form was. Examples of the past tense inflectional subjunctive are given for were in (41) and for was in (42):

(41) I have got into the house I have taken at Clapton. [...] If it were not that I must have room for a library and laboratory, it is larger than I ought to have, but without room for these things; [tho] they be expensive, I am useless (letter to John Wilkinson, 23 November 1791).

(42) If it was not for the assiduity of my son Joseph and his wife, to make me as comfortable as they can, I should leave this country; tho I should feel more than I you will conceive to leave the place where she and Harry are buried (letter to Judith Mansell, 25 January 1797).

The same conjunctions were analysed as those studied in section 9.3.2, in which the ones that were not attested in the JPLC at all have already been mentioned. In addition, the following conjunctions did not occur in a subjunctive context with the past tense either: ere, except, however, lest, whoever and whomsoever.
That left the following conjunctions to investigate: *if, tho’/though, before, whether, unless, whatever, ever, till, as if and so that*. The results of the analysis are summarised in Table 9.3.3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>conjunction</th>
<th>subjunctive</th>
<th></th>
<th>indicative</th>
<th></th>
<th>total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>N</em></td>
<td>/10,000</td>
<td>%</td>
<td><em>N</em></td>
<td>/10,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>if</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>1.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tho’/though</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>before</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>whether</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>unless</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>whatever</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ever</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>till</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>as if</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>so that</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>total</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>2.55</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9.3.3. The inflectional subjunctive (*were*) and indicative (*was*) in the JPLC (*be* past tense 3rd person singular).

The overall data shows that the indicative form *was* is by far Priestley’s preferred form in past tense subjunctive contexts. In fact, the inflectional subjunctive hardly occurs at all, and then only with *if*, which is the conjunction that most typically introduces subjunctive clauses. Consequently, the overall predominance of the indicative over the inflectional subjunctive is statistically very highly significant. For the conjunctions individually, only *unless, whatever* and *as if* show no significant difference between the frequency of use of the inflectional subjunctive and the indicative form; all others show a weakly to very highly significant preference for the indicative form in the subjunctive mood. Table 9.3.4 summarises the uses of the inflectional subjunctive and the indicative form in the six periods of the JPLC. There is no evidence of a diachronic development in the use of either the inflectional subjunctive or the indicative form.
Table 9.3.4. Diachronic variation in the inflectional subjunctive and indicative in the JPLC (be past tense 3rd person singular).

Figure 9.3.2 is a graphic representation of the diachronic development of Priestley’s usage in past tense subjunctive contexts. It shows the proportions of inflectional subjunctive and indicative forms in the past tense in the six periods of the JPLC.

![Diagram]

Figure 9.3.2. Proportions of subjunctive, periphrasis and indicative (be past tense 3rd person singular) in JPLC by period.
Figure 9.3.2 shows that the pattern of the use of the inflectional subjunctive in the past tense is similar to that of the present tense, but much more pronounced. It seems that, since the past tense contexts of *be* do not allow the use of periphrasis, and Priestley only used the indicative in these contexts, rather than the inflectional subjunctive, which can explain its seemingly far greater presence in the past tense compared to the present tense. However, significant differences between the use of the inflectional subjunctive and the indicative form could only be found in JPLC-4 and JPLC-6. The predominance of the indicative in JPLC-4 is weakly significant, and in JPLC-6 very highly significant. Diachronically, little difference in the use of either construction between each successive period was observed, and none of these differences were statistically significant. The scores for the conjunctions individually were so low that no significant temporal variation whatsoever could be detected. The above-mentioned patterns are only observable when the conjunctions are looked at collectively. The results for the investigation of the past tense subjunctive mood in Priestley’s formal and informal letters are summarised in Table 9.3.5.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>subjunctive</th>
<th></th>
<th>indicative</th>
<th></th>
<th>total</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>/10,000</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>/10,000</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>formal</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4.34</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>informal</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>2.30</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>total</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>2.55</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9.3.5. Style variation in the inflectional subjunctive and indicative in the JPLC (*be* past tense 3rd person singular).

A strong preference for the indicative form is found in both formal and informal letters. In this regard it may be interesting to note that the significance of this preference is much higher in informal style, where it is very highly significant, than in the formal style, where it is merely significant. The scores for the conjunctions individually were generally speaking very low, but some comments may be made about individual variation in formal and informal letters. In the
formal style, only the conjunction *tho’/though* occurs more often with the indicative form, a weakly significant preference. However, in the informal style, the conjunctions *unless, whatever, as if and till* occur neither more nor less often with the inflectional subjunctive than with the indicative. The others, *if, tho’/though, before, whether, ever* and *so that*, show a weakly significant preference for the indicative form in the informal style (for *before* it is even significant). This reaffirms the overall pattern that the informal style shows a more pronounced preference for the indicative form than the formal style.

**9.3.5. Semantic context**

Auer notes that in his *Grammar of the English Language* (1818) “Cobbett was aware of the different characteristics of the subjunctive mood and of the fact that the meaning of a sentence, rather than a conjunction, should determine the choice of mood” (Auer 2009: 58). Was Cobbett describing contemporary usage, such as we might also find it in Priestley’s letters some years earlier? We know that Priestley was also aware of this semantic factor, as Auer notes that “Priestley comments that the conjunctive is used with propriety only when there is some degree of doubt and hesitation implied” (Auer 2009: 42). The following passage from the first edition of the *Rudiments of English Grammar* shows Priestley’s ideas on the subject: “we should say, in pursuing a person, *We shall overtake him though he run;* not knowing whether he did run or no; whereas, upon seeing him run, we should say, *We shall overtake him though he runneth, or runs*” (Priestley 1761a: 15f).

Considering this simple ‘rule’ in the first edition of Priestley’s grammar, I hypothesised that a reinvestigation of some of the data based on semantic rather than formal features might provide a better understanding of Priestley’s usage. The conjunction *if* appears to function solely in conditional contexts, and consequently the inflectional subjunctive, the indicative form and the periphrastic construction do not occur in contexts of certainty. This means that, since there is no variation of the semantic context, the *if*-data is of little help in answering this particular question.
This raises the question which conjunctions to include in the investigation. It is interesting, though not surprising, to see that in his grammar, Priestley chose to give an example with the conjunction *though*, rather than one with the conjunction *if*, which Auer (2009: 74) found to be by far the most frequent conjunction in her study, and which is also by far the most frequent one in the JPLC. It seems that an example with the conjunction *though* was chosen deliberately because *if* introduces conditional clauses which always express doubt and do not allow an interpretation of certainty. These two possible interpretations are available in a clause introduced by *though*, however. Only two other conjunctions that occur in the present study, namely *before* and *so that*, also allow an interpretation of certainty. It is to be expected that many of the conjunctions governing the subjunctive mood will not allow an interpretation of certainty, because the function of the subjunctive mood, whatever form it takes, is to express uncertainty. Thus, I reassessed the data for the conjunctions *tho*/*though, before* and *so that* in terms of contexts of uncertainty and certainty. Contexts of uncertainty, which Priestley describes as being those of “doubt and hesitation”, are also taken to include aspects of unreality, which subsumes futurity and conditionality. The results are summarised in Table 9.3.6.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>context</th>
<th>subjunctive</th>
<th>indicative</th>
<th>periphrasis</th>
<th>total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$N$</td>
<td>/10,000</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>$N$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>uncertainty</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>certainty</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9.3.6. Contextual variation in the inflectional subjunctive, indicative and periphrasis in the JPLC (3rd person singular, present tense).

The frequency of occurrence of the inflectional subjunctive was unfortunately too low to say anything meaningful about its contextual distribution. For all that, we can clearly see that the indicative is the primary choice of form in contexts of certainty: its predominance over both the inflectional and periphrastic subjunctive is very highly significant. In contexts of uncertainty there is a clear preference for periphrastic constructions: its predominance over the
indicative form and the inflectional subjunctive is also very highly significant. This is not surprising since the modal auxiliaries used in the periphrastic construction also denote uncertainty.

9.3.6. Comparison with previous studies

Auer (2009) identified an increase in the use of the inflectional subjunctive in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. From a wider diachronic perspective, this was shown to be a temporary arrest in the decline that started in the Middle English period. She mentions that amongst historical linguists "[f]or a long time [...] there has been dissent on the development of the subjunctive during the age of prescriptivism" (Auer 2009: 16), and argues that the temporary reversal of the general trend was the result of the eighteenth-century grammarians’ efforts to revive the use of the inflectional subjunctive:

It was possible to observe that a majority of genres showed an upward trend of inflectional subjunctive frequency in the second part of the eighteenth century or the first part of the nineteenth century. [...] As we are not aware of any other intralinguistic and/or extralinguistic factors that could be responsible for the development of the subjunctive form in the eighteenth century, the conclusion that prescriptivists did exert a short-term influence (at least on the subjunctive form in adverbial clauses) would appear to be justified (Auer 2009: 86).

A comparison of the data from a study by Auer & Tieken-Boon van Ostade (2007) – which comprises the letters of the grammarian Robert Lowth, and the eighteenth-century letter subcorpus of ARCHER (2007: 13) – with that from the JPLC may show how Priestley measures up to contemporary usage. Table 9.3.7 below shows this comparison in the proportions of use of the inflectional subjunctive, periphrasis and the indicative in the third person present tense. What we see are three very different distributions of the possible forms for subjunctive contexts. Can these be explained sociohistorically or biographically, or are they, in the case of these two grammarians, purely idiosyncratic differences for which no real explanation can be found?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>corpus</th>
<th>subjunctive</th>
<th>indicative</th>
<th>periphrasis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JPLC</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lowth</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARCHER</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9.3.7. Subjective constructions in 3rd person singular present tense subjunctive contexts in JPLC, Robert Lowth's letters and the 18th-century letter subcorpus of ARCHER (based on Auer & Tieken-Boon van Ostade 2007).

Considering the aforementioned 'grammar effect', we may have expected Lowth's usage to show greater consistency with the correct forms. Specifically, we would expect a greater use of the inflectional subjunctive and a lesser usage of the indicative form in subjunctive moods. The reverse is, however, observed, which suggests that Lowth preferred the indicative form in his 'natural' idiom, as opposed to Priestley, who clearly favoured the inflectional subjunctive.

Comparison of the JPLC with a co-temporary section of ARCHER does not provide conclusive answers to the question of how progressive or conservative Priestley's usage was. Does his greater use of the inflectional subjunctive compared to ARCHER reflect conservatism or progressiveness? In general, the use of the subjunctive rose during the period 1750-1800, so a higher score could indicate a progressive attitude. However, the long-term trend was towards a reduction of the use of the inflectional subjunctive, so Priestley's greater use could also be interpreted as conservative. A comparison of the data from the JPLC with both earlier and later periods in ARCHER may provide more insight into the relation between developments exemplified in these corpora. Table 9.3.8 shows a comparison of the JPLC with three half-century periods from ARCHER (see also Auer 2009: 70): the half-century that precedes the JPLC, the one that is co-temporal with it, and the one that follows it. It should be noted that the data this table contains was drawn from all text types in ARCHER, not just letters, and should therefore be used with caution.
Table 9.3.8. Subjunctive constructions in 3rd person singular present tense subjunctive contexts in JPLC and three half-centuries in ARCHER (based on Auer & Tieken-Boon van Ostade 2007).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>corpus</th>
<th>subjunctive</th>
<th>indicative</th>
<th>periphrasis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JPLC</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARCHER 1700–1749</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARCHER 1750–1799</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARCHER 1800–1849</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is evident from Table 9.3.8 that there is no unambiguous pattern which relates Priestley’s usage to general usage, as it is represented by the data from ARCHER. Priestley’s use of the indicative form in subjunctive contexts appears to be rather conservative, being similar to the development in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. However, his use of the inflectional subjunctive and the periphrastic construction are completely different from any of the figures from ARCHER.

Table 9.3.9 shows a comparison in the proportions of use of the subjunctive and the indicative in the third person past tense of *be* between the JPLC, the letters of the grammarian Robert Lowth, and the eighteenth-century letters subcorpus of ARCHER (see Auer & Tieken-Boon van Ostade 2007: 13).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>corpus</th>
<th>subjunctive</th>
<th>indicative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>JPLC</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lowth</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARCHER</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9.3.9. Subjunctive constructions in 3rd person singular past tense subjunctive contexts of *be* in JPLC, Lowth’s letters and the 18th-century letter subcorpus of ARCHER (rounded to whole percentages).

Auer & Tieken-Boon van Ostade found that Lowth’s usage showed a preference for the inflectional subjunctive in the past tense when compared to ARCHER (2007: 7). It is evident from Table 9.3.7 and Table 9.3.9 that this does not hold
for Priestley, who uses the inflectional subjunctive even less in the past tense. As with the other comparisons, it is hard to determine why we see the differences between the JPLC, Lawth’s letters and ARCHER.

9.3.7. Summary and discussion

The use of the inflectional subjunctive is one of the features of English that changed in the course of the Late Modern English period. In this section, I investigated Priestley’s usage of the inflectional subjunctive and compared it to variant constructions in subjunctive contexts that are governed by subordinating conjunctions. The overall diachronic development in Priestley’s usage in the third person present tense was shown to be a reduction of the inflectional subjunctive in favour of the use of the indicative form in the subjunctive mood. However, use of the inflectional subjunctive – alternated with periphrasis – remained dominant over the indicative for the first half of the time frame covered by the JPLC. In the remaining periods, the inflectional subjunctive, indicative and periphrasis were used with comparable frequencies.

In both formal and informal letters, the inflectional subjunctive is the dominant construction used by Priestley. Furthermore, no difference was found in the use of all three constructions between formal and informal letters. Auer & Tieken-Boon van Ostade mention that in Lawth’s case, “his usage of the subjunctive [...] can be associated with a fairly formal style” (2007: 5). Considering this, and the fact that the eighteenth-century grammarians usually prescribed the use of the inflectional subjunctive, it was hypothesised that this construction would be predominant in formal texts (see also Auer 2009: 86). This was not found to be the case in Priestley’s letters, although Priestley favoured the inflectional subjunctive in the earlier years of his correspondence. This tendency notwithstanding, an investigation of individual conjunctions showed that some of them, notably *tho*/*though* and *so that*, appear to have triggered either the use of the indicative form or periphrasis. In the case of *tho*/*though*, this is very interesting since Priestley explicitly mentions *though* as a conjunction which governs the subjunctive. The past tense data showed a
very different picture than that for the present tense. In the past tense, there was a very highly significant overall preference for the indicative form over the inflectional subjunctive. This may be explained as the present tense periphrastic constructions are being 'shifted' to the indicative form in the past tense.

There may be a hint as to why the data seems to be so inconsistent in a passage from the *Rudiments of English Grammar*, where Priestley writes that when it comes to the subjunctive form "few writers are quite uniform in their own practice with respect to it" (Priestley 1768a: 120). Perhaps Priestley was aware of his own lack of "uniformity", perhaps he was not. Whichever it was, it seems not to have meant that there was going to be a change in his usage. Auer notes the possible correlation of the use of the inflectional subjunctive with formal text and with socially aspiring users: "[e]ighteenth-century grammarians associated the use of the inflectional subjunctive with polite language, which also suggests that the form is more likely to be found in formal genres and possibly more frequently used by social climbers" (Auer 2009: 86). Auer & Tieken-Boon van Ostade suggest that this could indeed have been so in the case of Robert Lowth, who was “a true social climber” (Tieken-Boon van Ostade 2011: 253) and appeared to be keenly aware of his own usage, especially during the time when he was working on his *Short Introduction to English Grammar*, noting that “[i]t is similarly significant that the instances found between 1762 and 1768 coincide with the publication and favourable reception of Lowth’s grammar” whilst “Lowth may have been going through a phase of linguistic self-consciousness at the time” (Auer & Tieken-Boon van Ostade 2007: 5).

Priestley’s use of the inflectional subjunctive did not change between the period he was involved in writing, correcting and publishing the second and subsequent editions of his grammar, nor in the period that followed. JPLC-1 and JPLC-2 taken together represent the period in which Priestley worked on the second and subsequent editions of the *Rudiments of English Grammar*, while JPLC-3 and JPLC-4 taken together, which represent the period immediately following. When Priestley’s use of the subjunctive in these two periods is
compared, we only find a significant rise in his use of the indicative form. Priestley apparently shared neither Lowth’s linguistic hyper-awareness during the period of writing and publishing his grammar, nor the linguistic insecurity that characterised the attitude of much of the aspiring middle classes during the eighteenth century. Another explanation for the apparently inconsistent results could be that most of the analysis was based on a formal linguistic feature, i.e. the use of certain conjunctions, rather than being based on sentence semantics. The investigation of *tho*/though is illustrative of this.

To conclude this section, I should say something about the implications of Priestley’s use of the subjunctive for his reputation as a descriptivist. If he really were a descriptivist, we would assume that he would have described either general contemporary usage, or his own insofar as these two did not coincide. However, since the rules for the use of the subjunctive mood in his *Rudiments of English Grammar* do not seem to reflect Priestley’s own usage, it appears that these rules followed contemporary prescriptions rather than being based on his own usage. This means that with regards to the subjunctive mood, Priestley cannot be seen as a descriptivist.

### 9.4. Preposition placement

In this section I investigate the attitude to preposition placement in Priestley’s grammar, as well as his own usage in this respect. I will primarily draw upon the study on the subject of preposition stranding by Yáñez-Bouza (2007). For further reference, the topic of preposition fronting and preposition stranding is also covered in Hoffmann (2005).

#### 9.4.1. Introduction

Since the word *preposition* literally refers to the “action of placing in front” (*OED*, s.v. ‘preposition’), prepositions etymologically precede the complement of the prepositional phrase of which they are the head. When placed in this position, they are referred to as fronted or pied-piped prepositions. The alternative position of a preposition is one in which the preposition is placed in
a deferred position at the end of the sentence, which is referred to as preposition stranding. Huddleston & Pullum (2002: 627) give the following contexts as those in which prepositions can be stranded in Present Day English: open interrogatives, exclamatives, wh-relatives, non-wh-relatives, and comparative and passive constructions. In the first three of these, open interrogatives, exclamatives and wh-relatives the preposition can be used in either fronted or stranded position, whereas preposition stranding is obligatory in non-wh-relatives, comparatives and passives. Examples of the most common obligatory and optional contexts for preposition stranding from Priestley’s letters are given in (43) to (49).

OBLIGATORY CONTEXTS

The most typical context in which preposition stranding is obligatory is probably that of non-wh-relatives, of which (43) and (44) are examples. In (43), the non-wh-relative is a zero relative, indicated by [ø] in the quotation:

(43) In this water, and the air together, I find the weight of all the water [ø] I make use of, and that the water thus collected has undergone no change, is evident from its serving to make more air, just as well as fresh water (letter to Josiah Wedgwood, 23 March 1783).

Another frequent non-wh-relative construction is a that-relative, shown in example (44), with the preposition on in stranded position:

(44) I rejoice with you that French Revolution goes on, to all appearance, so well, and I hope the example will be followed in other countries. I also rejoice that the Russians are so near Constantinople. That is the only war that I wish to go on (letter to Richard Price, 27 January 1791).

An example of a passive construction is given in example (45), in which the stranded position is obligatory for the preposition of:

(45) Of the Undergraduate I have said more, because it was much boasted of at Oxford, and in many places (letter to William Turner, 1 January 1788).

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8 Several discussions of the development of syntactical properties of prepositions in the history of the English language – Fischer & Van der Wurff (2006), Rissanen (1999) and Denison (1998) – mention no changes in these contexts after the Middle English period. It is only noted that “[n]o new constructions have appeared in IMoE, but the frequency of preposition stranding has probably increased” (Denison 1998: 220). It is therefore assumed that these contexts have remained the same since the period under discussion here.
Example (46) shows an instance of obligatory preposition stranding in a comparative construction:

(46) I am glad that you approve of anything in my Essay on discipline, notwithstanding the faults that I doubt not you justly find with it. However, I wrote it with as much circumspection as I am capable of, and you expect too much from me, if you look for anything better (letter to Theophilus Lindsey, 4 November 1770).

**Optional contexts**

The example in (47) neatly illustrates the variability of preposition stranding and preposition fronting with a *wh*-relative in one sentence. The first instance of *in* is stranded at the end of the first clause containing the relative pronoun *which*. The other two instances of *in* are fronted, being placed before their relative pronouns:

(47) The large 22 work which I have lately engaged in, and which has been exceedingly well received both in England and abroad, barely defrays the very great expenses in which it has involved me; and my philosophical experiments, in which I have of late been exceedingly fortunate, take up a great deal of my time, are necessarily very expensive, and cannot possibly make any return of profit (letter to Sir George Savile, 11 November 1772).

The example in (48) shows preposition stranding in an optional *wh*-relative context with the relative pronoun *what*:

(48) I forget what experiments I gave you an account of in my last. I have lately determined two things of considerable consequence, one is, that a very great proportion of the weight of fixed air is water (letter to Richard Price, 12 April 1787).

There are no instances of exclamatives in Priestley’s letters to illustrate the use of a stranded preposition. The single exclamative sentence in the entire corpus occurs in the passage quoted in (49) below, which I have given because it also contains the sole example of preposition stranding in an open interrogative sentence in the JPLC:

(49) Who do you think I had a letter from [yesterday]? Mr. Radcliff! But I shall [not] tell you what it is about, or how it is written, till your return (letter to Radcliffe Scholefield, 13 July 1785).
Yáñez-Bouza (2007) made a comprehensive study of preposition stranding in the Early and Late Modern English periods, with a special reference to the role of eighteenth-century (prescriptive) grammars in its diachronic development. Preposition placement was a much-debated feature of Late Modern English grammars, and still makes a regular appearance in present-day usage guides such as Fowler’s Modern English Usage (Burchfield 1996: 617–619). Particularly the practice known as preposition stranding was often proscribed for being incorrect English since at least as early as the Late Modern English period. Beal writes that “Dryden was the first to notice this in his own writing but the eighteenth-century grammarians propagated this shibboleth, which still raises its head today” (2004: 84). The attitudes of eighteenth-century grammarians are discussed at greater length in Yáñez-Bouza (2007: 22–127) and Yáñez-Bouza (2008).

Priestley’s first comment on preposition placement is found in a footnote in the section ‘Of Syntax’ in the first edition of his Rudiments of English Grammar: “[p]repositions generally precede their substantives; as He went to London: but sometimes a verb more elegantly parts them; as This is the thing with which I am pleased; or, This is the thing which I am pleased with” (Priestley 1761a: 34f). This comment indicates that Priestley had no particular aversion to preposition stranding. In the section ‘Observations on Style’ in the first edition of his grammar, Priestley wrote the following, in which he actually advocated preposition stranding in all but the most formal styles:

It is often really diverting to see with what extreme caution words of such frequent occurrence as of and to are prevented from fixing themselves in the close of a sentence; though that be a situation they naturally incline to, where they favour the easy fall of the voice, in a familiar cadence; and from which nothing but the solemnity of an address from the pulpit ought to dislodge them; as in any other place they often give too great a stiffness and formality to a sentence (Priestley 1761a: 50–51).

As already discussed in section 6.3.3, Priestley seems to have intentionally stranded the preposition to in this passage, perhaps to illustrate how natural the construction is (see also Yáñez-Bouza 2007: 103–107). Alternatively, he could have stranded the preposition to illustrate the necessity of doing so in a
zero-relative clause. Yáñez-Bouza states that Priestley was one of the grammarians who discussed “the place of the preposition with that-relative only to point out the absurdity of the construction with fronted prepositions in this context” (2007: 109). The second edition of Priestley’s Rudiments of English Grammar does not contain the abovementioned rules but has only the following remark on that-relative clauses, where preposition fronting is mandatory because “[i]f a preposition must precede the relative, there is a kind of necessity to replace who or which; because the pronoun that does not admit of such a construction” (Priestley 1768a: 100–101). This change towards a less descriptive treatment of prepositions is congruent with the general development of increasing prescriptivism and proscriptivism between the first and second editions of Priestley’s Rudiments of English Grammar, as discussed in chapter 6. The most authoritative grammar of the late eighteenth-century, Lowth’s Short Introduction to English Grammar, contains the following remark on preposition stranding:

The Preposition is often separated from the Relative which it governs, and joined to the verb at the end of the Sentence, or of some member of it [...]. This is an idiom which our language is strongly inclined to; it prevails in common conversation, and suits very well with the familiar style of writing; but the placing of the Preposition before the Relative is more graceful, as well as more perspicuous; and agrees much better with the solemn and elevated Style (Lowth 1762: 127–128).

Like Priestley, Lowth also strands the preposition to in the sentence in which preposition stranding is described as a natural phenomenon of the English language. In short, according to both Priestley and Lowth, preposition stranding is a feature of ‘familiar writing’, or informal texts. Considering Priestley’s attitude towards this particular feature, we expect to find a fair degree of prepositional stranding in his letters.

9.4.2. Method

Since it was not practical to investigate all prepositions in an analysis of variation in preposition placement in this corpus, I identified the ones that occur the most frequently in the JPLC to discover which ones to investigate. In decreasing
order of frequency, the nine most frequently occurring prepositions are: of, to, in/into, with, for, at, by, from, and on/upon. To these I added a selection from the thirty-eight prepositions investigated by Yáñez-Bouza (2007: 139) labelled as ‘others’. To avoid redundancy, I did not include those that were compounds derived from the abovementioned nine common prepositions, such as in accordance with. The following twenty-five then remained from the thirty-eight: about, above, after, against, amid, among(st), before, behind, below, beneath, between, beyond, concerning, during, like, near, notwithstanding, over, since, through, toward(s), under, up, within, without.

Also, in order to make the results comparable to those obtained by Yáñez-Bouza (2007) I used the same parameters for my investigation as much as possible. This meant restricting my analysis to the same obligatory contexts for preposition stranding (non-wh-relatives, prepositional passives, comparatives, infinitives and ing-constructions) and the same optional contexts (wh-relatives, indirect questions, direct questions and exclamatives), in which prepositions may be put both in fronted and stranded positions. The “exceptional contexts” of topicalization and “prepositional nouns” (Yáñez-Bouza 2007: 156–158) were not included in the investigation. It also meant restricting the analysis study to VP-contained prepositional phrases (see also Yáñez-Bouza 2007: 172–174). Partitive constructions in NP-contained prepositional phrases (see also Yáñez-Bouza 2007:167–168), such as those in example (48), were consequently also excluded from the analysis:

(50) A thank you for your very acceptable present of your three volumes, two of which were destroyed in the riot (letter to John Adams, 20 October 1792).

I analysed the frequency of use of stranded prepositions as well as the distribution between the frequencies of stranded and fronted prepositions in optional contexts in the JPLC. The analysis of preposition stranding included both obligatory and optional contexts, whereas the investigation of the distribution

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9 When these are compared to the eleven common, high-frequency prepositions analysed by Yáñez-Bouza (2007: 138) and Sairio (2009: 198), we find a striking consistency in the most frequently used prepositions across these different corpora.
between preposition fronting and preposition stranding was limited to the optional contexts.

**9.4.3. Preposition placement in the JPLC**

The development of Priestley’s total use of stranded prepositions in the JPLC is summarised in Table 9.4.1. The raw and normalised scores in this table indicate how frequently the prepositions occur in stranded positions in optional and obligatory contexts, as well as the total frequencies of stranded prepositions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>subcorpus</th>
<th>optional contexts</th>
<th>obligatory contexts</th>
<th>total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N /10,000</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>N /10,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JPLC-1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JPLC-2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JPLC-3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JPLC-4</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JPLC-5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JPLC-6</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>total</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>201</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9.4.1. Preposition stranding in optional and obligatory contexts in the JPLC.

We see that the majority of stranded prepositions occur in obligatory contexts. We also see that Priestley’s preposition placement is very consistent throughout his lifetime. There is only a weakly significant decrease in the use of stranded prepositions in optional contexts when JPLC-1 is compared to JPLC-6.

There is, however, no significant change in overall preposition stranding either between each successive period or between the first and last periods. This pattern is illustrated in Figure 9.4.1 below. Looking at the figures for preposition stranding in optional and obligatory contexts separately, we see from Figure 9.4.1 that there is a greater proportion of preposition stranding in optional contexts in JPLC-4. The changes in preposition stranding in obligatory contexts between JPLC-3, JPLC-4 and JPLC-5 are all statistically significant.
I can, however, as yet give no good explanation why it is specifically the period represented by JPLC-4 that shows a break in the overall pattern. Next, I looked at Priestley’s preposition placement in the optional contexts alone. The results of the investigation of his choices of preposition fronting and preposition stranding in these contexts are summarised in Table 9.4.2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>subcorpus</th>
<th>preposition fronting</th>
<th>preposition stranding</th>
<th>total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>/10,000</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JPLC-1</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>32.5</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JPLC-2</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>27.8</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JPLC-3</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>27.7</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JPLC-4</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>20.8</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JPLC-5</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>14.6</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JPLC-6</td>
<td>237</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>total</td>
<td>472</td>
<td>22.7</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9.4.2. Preposition fronting and stranding in six periods in the JPLC.

The proportions of preposition stranding versus fronting in the six periods of the JPLC are illustrated visually in Figure 9.4.2 and Figure 9.4.3 below. Figure
9.4.2 clearly show that there is a much larger proportion of preposition fronting than preposition stranding in the JPLC across all six sub-periods. The predominance of preposition fronting is very highly significant in each of the six sub-periods of the corpus. The consistency in Priestley's usage is again shown in the fact that there is virtually no diachronic change; there is only a weakly significant increase in the proportion of preposition fronting between the last two periods.

![Graph showing proportions of preposition stranding and fronting in six periods in the JPLC.](image)

Figure 9.4.2. Proportions of preposition stranding and fronting in six periods in the JPLC.

Figure 9.4.3 shows the normalised frequencies of preposition stranding and fronting, and how they develop across time. Even though there appears to be a diachronic development in the normalised scores, there are no statistically significant differences between each period. Even when we look at the largest time span in the JPLC by comparing the first and last periods, we find that there is only a weakly significant decrease in the normalised scores for preposition stranding. There does appear to be a relatively high frequency of fronted prepositions in JPLC-1, compared to the other periods.
The very great overall difference between preposition fronting and stranding in each period is also reflected when we compare fronting and stranding in formal letters with that in informal ones. The results of this comparison are summarised in Table 9.4.3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>style</th>
<th>preposition fronting</th>
<th>preposition stranding</th>
<th>total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>/10,000</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>formal</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>30.4</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>informal</td>
<td>395</td>
<td>21.6</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>total</td>
<td>472</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9.4.2. Preposition fronting and stranding in formal and informal letters in the JPLC.

In both styles, formal and informal, the predominance of preposition fronting is very highly significant. Preposition fronting occurs significantly more often in formal letters than in informal ones, whilst for preposition stranding no significant difference between the two registers was found. This also explains the relatively high frequency of fronted prepositions in JPLC-1 compared to the
other five periods, since JPLC-1 is composed of a relatively much larger number of formal letters than the other periods in the JPLC (see chapter 8).

9.4.4. Comparison with previous studies
The average relative frequency of 11.9/10,000 words over the entire period of the JPLC for preposition stranding (see Table 9.4.1) is considerably higher than what Yáñez-Bouza found for the period 1750–1799 using ARCHER. She analysed a subcorpus consisting of multiple genres, for which preposition stranding came to 9.4/10,000 words (Yáñez-Bouza 2007: 177), as well as a subcorpus consisting of personal letters, in which preposition stranding occurred at a frequency of 9.6/10,000 words (Yáñez-Bouza 2007: 184). Yáñez-Bouza gives the proportion of preposition stranding in optional contexts as 21.4% against 78.6% preposition fronting for the period 1750–1799 of the multi-genre corpus (2007: 178). Unfortunately, she gives no relative figures for preposition stranding and fronting in the letter subcorpus for the same period. The proportion of preposition stranding in optional contexts in the JPLC is much lower, namely 9% preposition stranding against 91% preposition fronting.

In her study of the language in the letters of the Bluestocking network, Sairio (2009) attested a proportion of preposition stranding at 36%, 34% and 31% respectively, in the last three periods of her corpus. Consequently, the proportion of preposition fronting are 64%, 66% and 69% respectively (Sairio 2009: 199). Recalculating the figures for these three periods combined, thereby covering the second half of the eighteenth century, the proportion of preposition stranding comes down to 38% against 62% preposition fronting.

The normalised scores of preposition stranding and preposition fronting found in these corpora and the JPLC, as well as the proportions of fronting and stranding, are compared in Table 9.4.4 below. The values have been recalculated from the scores and sizes of the corpora used (see Yáñez-Bouza 2007: 178; and Sairio 2009: 62, 199).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>preposition fronting</th>
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Table 9.4.4. Preposition stranding vs. preposition fronting in Yáñez-Bouza (2007: 178), Sairio (2009: 199) and the JPLC.

Interestingly, with regard to the normalised scores for preposition stranding it is not the multi-genre corpus which stands out from the two letter-corpora, but rather Sairio’s Bluestocking Corpus. The normalised score for preposition stranding in the Bluestocking Corpus is very highly significantly greater than in the two ARCHER subcorpora and the JPLC. It is possible that since the letters in the Bluestocking corpus are all between friends and family, they are generally speaking more informal. The fact that they represent upper-class usage may also be a contributing factor. The usage of the eighteenth-century upper class is analysed in Henstra (in prep.).

Priestley fronts prepositions more often than is the case in the Bluestocking Corpus and in both ARCHER subcorpora: the differences are all very highly significant. There is, on the other hand, no significant difference between the normalised scores for preposition stranding in optional contexts in the JPLC and the contemporary ARCHER 1750–1799 subcorpus. But there is a greater amount of preposition stranding in the preceding ARCHER 1700–1749 subcorpus compared to the JPLC, which is weakly significant.

9.4.5. Preposition placement and self-corrections

Self-corrections can reveal something about the linguistic (self-) consciousness of their writer, as Auer (2008b) found in her study of self-corrections. From an analysis of the letters of the eighteenth-century painter Joshua Reynolds (1723–1792), she draws the following conclusion:
Joshua Reynolds, having been well-educated and belonging to polite London society, was clearly aware of the correct use of language and of good style. This was reflected in the corrections he carried out in his letters (Auer 2008b: 230).

Fairman argues that self-corrections “occurred as part of the psychological and physical process of writing” (2008: 199) and were used to alter the “style the writer aimed at” (Fairman 2008: 202), among other things. Corrections and/or insertions can be illustrative of a writer’s attitude to preposition placement. I have found two examples in Priestley’s letters where prepositions were inserted afterwards in fronted positions. In the first example it seems that Priestley caught himself almost stranding the preposition for and corrected himself by inserting it in a fronted position:

(51) More than ever do I not regret the loss of the lunar society where I spent so many happy hours, and for which I found no substitute even in London (letter to William Withering, 27 October 1795).

The second example is a little more complicated due to the presence of the crossed preposition to, which may also account for the insertion, indicating that Priestley changed the preposition itself rather than its place in the sentence:

(52) I am much pleased with Mr Kentish’s Sermon preached at Birmingham, and wish to see that which he preached at Hackney, and to in which I see some [form] animadversions by Mr [Sturh] (letter to Thomas Belsham, 3 July 1803).

However, the preposition in might also have been inserted in stranded position, which Priestley chose not to do. Both letters are personal and informal and still Priestley preferred to front his prepositions rather than put them in the place that “they naturally incline to”. It seems that sometimes, for whatever reason, Priestley was not quite sure where to put his prepositions, as with the preposition to in the following example:

(53) The experiments will, no doubt be laborious, but nothing of value is to be had without labour; and in that long attention to any one subject which they oblige us to, new views will often occur, relating not only to that but to other things (letter to Thomas Wedgwood, 26 June 1791).
Fairman does not discuss insertions like these without a strikethrough, but they resemble what he calls an “echo” (Fairman 2008: 200) in reverse, where a word is added rather than removed. It seems that Priestley still had to in his head and therefore realised only later that he had neglected to front the latter to (indicated in boldface type). Why he then decided to insert it in a stranded position after us rather than in a fronted position before which is unclear, since we have seen that Priestley usually fronted his prepositions if he could. Another ambiguous use, in a context involving multiple instances of the same preposition, is given in the following example:

(54) To judge of what any man is, or is capable of, his mind [must] be at ease
(letter to John Wilkinson, 3 November 1790).

This looks like an erroneous construction with a repetition of the preposition of, and I suspect that Priestley started to write judge of what any man is capable and changed his mind after is, wishing to write judge what any man is, or is capable of, which resulted in an odd construction, which he did not correct before sending the letter to his brother-in-law.

9.4.6. Preposition placement and text type

In a section called ‘Idiolectal Preferences’ Yáñez-Bouza (2007) discusses Priestley’s preposition placement in one of his scientific texts in her ARCHER sample, i.e. his ‘Account of Further Discoveries in Air’ (Priestley 1775b). She found that Priestley apparently favoured the fronted position in his scientific prose, just as he did in his letters:

[I]n his prose style as a scientist he avoids the colloquial idiom to the extent that in the ARCHER sample he only ends one sentence with a preposition (4.6/10,000 words), one which obligatory requires the position at the end [...] In contrast, there are nine pied-piped preposition (41.8/10,000 words). Moreover, he always opts for the front-position of prepositions whenever the use of a wh-relative pronoun allows the choice (Yáñez-Bouza 2007: 193).

Yáñez-Bouza suggests that this preference for preposition fronting is due to Priestley’s changing ideas regarding grammar, to his maturing as a scientist, and to leaving the business of grammar behind him. She also argues that this
tendency can be explained as a function of the text type, since scientific articles were written for “a different target audience” (Yáñez-Bouza 2007: 194):

[The once-advocate grammarian had surrendered to the highly controlled and edited circumstances in which he was writing, to the extremely informational purpose of what he was writing, and to the extremely demanding society and selected (‘polite’) audience for whom he was writing this particular scientific text (Yáñez-Bouza 2007: 194–195).

The analysis in this section offers the opportunity to test that explanation. We can assume that personal letters are a much less formal and much less “highly controlled and edited” text type than scientific prose, designed for a far less “demanding society” or “polite audience”. The presence of the self-corrections are proof of that. However, we find the same pattern in these two very different text types. This suggests that the difference between Priestley’s rules in his grammar and his own usage has perhaps less to do with socio-historical factors or with different text types. It is just as likely to be simply a case of an idiolectal discrepancy between prescription and usage.

9.4.7. Summary and discussion

It seems that despite Priestley’s apparent advocacy of preposition stranding in his grammar, he actually fronted more on average than in general usage, as exemplified by the letters in the Bluestocking Corpus and ARCHER. The difference between preposition stranding in the JPLC and the ARCHER 1700–1749 subcorpus could be taken as an indication of an effect of prescriptivism on Priestley’s usage, were it not for the fact that early eighteenth-century grammars tended to be descriptive rather than prescriptive on the issue of preposition stranding (Yáñez-Bouza 2007: 65). The Bluestocking Corpus consists of letters written by literate men and women from the upper class (see Sairio 2008). As such, it is a much more focussed corpus than ARCHER but less focussed than the JPLC. The Bluestocking Corpus also shows the largest proportion of preposition stranding of the four compared corpora. If there is a correlation between these two factors, its origin may lie in class-differences between the writers of the letters in these two corpora.
9.5. Summary and conclusions

This chapter explored Priestley’s usage by means of case studies of the following linguistic features: selection of the auxiliary be or have with the past participles of mutative intransitive verbs, different realisations of the subjunctive in subordinate clauses in subjunctive contexts, and preposition placement. The question posed at the start of this chapter was if the rules in Priestley’s *Rudiments of English Grammar* can be traced back to his own usage. As a general conclusion, I can say that the results of the analyses do not give a clear answer to this question.

In the case of the of be/have with the past participles of mutative intransitives, the rules Priestley’s grammar appear indeed to correlate with his own usage. He prescribes be in contexts of immediacy and have in those of duration in his grammar, which is also what we find in his letters. Priestley’s usage is neither conservative nor progressive, but typical of someone from the educated middle classes. With regard to the subjunctive mood, Priestley’s rules appear to follow the prevailing prescriptivism of the time, more or less as they may have appeared in other grammars. At the same time, his usage shows something distinctly different. However, there is an indication that an analysis based on semantic aspects of the subjunctive mood rather than formal ones may reveal a closer agreement between Priestley’s prescription and his usage. The analysis of Priestley’s placement of prepositions shows that his usage does not reflect the rules in his grammar, or vice versa. What is more, Priestley’s use of fronted prepositions is much more frequent than that found in corpora that present roughly the same period in history. The high incidence of fronted prepositions in his usage can be considered conservative and are reflected in the prescriptions of later grammars.

It appears as though there is very little variation in the use of the different variants between formal and informal letters. Either Priestley did not bother with formality – though that does not seem likely – or the criteria used to distinguish between formal and informal letters were not sufficiently sophisticated to make this distinction. There also seems to be a general tendency that
scores found in the JPLC more closely resemble those of other studies when the number of words in a subcorpus is relatively high, such as in the case of JPLC-6, than when it is lower, such as in JPLC-1 and JPLC-3. It seems that as far as these corpus-based studies are concerned, size does matter.

An explanation for the discrepancies between grammar and usage may be that a work of grammar is part of a tradition of writing, based on a shared body of knowledge, whereas a person's usage is a much more individual matter. The gap between prescription and usage that Auer (2009: 11) argues is required in order to be able to say that the former affected the latter need not be looked for in the case of the usage of a grammarian. If we assume that a grammarian's prescription was based on actual usage, as was supposedly the case in Priestley's grammar, then prescription may either precede, coexist with, and follow usage. It only becomes interesting if a grammarian displays linguistic self-consciousness and changes his or her usage around the time of composing a grammar – as was found with some features in the case of Robert Lowth. This, however, is not what seems to have happened in any of the syntactic features investigated in Priestley's case.
10. Conclusions

10.1. Questions and answers
The main premise of this study has been that Priestley was one of the codifiers of English in the eighteenth century and that he had a profound influence on the establishment of standard English. In order to investigate this claim, I posed the following questions:

- What were the sources for Priestley’s most important grammar book, The Rudiments of English Grammar?
- How influential was Priestley as a codifier of the English language in the eighteenth century?
- What was the norm inherent in Priestley’s grammar and where did it come from?
- How descriptive or prescriptive was Priestley’s grammar compared to other grammarians of the time?
- How does Priestley’s own usage compare to his grammatical norms?
- Was Priestley a descriptivist?

I have sought to answer these questions in a broadly socio-historical linguistic approach using quantitative (corpus-based) and qualitative investigations. The investigations themselves were of a biographical, bibliographical, philological, text-analytical and historical linguistic nature to allow for as full an analysis of Priestley’s grammar and usage.

10.1.1. Sources for the Rudiments of English Grammar?
In chapter 3, I have shown that the sources which Priestley used for his Rudiments of English Grammar can be traced back to the grammar prefixed to Johnson’s Dictionary of the English Language and Lowth’s Short Introduction to
English Grammar. Many other features of his grammar appear to be fairly
typical of the Latin-based grammars of the period, which were part of a long
grammatical tradition (see Michael 1970). Priestley apparently favoured a
pragmatic approach to grammar writing and was content to use what sources
were available to him. For a list of irregular verbs, for example, he used a
catalogue of these verbs from Ward’s Four Essay’s Upon the English Language
(1758), and rather than describing orthography, he referred the reader to Isaac
Watts’s (1674–1748) Art of Reading and Writing English (1722) as an intro-
duction to his own grammar (Priestley 1761: 1f).

10.1.2. Priestley’s influence as a codifier
In the history of English grammars, Priestley’s influence as a codifier of the
English language has certainly not been exaggerated, and the extent of his
influence has never been fully recognised yet. I used bibliographical data to
reconstruct the number of editions and reprints of the Rudiments of English
Grammar in chapter 3 and the level of their dissemination in chapter 4. I have
shown that Priestley’s grammar was reprinted more often than has previously
been assumed, and that it was more widely available and more popular than
has been noted before. The wide dissemination of Priestley’s grammar was
shown, for example, by the publication of a pirate edition in Ireland and a
translation into French. In addition, I have shown that Priestley’s grammar was
particularly important as a source for later grammars that may have been more
commercially successful and more authoritative than his own. Examples of such
grammars are those of Lindley Murray and Noah Webster. The effects of
Priestley’s influence on these later grammarians were felt almost to the end of
the nineteenth century, over a hundred years after his Rudiments of English
Grammar had first been published in 1761. Had Priestley been in a position to
know all this, I think that this would almost certainly have surprised him.
Especially considering that his interest in grammar and grammar writing
rapidly died out after the publication of the second edition of his Rudiments of
English Grammar in 1768, as I have argued in chapter 2.
10.1.3. The linguistic norm in Priestley’s grammar

The investigations into Priestley’s usage in chapter 9 showed that some of the rules in his grammar were based on his own, or at least contemporary usage, while other rules were less original and seem to have been representative of the normative climate of the time. Even though his works show that he had definite ideas regarding correctness in grammar and language, Priestley does not really seem to have shared them publicly outside the context of his grammar. As shown in chapter 5, there is little evidence to support the idea that Priestley ever took an active part in the wider contemporary debate over correctness or that he can be considered to have been a central member of the discourse community of eighteenth-century grammarians. He objected to the idea of a language academy as being an authoritarian institution, and as a lifelong teacher, he envisioned the grammarian as a guide to acquiring correct usage rather than as an authority enforcing it.

From a socio-historical perspective, Priestley’s norm of correctness is likely to have lain with polite writers and intellectuals of the educated middle class, to which he belonged himself. The ‘best writers’ cited in his grammar typify the most admired and respected authors of a literary canon that seems to have been part of a shared body of knowledge among eighteenth-century grammarians. Priestley’s norm also shows some similarities with those advocated by the Royal Society as being appropriate for scientific language.

10.1.4. Priestley’s prescriptivism compared

In the history of English grammars, Priestley’s *Rudiments of English Grammar* has usually been presented as the only really descriptive grammar of the eighteenth century. As such, it was often contrasted with Robert Lowth’s *Short Introduction to English Grammar*, whose author was regarded as an icon of prescriptivism (Tieken-Boon van Ostade 2010b). However, from the comparison of the level of prescriptiveness and descriptiveness in the two grammars in chapter 7, I found that these grammars were actually not all that different. Priestley’s grammar was much more prescriptive than it had previously been
made out to be, and Lowth’s much more descriptive. In the same chapter, I argued that prescriptivism and descriptivism should not be seen as diametrical opposites, or not even as opposing ends of a two-dimensional continuum. Rather, when it comes to grammar books, such as Priestley’s *Rudiments of English Grammar*, prescriptivism and descriptivism can be seen as independent variables.

Comparing the grammars of Priestley and Lowth in chapter 7, I came to the conclusion that especially the second edition of the *Rudiments of English Grammar* can be viewed as consisting of two different texts: what I have called there the grammar proper and the ‘Notes and Observations’. The grammar proper, what Priestley called the *rudiments*, is a fairly typical eighteenth-century grammar book; what distinguishes the second edition of Priestley’s grammar from other grammars is the section ‘Notes and Observations’. This section shows a more pronounced authorial style and contains the majority of Priestley’s prescriptions. I have argued that it represents a formative stage in the development of the usage guide.

10.1.5. *Usage vs. grammatical norms*

Generally speaking, Priestley’s usage in his letters seems very consistent with regard to variation in time or level of formality. It seems that composing and publishing the *Rudiments of English Grammar* had no effect on the level of grammatical correctness in his language. Analysis of his usage with regard to some linguistic features discussed in his grammar showed that sometimes his grammar and usage follow the same rules, while at other times they do not. The grammatical norms, as they are presented in Priestley’s grammar, are evidently not indicative of his personal norms, exemplified by his private letters. The same analysis also showed that his usage was sometimes conservative and sometimes progressive compared to eighteenth-century English in general. It also seems that an analysis based on formal features may not always yield the best results. The analysis of many more linguistic features in Priestley’s letters may give a better indication of some of the characteristics of his idiolect.
Although it may sound redundant, it seems that idiolectal variation is just that, idiolectal. It is often hard to determine why one form is preferred over another by a particular author. Despite that fact that there are sociolinguistic and biographical factors at work, it seems that sometimes the author just prefers one form over another, without any apparent reason.

10.1.6. Priestley’s descriptivism

I have argued that Priestley’s normative metalanguage displays a linguistic sophistication which we associate with modern descriptivism. Priestley’s metalanguage is different for prescriptive and proscriptive remarks in his grammar, even though it is not always easy to distinguish between the two. Some of the topics in his grammar are dealt with in a purely descriptive fashion, such as the use of the auxiliaries be or have with the past perfect of mutative intransitive verbs, whilst others contain clearly normative comments. Consequently, I conclude that he was more than a mere grammarian and that in view of the pre-linguistic age in which he lived he may be called a proto-linguist. Chapter 9 showed that some of the rules in Priestley’s grammar appear to be descriptive of his own usage. The examples Priestley used in his *Rudiments of English Grammar* were intentionally taken from the works of contemporary authors in his grammar in order to illustrate current usage. In this sense, Priestley took an active part in the process of codifying the language of his time.

10.2. Future research

Much remains still to be done with regard to the investigation of Priestley’s grammar and usage. Some of this future research may consist of analyses of features that have to some extent already been discussed in this study, but could be expanded upon. Other possible research topics that were not investigated in this study surfaced as a result of my analyses of those that were.
10.2.1. Expanding the research in this study

There are other syntactic features of Priestley's usage that might be analysed in order to elucidate his idiolect. Ideally, these will be features that either underwent some kind of change during the eighteenth century, or whose uses were not yet fully codified for other reasons. Examples are verbal constructions such as the use of the auxiliaries shall and will in the first and second person and the uses of the auxiliary do. Also, Priestley's use of past tense and past participle forms, especially of strong verbs and his use of the passival could be analysed. I have only compared the findings from the analysis in chapter 9 with several earlier studies. A desirable extension of these analyses would be to use a proper reference corpus, such as the eighteenth-century extension of the Corpus of Early English Correspondence, (CEECE). In this study I have only compared Priestley's grammar with Lowth's. Analyses similar to the one in chapter 7, regarding the descriptive and prescriptive nature of the grammar, could be done in order to compare several other key grammars of the period, such as Murray's in order to discover the extent of Priestley's influence on this work. A comparison with other grammars that were not influenced by Priestley's work is expected to yield predictable results as well.

10.2.2. New research inspired by this study

The letters I collected for this study also contained a number of formal notes (see chapter 8). A cursory examinations of these notes strongly suggests that they constitute a separate text type, which seems never to have been investigated yet. A preliminary investigation of spelling and orthography in Priestley's letters has shown that, like his syntax, they are both conventional and idiosyncratic, though nearly always very consistent (Straaijer, in progress). Other non-syntactic features that are interesting to investigate are: an speech-like features in Priestley's letters, strikethroughs and self-corrections (see Auer 2008, Fairman 2008), and Priestley's use of prepositions, compared to his many prescriptions regarding them in the 'Notes and Observations' in the Rudiments of English Grammar (Priestley 1768). Moving a little further afield, an inves-
tigation of Priestley’s style will almost certainly yield interesting results. This could occur on a discourse level with an investigation of the discourse structure and textual organisation of Priestley’s letters. It could also be as simple as an investigation of Priestley’s vocabulary. My analysis of the most frequently used content words and keywords, for example, has shown how his interest changed over time. After becoming a victim of the Birmingham riots, Priestley’s interests radically shifted from his scientific experiments to a preoccupation with his family, finances, health and safety. Finally, a social network analysis along the lines of that in Sairio (2009) can possibly reveal more about the origin of Priestley’s norm of correctness and his influence on his immediate socio-linguistic environment.

10.3. Closing remarks

As I have mentioned in the first chapter of this study, Priestley was one of the great polymaths of the eighteenth century, and his work on the English language was just one of the many subjects that he involved himself with. Nevertheless, his *Rudiments of English Grammar* (1761–1798), his *Course of Lectures on the Theory of Language and Universal Grammar* (1762) and his *Course of Lectures Oratory and Criticism* (Priestley 1777) have had a significant impact on the development of modern English. The part that Priestley has played in history has largely been viewed from the perspectives of science, religion and politics. Consequently, the results of this study, which looks at it from the perspective of language and – to a much lesser extent – education, should be a useful complement to these previous studies. As such, this study will add to existing non-linguistic scholarship on Priestley, and provide a more complete picture of his place in the history of Late Modern English language and society.
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88.


Appendices

Appendix 1. Editions and reprints of The Rudiments of English Grammar

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<td>reprint</td>
<td>12mo</td>
<td>—</td>
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<tr>
<td>1769</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>reprint</td>
<td>12mo</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>1s.6d.</td>
<td>London</td>
<td>T. Beckett &amp; Hardy (Becket; Hardy?)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1771</td>
<td>[Another edition]</td>
<td>reprint</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>12mo</td>
<td>1s.6d.</td>
<td>London</td>
<td>J. &amp; F. Rivington; T. Lowndes; S. Crowder; T. Becket &amp; Co.; J. Johnson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1772</td>
<td>The Third Edition</td>
<td>edition</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>12mo</td>
<td>1s.6d.</td>
<td>London</td>
<td>J. &amp; F. Rivington; T. Lowndes et al.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1772</td>
<td>The Third Edition</td>
<td>reprint</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>8vo</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>London</td>
<td>J. &amp; F. Rivington; T. Lowndes; S. Crowder; T. Becket &amp; Co.; J. Johnson</td>
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<tr>
<td>1773</td>
<td>Fourth edition</td>
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<td>192</td>
<td>12mo</td>
<td>3s.</td>
<td>London</td>
<td>J. &amp; F. Rivington; T. Lowndes; S. Crowder; T. Becket &amp; Co.; J. Johnson</td>
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<tr>
<td>1784</td>
<td>The Fourth Edition (pirate)</td>
<td>edition</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>12mo</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>Dublin</td>
<td>P. Byrne</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

1 A dash in the table below indicates that the information for that cell was not available. As discussed in chapter 3, entries in italics are speculative.
### Appendix 2. Priestley's London booksellers for The Rudiments of English Grammar

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>name of business</th>
<th>partners</th>
<th>place of business (dates at that location)</th>
<th>years in business</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Becket &amp; de Hondt</td>
<td>Thomas Becket (?–?)</td>
<td>73 Tully's Head, corner of Adelphi, Strand (1760–1776)</td>
<td>1767–1776</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Peter Abraham de Hondt (?–?)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Elias Brownword (?–?)</td>
<td>11 Budge Row (1740–1765)</td>
<td>1740–1781</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hardy (?–?)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S. Crowder</td>
<td>Stanley Crowder (d. 1795)</td>
<td>2 Paternoster Row (1767–1775)</td>
<td>1763–1775</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ralph Griffiths</td>
<td>Ralph Griffiths (1720?–1803)</td>
<td>Dunciad, Strand (1759–1772)</td>
<td>1747–1772</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Johnson &amp; Payne</td>
<td>Joseph Johnson (1738–1809)</td>
<td>8 Paternoster Row (1769–1770)</td>
<td>1768–1770</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>John Payne (?–?)</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Joseph Johnson (1738–1809)</td>
<td>Paternoster Row (1765–1770)</td>
<td>1770–1809</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>72 St. Paul's Churchyard (1770–1815)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>T. Lowndes</td>
<td>Thomas Lowndes (1719–1784)</td>
<td>Fleet Street (1756–1771)</td>
<td>1751–1784</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>77 Fleet Street (1772–1786)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>W. Lowndes</td>
<td>William Lowndes (1753?–1823)</td>
<td>77 Fleet Street (1784–1791)</td>
<td>1784–1822</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>76 Fleet Street (1792–1796)</td>
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<tr>
<td>J. Nichols</td>
<td>John Nichols (?–1826)</td>
<td>4 Red Lion Passage, Fleet Street (1767–1820)</td>
<td>1766–1799</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Francis Rivington (1745–1822)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Francis Rivington (1745–1822)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Charles Rivington (1754–1831)</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Charles Rivington (1754–1831)</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>George Robinson (d. 1811)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>John Robinson (d. 1813)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>James Robinson (?–?)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G. G. &amp; J. Robinson</td>
<td>George Robinson (1737–1801)</td>
<td>25 Addison's Head, Paternoster Row (1764–1822)</td>
<td>1794–1801</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>George Robinson (d. 1811)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>John Robinson (d. 1813)</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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2 See Maxted (2007).
3 Also traded as Becket & Co. (Maxted 2007)
4 Listed in Maxted (2007) as a stationer.
5 Listed in Maxted (2007) as a printer.


The Rudiments of English Grammar, adapted to the Use of Schools; with Observations on Style. By Joseph Priestley. 12mo. 1 s. 6 d. Griffiths.

The study of our own Tongue has hitherto been most shamefully neglected in our public schools, while the construction of the dead Languages, with all their idioms has been assiduously taught. In this respect we certainly pay too great a regard to custom. This mode of education might be necessary in those times, when the Language of our country was little cultivated or used, and when the works of the learned among us were written in Latin; but now that the English Tongue is not only become the vehicle of science, but is also the Language of the orator, it is certainly absurd that our youth should waste that time in learning to write or speak a dead Language, which they might more usefully employ in studying their own. They should be able to read and understand the Classics, but their compositions should be in English.

The Rudiments of English Grammar are exhibited with great accuracy and clearness in this little treatise, by Mr. Priestley. Upon the whole, we commend his brief manner of explaining and laying down his Precepts; but we could wish that he had been a little more diffuse in the Syntactical part.

His observations on Style, annexed to his Grammar, are, in general, judicious and ingenious; but he is certainly in the wrong to make it a doubt whether the antient Poets intended the Structure or the Sound of their Verses at any time to be expressive of the Sense. It is impossible to read Vida’s Art of Poetry, and at the same time to entertain the least doubt on that head.

For a specimen of our Author’s abilities, as a Philologist, we shall quote the following passages from his Observations on Style.

*From the correspondence between mens thoughts and language, explained in the former part of these observations, we may infer, that in Style, as in every other production, there is room for an infinite diversity, where the degrees of excellence may be the same. For as every man hath some peculiarity in his manner, whether of speaking, or behaviour, of his limbs, distinguishes him from other men; and which, if he have no affectation, is more becoming him, and better suits his whole character, than any other manner whatever: so likewise hath every man a peculiar manner of conceiving things, and expressing his thoughts, which, were he so fortunate as to hit upon subjects adapted to his genius, would not want propriety or beauty.

*It is not nature that requires a perfect similarity of Style in all that write upon the same subject. The dresses of many persons, of the same age, the same nation, the same climate, and even upon the same occasion, may have equal propriety, and yet be considerably different. In some things a person may innocently consult his own person and taste.
"This natural foundation for diversity of Style, critics seem not sufficiently to have attended to, and have, hence, been too hasty in establishing general laws of writing from particular instances of successful composition; and have defined and circumscribed the paths to literary excellence, in such a manner, that no writer, who pays a scrupulous regard to their rules, can ever arrive at it.

"It ought to have been confirmed, that the infinite diversity of the subjects of human enquiry and speculation, might suggest an infinite diversity in the very kinds of composition, and that the diversity of lights in which the same subject may be viewed by different human intellects, might occasion as great differences in the manner of treating them.

"Hence hath arisen the modern method of evading the force of established criticism, upon compositions of very common denominations, by inventing new titles to works. Thus the writer of Memoirs or Travels, is not confined by the strict laws of History; at the same time that he gives us all the instruction, and perhaps (if only from the variety of his method) more entertainment, than we could receive from the most regular historical performance. And all the rules of Epic writing are dispensed with, and all the uses of such works preserved, in the looser dress of a Novel or Romance; from each of which, being executed with all imaginable diversity of manner, (owing to the human genius being left to its native freedom, in a province as yet uninvaded, at least unoccupied, by the critics) the spirit of antient commentators, might have established quite different sets of rules for this species of composition.

"Language partakes much of the nature of art, and but little of the nature of science; both because improvements in language have their ne plus ultra, and because it is a thing not exempt from the influence of fashion and caprice; whereas a true science is the same in all places, and in all times, and admits of unbounded improvements.

"Both languages and arts, in their infancy, are composed of rough unpolished materials, that barely answer the purposes for which they were intended; in process of time, and in consequence of more persons being employed in improving and using them, they acquire an elegance of construction, and beauty of finishing, while they still retain their strength and capacity for service: but, at last, strength and service are sacrificed to useless and superfluous ornaments, following the universal changes of taste, which are, from the rough and unpolished, to the cultivated and manly; and from the cultivated and manly, to the effeminate and vitiates.

"The time when a language comes to its perfection may be nearly ascertained, from considering the causes that contribute to it. To resume our former comparison; any art may be judged to be arrived at its perfection, when it hath been a considerable time practiced, and in reputation; for, in those circumstances, there could have been no want of motives, either from interest of honour, to excite the ingenious to try every expedient for its improvements.
“Languages have hardly ever received any real improvement, after an entire century favourable to the polite arts; and, from causes that have generally coincided, the period of literary renown in any nation, hath seldom been long after the time in which it made the greatest figure in arms and politics. Also the language of those times which produced the most and the best writers, hath always been deemed classical, and the standard of Style to those that have succeeded them.

“We need to make no doubt, therefore, but that the conjectures and apprehensions we find in the writings of Addison, Pope, Swift, and others, their cotemporaries, that the language of their time would, at length, become obsolete in this nation, are absolutely groundless. And it may be taken for granted, that the schemes of some still more modern writers, to add something considerable to the perfection of the English language, in order to contribute to the permanency of it, cannot, according to the course of nature, produce any effect. If the English language hath not already attained to its maturity, we may safely pronounce that it never will; and if it be not now in a condition to perpetuate itself, and stand the attacks of time, no method that we can at this day take, will rescue it from oblivion.

“More than a century is already elapsed since Dryden began to be admired as a writer; and where is the probability of the prophecy of Mr. Pope ever coming to pass?

And such as Chaucer is, shall Dryden be.

“It is writing that fixes and gives stability to a language; for hardly any of the causes that contribute to the revolutions of vocal language do at all affect that which is written. And when a language is so much read, written, and diffused in books through the bulk of the nation that speaks it as the English, in its present state, it would be absolutely miraculous were it to receive any considerable alteration.”

The Rudiments of English Grammar, adapted to the use of Schools; with Notes and Observations, for the use of those who have made some Proficiency in the Language. By Joseph Priestley, L.L.D. F.R.S. 8vo 2 s. 6 d. Becket, &c. 1768.

It is with pleasure that we have observed the regard which has, of late years, been paid to the cultivation of our native tongue. Formerly, the grammar of it was so far from being accurately attended to, that even our best writers were betrayed into several modes of expression which are evidently inconsistent with the analogy of the language; and this is the more to be regretted, as the great simplicity of its structure, arising, chiefly, from the small number of its inflections, makes the reducing it to a proper standard no very difficult attainment. Few of our readers can be unacquainted with our obligations to the bishop of Oxford, for pointing out the grammatical errors of even such authors as Swift, Addison, Pope, &c. and a similar design is here more fully pursued by Dr. Priestly, though it is conducted in a different manner.

The first part of the present performance, containing the rudiments of English grammar, was published before*; but the second, which is by much the largest part, is entirely new. It consists of a series of observations upon the numbers, cases, adjectives, pronouns, verbs, articles, prepositions, and other particulars; illustrated with examples from many of our writers, tending either to confirm or censure their methods of expression. Indeed the best thing that can at present be done for the improvement of our native tongue, is, as Dr. Priestly justly remarks, to exhibit its actual structure, and the varieties with which it is used. When these are once distinctly pointed out, and generally attended to, the best forms of speech, and those which are most agreeable to the analogy of the language, will soon recommend themselves, and come into general use; and when, by this means, the language shall be written with sufficient uniformity, we may hope to see a complete grammar of it. At present, it is by no means ripe for such a work; but we may approximate to it very fast, if all persons who are qualified to make remarks upon it, will give a little attention to the subject.

* If, says our author, I have done any essential service to my native tongue, it will arise from my detecting in time a very great number of gaietics, which have insinuated themselves into the style of many of our most justly admired writers; and which, in my opinion, tend greatly to injure the true idiom of the English language, being contrary to its most established analogies. I dare say, the collections I have made of this nature, will surprize many persons who are well acquainted with modern compositions. They surprize myself, now that I see them all together; and I even think, the writers themselves will be surprized, when they see them pointed out. For I do not suppose, that they designedly adopted those forms of speech, which are evidently French, but tht they fell into them inadvertently, in consequence of being much conversant with French authors.*
Dr. Priestley thinks that there will be an advantage in his having collected examples from modern writings, rather than from those of Swift, Addison, and others, who wrote about half a century ago, in what is generally called the classical period of our tongue. By this means we may see what is the real character and turn of the language at present; and by comparing it with the writings of preceding authors, we may better perceive which way it is tending, and what extreme we should most carefully guard against.

The Doctor does not look upon it as necessary to make an apology for the freedom he has taken with the works of living authors in his collections. Except a very few pages in Swift, he read nothing with an immediate view of them. This was always a secondary consideration; but if any thing struck him in the course of his reading, he did not fail to note it. ‘If, continues he, I be thought to have borne harder upon Mr. Hume than any other living author, he obliged for it to the great reputation his writings have justly gained him, and to my happening to read them at the time that I did; and I would not pay any man, for whom I have the least esteem, so ill a compliment, as to suppose, that exactness in the punctilios of grammar was an object capable of giving him the least disturbance.

Rev. Sept. 1768.

* See Review, vol. xxvi. p. 27.
Appendix 4. Advertisements for The Rudiments of English Grammar in Priestley’s works

(1769) Considerations on Differences of Opinion Among Christians. London: printed for J. Johnson and J. Payne. 92pp. Unnumbered page lists the Rudiments (title refers to the 1761 edition) price 1s. 6d. as No.7 in a list “Published by Joseph Priestley”, and the “second Edition”, price 3s. as No.8 in the same list.

(1769) A Familiar Introduction to the Study of Electricity. The second edition. London. 92pp. Unnumbered page lists the Rudiments, price 1s.6d. as No.7 in a list “Published by Joseph Priestley”, and the “second Edition”, price 3s. as No.8 in the same list.

(1769) The History and Present State of Electricity, with Original Experiments. The second edition, corrected and enlarged. London: printed for J. Dodson, J. Johnson and J. Payne, and T. Cadell (successor to Mr. Millar). 776pp. Unnumbered page lists the 1768 edition of the Rudiments, price 2s.6d. as No.6 in a list “Published by the author”.

(1770) Letters to the Author of Remarks on Several Late Publications Relative to the Dissenters. London. 71pp. Unnumbered page lists the Rudiments, price 1s.6d. as No.5 in a list “Published by”, and the “Third Edition”, price 3s. as No.6 in the same list. Note: was the 3rd edition perhaps published as early as 1770?

(1771) The Rudiments of English Grammar, Adapted to the Use of Schools. London. 223pp. Unnumbered page lists the Rudiments, price 1s.6d. as No.1 in a list “Published by”.

(1772) The Rudiments of English Grammar, Adapted to the Use of Schools. The third edition. London. 224pp. Unnumbered page lists the Rudiments, price 1s.6d. as No.1 in a list “Published by”.

(1774) An Examination of Dr. Reid’s Inquiry into the Human Mind on the Principles of Common Sense. London. 431pp. Unnumbered page lists the Rudiments, price 1s.6d. as No.10 in a list “A Catalogue of Books”, and the “4th Edit.”, price 3s. as No.11 in the same list.

(1775) An Examination of Dr. Reid’s Inquiry into the Human Mind on the Principles of Common Sense. The second edition. London. 432pp. Unnumbered page lists the Rudiments, price 1s.6d. as No.10 in a list “A Catalogue of Books”, and the “4th Edit.”, price 3s. as No.11 in the same list.

(1775) Experiments and Observations on Different Kinds of Air. The second edition corrected. London. 358pp. Unnumbered page lists the Rudiments, price 1s.6d. as No.10 in a list “A Catalogue of Books”, and the “4th Edit.”, price 3s. as No.11 in the same list.

(1775) Philosophical Empiricism: Containing Remarks on a Charge of Plagiarism Respecting Dr. H-s. London. 92pp. Unnumbered page lists the Rudiments, price 1s.6d. as No.11 in a list “A Catalogue of Books”, and the “4th Edition”, price 3s. as No.12 in the same list

(1777) *A Course of Lectures on Oratory and Criticism.* London. 328pp. Unnumbered page lists the *Rudiments*, price 1s.6d. as No.13 in a list "written by Joseph Priestley", and the "4th Edit.", price 3s. as No.14 in the same list.

(1777) *The Doctrine of Philosophical Necessity Illustrated; Being an Appendix to the Disquisitions Relating to Matter and Spirit.* London. 247pp. Unnumbered page lists the *Rudiments*, price 1s.6d. as No.9 in a list "A Catalogue of Books", and the "4th Edit.", price 3s. as No.10 in the same list.


(1778) *A Free Discussion of the Doctrines of Materialism, and Philosophical Necessity.* London. 472pp. Unnumbered page lists the *Rudiments*, price 1s.6d. as No.14 in a list "Books written by", and the "4th Edit.", price 3s. as No.15 in the same list.

(1778) *Miscellaneous Observations Relating to Education,* printed by R. Cruttwell, for J. Johnson, London. Page 336: "The RUDIMENTS OF ENGLISH GRAMMAR, adapted to the Use of Schools, is. 6d. 15. The above GRAMMAR with Notes and." [no more info, Google books has indexed but not scanned the page].

(1779) *Experiments and Observations Relating to Various Branches of Natural Philosophy.* London. 529pp. Unnumbered page lists the *Rudiments*, price 1s.6d. as No.10 in a list "A Catalogue of Books", and the "4th Edition", price 3s. as No.11 in the same list.


(1782) *Additional Letters to a Philosophical Unbeliever, in Answer to Mr. William Hammond.* Birmingham. 94pp. Unnumbered page lists the *Rudiments", "4th Edition" price 3s as No.11 in a list "written by Dr. Priestley".

(1783) *A Reply to the Animadversions on the History of the Corruptions of Christianity. In the Monthly Review for June, 1783*. Birmingham. 63pp. Unnumbered page lists the *Rudiments*, price 1s.6d. as No.11 and the 4th edition, 3s. as No.12 in the same list.

(1786) *Defences of the History of the Corruptions of Christianity*. Unnumbered page lists the *Rudiments*, "bound", price 1s.6d. as No.11 and the 4th edition, "bound", 3s. as No.12 in the same list.


(1789) *A Description of a New Chart of History*. The seventh edition, corrected. London. 105pp. Unnumbered page lists the *Rudiments*, "bound"price 1s.6d. as No.10 in a list "A Catalogue of Books", and the "4th Edit.", "bound", price 3s. as No.11 in the same list.

(1790) *A General History of the Christian Church, to the Fall of the Western Empire*. Birmingham. 591pp. Vol. 2 of 2. Unnumbered page lists the *Rudiments*, price 1s.6d, and the "4th Edit.", price 3s, both as No.9 in a list "A Catalogue of Books".

(1791) *An Appeal to the Public, on the Subject of the Riots in Birmingham*. Birmingham. 221pp. Unnumbered page lists the *Rudiments*, "a new Edition", "bound"price 1s.6d. as No.8 in a list "written by Dr. Priestley", and the "4th Edit." (no price) as No.9 in the same list.

(1791) *A Discourse on Occasion of the Death of Dr. Price; Delivered at Hackney, on Sunday, May 1, 1791*. London. 55pp. Unnumbered page lists the *Rudiments*, "a new Edition", "bound"price 1s.6d. as No.8 in a list "written by Dr. Priestley", and the "4th Edit.", "bound" price 3s. as No.9 in the same list.


(1793) *A Description of a New Chart of History. Containing a View of the Principal Revolutions of Empire that have taken Place in the World*. The eighth edition, corrected. London. 105pp. Unnumbered page lists the *Rudiments*, "bound"price 1s.6d. as No.10 in a list "A Catalogue of Books", and the "4th Edit.", "bound", price 3s. as No.11 in the same list.
**Appendix 5. Proscriptions in The Rudiments of English Grammar (1761)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>feature</th>
<th>proscription/rule</th>
<th>example /source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“...s his” for genitive “...s’s” (p. 5f)</td>
<td>“absurd”</td>
<td>Pope; Spectator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>indefinite article with plural noun (p. 7f)</td>
<td>“can never be used”</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ye instead of you as 2nd person nominal pronoun plural (p. 9f)</td>
<td>“by the complaisance of the present times”</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>which as relative pronoun relating to persons (p. 11f)</td>
<td>“use hath now appropriated who to persons”</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>as for that / which (p. 11f)</td>
<td>“seems quite foreign to the general use”</td>
<td>Hume Essays Moral and Political p.227</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>whose as genitive of which in non-poetical texts (p. 11f)</td>
<td>“this observation [...] is Mr. Johnson’s Hume “Pleasure whose nature”</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>preterites for past participles: wrote instead of written or took instead of taken as past participle (p. 170)</td>
<td>“make a participle different from the preterite”</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>very frequent ellipsis of relative pronouns (p. 33)</td>
<td>“seems to be a fault”</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>use of orthographical figures: aphæresis, syncope, apocope (p. 37)</td>
<td>“not used with approbation, except in very familiar writing, or verse”</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>use of mixed metaphors (p. 38)</td>
<td>“absurd”</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tautology in a sentence (p. 48)</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fronting of the prepositions of and to (pp. 50–51)</td>
<td>“give too great a stiffness and formality”</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>use of figurative language (p. 54)</td>
<td>“Strong, bold figures, that have no natural connection with one another, ought not to stand too near together”</td>
<td>–</td>
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### Appendix 6. Proscriptions in The Rudiments of English Grammar (1768)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>feature</th>
<th>proscription/rule</th>
<th>example / source</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>gallicisms (p. x)</td>
<td>“greatly [...] injure the true idiom”</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>very frequent omission of relative pronouns (p. 46)</td>
<td>“seems to be a fault”</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>use of orthographical figures (p. 46)</td>
<td>“are not used with approbation, except in very familiar writing, or verse”</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>contraction of weak –ed verb declension to –t (p. 53)</td>
<td>“not admitted in solemn language”</td>
<td>Addison on Medals p.79</td>
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<tr>
<td>...’s instead of ...ses for plural nouns (p. 57)</td>
<td>“it seems better to add es”</td>
<td>Robertson History of Scotland vol.1, p.74; Preceptor vol.2, p.435; Ulloa Voyage vol.1, p.304</td>
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<tr>
<td>pluralisation of mass nouns (pp. 63–64)</td>
<td>“the effect is very disagreeable”</td>
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<td>* mean instead of means as singular noun (p. 64)</td>
<td>“Dr. Lowth pleads for it”, “our ears [...] do not easily admit this form”</td>
<td>Pope; Smollet Voltaire vol.18, p.131; Hume History vol.4, p.426; English Merchant, p.7; Locke</td>
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<td>plural verbs/demonstratives with nouns of singular signification but plural form, e.g. means, pains, news (pp. 64–67)</td>
<td>“the singular number seems to be more common and is therefore preferred”, “the singular number would have been better”</td>
<td>Pope; Spectator</td>
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<td>“...s his” for genitive “...’s” (p. 68)</td>
<td>“absurd”</td>
<td>Smollet Voltaire vol.25, p.82; &amp; vol.18, p.10; Harris Three Treatises, p.189</td>
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<td>my every thought instead of all my thoughts (p. 73)</td>
<td>“seems to sound harsh”</td>
<td>Clarendon; Hume History vol.4, p.426; Price</td>
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<td>a million men instead of a million of men (p. 74)</td>
<td>“will hardly be admitted [...] whereas a thousand men is quite familiar”</td>
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<td>comparison of ‘categorical’ adjectives, e.g. perfect (p. 78)</td>
<td>“not uncommon to see”</td>
<td>Bolingbroke on History vol.1, p.231</td>
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<tr>
<td>* double comparative / superlative (p. 78)</td>
<td>“still a greater impropriety”, “it offends my ears”</td>
<td>Hume Essays, p.11; Shenstone’s Works vol.2, p.45</td>
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<td>superlative for comparative (p. 78)</td>
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<td>* adjectives for adverbs (p. 80)</td>
<td>“the practice is hardly to be approved, except in cases where long custom has made the examples quite easy”</td>
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<td>them for those / these (p. 91)</td>
<td>“find this fault even in writing”</td>
<td>Devil upon Crutches</td>
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<td>that for so great / such a (pp. 91–92)</td>
<td>“common construction is generally preferable”</td>
<td>Hume History vol.5, p.288; Hume History vol.8, p.317</td>
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<td>what for which (p. 92)</td>
<td>“should not be used”</td>
<td>Hume Essays, p.74</td>
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<td>improper use of <em>somewhat</em> <em>(p. 94)</em></td>
<td>“seems to be used improperly”</td>
<td>Hume History vol.1, p.371</td>
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<td><em>who for which</em> <em>(p. 97)</em></td>
<td>“there is generally a harshness”, “will hardly authorize the use of it”, “in the style of history, there can seldom be a propriety in it”</td>
<td>Macaulay History vol.3, p.21; Smollet Voltaire vol.6, p.187; &amp; vol.9, p.141; &amp; vol.9, p.227; &amp; vol.2, p.32; Hume History vol.8, p.312; Hume Essays, p.298</td>
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<td><em>who for which</em> when referring to children <em>(pp. 98–99)</em></td>
<td>“seems to be harsh”</td>
<td>Cadogan</td>
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<td><em>who for which</em> when referring to animals <em>(p. 99)</em></td>
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<td><em>whose</em> referring to things <em>(p. 99)</em></td>
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<td>Hume; Harris Hermes; Swift Tale of a Tab</td>
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<td><em>who / which</em> after adjective, especially in the superlative degree <em>(p. 100)</em></td>
<td>“cannot be admitted”</td>
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<td>use of different relatives, in a series of clauses, referring to the same antecedent <em>(pp. 101–102)</em></td>
<td>“ought to have been”</td>
<td>Hume History vol.2, p.262; Universal History vol.25, p.117</td>
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<td>* nominative case for oblique: “the chaplain intreated my comrade and I” for “…and me” <em>(p. 102)</em></td>
<td>“awkward construction”</td>
<td>World Displayed vol.1, p.163; Fair American vol.1, p.141</td>
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<td>oblique case for nominative: “my father and him have…” for “my father and he have…” <em>(p. 103)</em></td>
<td>“a French construction”</td>
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<td>neuter verbs used transitively in reciprocal constructions <em>(p. 108)</em></td>
<td>“French construction”, “foreign to the idiom of the English tongue”, “can never take generally”</td>
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<td>variant spelling of preter tense and past participles when they are homophone with the present tense: <em>red</em> as preter and past participle of <em>to read</em> <em>(p. 124)</em></td>
<td>“particularly bad”</td>
<td>Bolingbroke on History vol.1, pp.26, 68, 92; Hume Essays, p.282</td>
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<td>* preterite for past participle <em>(p. 125)</em></td>
<td>“peculiarly awkward”</td>
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<td>omission of <em>have</em> in perfect tense <em>(pp. 126–127)</em></td>
<td>“in many cases […] writers are certainly faulty”</td>
<td>Hume History vol.6, p.248; Harris</td>
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<td><em>where</em> for rel. pron.+prep. <em>(p. 133)</em></td>
<td>“French idiom”</td>
<td>Hume History</td>
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<td>hence / whence / thence + preposition <em>(pp. 133–134)</em></td>
<td>“seems […] to be improper”, “it is superfluous”, “yet the practice is very</td>
<td>Swift Tale of a Tab; Dryden</td>
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...-ing nouns derived from verbs used to govern another word without a preposition (p. 156) | “ought not to govern another word, without the intervention of a preposition” | Hume History vol.7, p.117
* improper use of of instead of other prepositions (pp. 158–160) | “leaned to the French idiom”, “departed from the genius of the English tongue”, “with would have been more proper”, “regard to the French idiom” | Hume History vol.4, p.251; & vol.5, p.185; & vol.1, p.206; & vol.2, p.65; vol.6, p.283; vol.1, p.401; vol.7, p.161; vol.2, p.71; vol 1, p.292; vol 6, p.63; Dryden
* superfluous use of of (p. 160) | “superfluous”, “derived [...] from the French”, “had better be omitted” | Hume Essays, pp.81, 78, 258; Montague Rise and Fall of Antient Repubicks, p.137
* omission of of (p. 161) | “resembles the French idiom” | Addison on Medals, p.23
use of to with words that govern dative in Latin and French (p. 162) | “does not seem to suit the English language” | Bible Romans; Milton; Dryden; Bolingbroke on History vol.1, p.136
* to for other prepositions; for, of, against, upon (p. 163) | “for is more usual”, “seems to be used improperly” | Hume History vol.4, p.191; Hume Essays, p.133; Hume History vol.6, p.323; Dryden; Locke; Smollet Voltaire vol 1, p.178
* for instead of other prepositions (pp. 163–164) | “had better have been supplied by other prepositions” | Smollet Voltaire vol 1, pp.203, 30; Addison; Dalembert History of the Expulsion of the Jesuits, p.132; Law Tracts vol.1, p.70
* superfluous use of for (p. 164) | “only used in familiar and colloquial style” | Law Tracts vol.1, p.184; Shakespeare
* with instead of other prepositions (pp. 164–165) | “would have been more proper”, “had better have been substituted” | Hume History vol.4, pp.176, 10; Smollet Voltaire vol 3, p.65; Harris three Treatises, p.205; Addison; Newberry New Testament; Dryden; Preceptor; Pope
* improper use of on / upon (p. 166) | “seems to be used improperly” | Addison on Medals; Pope; Swift; Hume History vol.7, p.355, & vol.3, p.5, & vol.8, p.75; Hume Political Essays, p.12; Macaulay History, p.112
* in instead of other prepositions (p. 167) | “some other preposition would be more agreeable to the English idiom”, “might with advantage be changed”, “agreeable to the French idiom” | Hume History vol.1, p.402; & vol.3, p.162; Swift; Addison; Law Tracts vol.1, p.45; vol 8, p.68
* ellipsis of in (p.168) | “hardly suits grave style” | Hume History vol.7, p.315
* improper use of from (p. ...
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<td>“seems to be superfluous”</td>
<td>Hume History vol.8, p.282</td>
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<td>* use of <em>among</em> in conjunction with <em>every</em></td>
<td>“cannot be used”</td>
<td>Hume Essays, p.92</td>
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<td>* use of <em>known under the general name of</em></td>
<td>“seems to be some impropriety”</td>
<td>Hume Political Essays, p.71</td>
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<td>separation of adjective from its substantive (p. 170)</td>
<td>“should not be separated”</td>
<td>Hume Political Essays, p.196</td>
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<td>separation of <em>of</em> from the noun it precedes or follows (p. 172)</td>
<td>“will not bear to be separated […] without a disagreeable effect”</td>
<td>Hume History vol.2, p.445; Harris three Treatises, p.190; Walpole Anecdotes; Johnson Rasselas vol.2, p.32</td>
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<td>separation of genitive from word that usually follows it (p. 173)</td>
<td>“particularly awkward”</td>
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<td>* of + connected words preceding the verb on which they both depend, when they depend on a following noun (p. 174)</td>
<td>“is properly French, and does not succeed very well in English”</td>
<td>Johnson Rasselas vol.2, p.54; &amp; vol.1, p.32; Addison on Medals, p.12</td>
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<td>S-V-inversion after <em>than</em> (p. 175–176)</td>
<td>“does not easily follow”</td>
<td>Hume History vol.7, p.71</td>
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<td>insertion of nominative case between negative particle and verb in negative context (p. 176)</td>
<td>“we are disappointed, if the verb do not immediately follow”</td>
<td>Hume History vol.6, p.389; Hume Essays, p.173</td>
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<td>insertion of word between nominative case and verb (noun follows verb) in interrogative contexts (p. 176)</td>
<td>“no other word should be interposed”</td>
<td>Addison on Medals, p.29; Smollet Voltaire vol.18, p.152</td>
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<td>no insertion of nominative after verb in negative context (p. 176)</td>
<td>“a still worse effect”</td>
<td>Hume History vol.7, p.77; &amp; vol.7, p.362</td>
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<tr>
<td>negative particle put between active participles of auxiliaries and passive participles of other verbs (p. 178)</td>
<td>“not well situated”</td>
<td>Addison on Medals, p.29; Johnson Rasselas vol.2, p.9; &amp; vol.1, p.16</td>
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<tr>
<td>interposition of substantive / phrase between relative and antecedent in genitive case (p. 179)</td>
<td>“cannot be interposed […] without a disagreeable effect”, “a still worse effect”</td>
<td>Hume History vol.3, p.362; vol.4, p.99; Sterne Tristram Shandy vol.1, p.10; Hume History vol.4, p.225; vol.3, p.362</td>
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<td>separation of object of affirmation from its verb by other clauses (p. 179)</td>
<td>“should not easily be separated”</td>
<td>Smollet Voltaire vol.2, p.73; Bolingbroke on History vol.2, p.310; Hume History vol.1, p.415</td>
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<td>consistently placing adverbs after the verb (p. 180)</td>
<td>“by no means suits the idiom of the English tongue”</td>
<td>Hume History vol.2, p.46; vol.2, p.342</td>
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<td>active participle placed before its substantive (p. 182)</td>
<td>“imitation of [...] Latin”, “a very awkward construction in English”</td>
<td>Macaulay History vol.3, p.283; Lennox Female Quixote vol.1, p.132</td>
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<td>use of plural verb form with multiple related subjects of an affirmation (p. 184)</td>
<td>“manifestly harsh”</td>
<td>Johnson; Hume History vol.6, p.14; Hume</td>
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<td>plural pronoun referring to collective noun (p. 185)</td>
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<td>* plural verb form with collective noun (p. 186)</td>
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<td>Johnson; Hume History vol.8, p.108; vol.1, p.306</td>
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<td>joining of words which are attributes of unity to nouns in the plural (pp. 188–189)</td>
<td>“it seems wrong”, “there does not seem to be the same propriety”</td>
<td>Hume History vol.1, p.179; vol.8, p.92</td>
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<td>plural verb form with coordinated clauses. or ... or ... are for or ... or ... is (p. 190)</td>
<td>“faults”</td>
<td>Spectator; Addison on Medals, p.30; Bolingbroke on History, p.123; Condamine Travels, p.60</td>
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<td>erroneous use of particles (pp. 194–198)</td>
<td>“ill put”, “does not well supply the place of”, “leans more to the French”, “does not seem to admit”, “a very common fault”, “it is very common to forget”</td>
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<td>so soon as for as soon as (p. 195)</td>
<td>“does not read so well”</td>
<td>Swift Tale of a Tub, p.55</td>
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<tr>
<td>that for when/till after comparative (pp. 196–197)</td>
<td>“French idiom”, “would be more truly English”</td>
<td>Hume History vol.6, p.5; Bolingbroke on History vol.1, p.121</td>
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<tr>
<td>such for who/such as/(s)he/they/these (p. 197)</td>
<td>“a very common fault”</td>
<td>Hume History vol.7, p.289</td>
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<tr>
<td>scarce(ly) + than (p. 197)</td>
<td>“does not admit of”</td>
<td>Smollet Voltaire</td>
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<td>same particle for two clauses that require different particles (pp.197–198)</td>
<td>“very common to forget”</td>
<td>Addison on Medals; Hume History vol.4, p.35</td>
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<td>faulty two-part negation (p.198)</td>
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<td>Hume Essays, p.133; Addison on Medals, p.16</td>
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<td>no for neither (p. 199)</td>
<td>“does but ill supply the place of”</td>
<td>Hume History vol.4, p.174</td>
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<tr>
<td>comparative + but instead of than (p. 199)</td>
<td>“not an easy correspondence”</td>
<td>Hume History vol.5, p.105</td>
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### Appendix 7. Prescriptions in The Rudiments of English Grammar (1761)

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<td>“like polysyllables”</td>
<td>Mr. Johnson (S.J. Dictionary)</td>
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<td>use of ‘conjunctive pretertense’ (p. 15f)</td>
<td>“analogy of the language seems to require that both the tenses be put upon a level in this respect”</td>
<td>“We shall overtake him though he run/runs”</td>
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<td>different forms for preterite and participle (p. 17f)</td>
<td>“ought to take advantage of every variety that the practice of good authors will warrant”, “make a participle different from the preterite”</td>
<td>“a book is written, not wrote” “the ships are taken, not took”</td>
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<tr>
<td>use of war with singular you in conjunctive preterite (pp. 20–21f)</td>
<td>“ought not the verb […] to be plural”, “we always say you are”</td>
<td>Hume Essays p.224</td>
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<td>emphatic do (p. 21)</td>
<td>“expresses the affirmation with greater emphasis”</td>
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<tr>
<td>use of shall and will (pp. 22–23)</td>
<td>“when we simply foretel, (sic.) we use shall in the first person, and will in the rest”, “when we promise, threaten, or engage, we use will in the first person, and shall in the rest”</td>
<td></td>
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<td>different uses of present and past forms of can and may (p. 22)</td>
<td>“can, signifies a present power; may, a right […] to do something that is not yet done”, “could and might, signify […] a power and right to do what is affirmed, but imply the intervention of some obstacle or impediment”</td>
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<td>English word order (p. 33)</td>
<td>“admits of no other disposition of the words without either entirely altering the sense, or leaving it ambiguous”, “the subject in the sentence must precede the verb, and […] the object must follow it”</td>
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<tr>
<td>joining of grammatical and ungrammatical clauses (pp. 34–35)</td>
<td>“that must be substituted instead of as”</td>
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<td>use of mixed metaphors (p. 38)</td>
<td>“every word with which the metaphorical term is connected, should in the strictest propriety of language be applicable to it”</td>
<td>“extinguishing the seeds of rebellion”</td>
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<td>perspicuity (p. 48)</td>
<td>“he must make the principal proposition the most conspicuous”, “those which contain nothing more than circumstances, or illustrations, must be thrown into the form of adjectives, adverbs, metaphors, &amp;c.”</td>
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<td>harmony of style (p. 49)</td>
<td>“must carefully avoid […] too frequent recurrence”</td>
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<tr>
<td>importance of style: correctness vs. perspicuity (61)</td>
<td>“we ought rather to aim at perspicuity and strength of expression, than exactness in the punctilios of composition”</td>
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### Appendix 8. Prescriptions in The Rudiments of English Grammar (1768)

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<td>“renders the affirmation the more emphatical”</td>
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<td>‡ use of <em>shall</em> and <em>will</em> (p. 37)</td>
<td>“when we simply <em>foretel, [sic] we use shall in the first person, and will in the rest</em>, <em>when we promise, threaten or engage, we use will’ in the first person, and shall in the rest</em>”</td>
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<tr>
<td>‡ different uses of present and past forms of <em>can</em> and <em>may</em> (p. 38)</td>
<td>“in the absolute form […] can signifies a present power; may a right […] to do something that is not yet done”, “the conditional forms could and might, signify likewise, a power and right to do what is affirmed, but imply the intervention of some obstacle or impediment”</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>‡ Adj-N agreement (p. 41)</td>
<td>“They must agree in number”</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>‡ S-V agreement (p. 42)</td>
<td>“They must have the same number, and person”</td>
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<td>‡ verb with two S (sing.) (p. 42)</td>
<td>“The verb corresponding to them must be in the plural”</td>
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<td>use of <em>elder</em> vs. <em>older</em> (p. 76)</td>
<td>“<em>elder, and eldest</em> seem to refer to priority of rank or privilege, in consequence of age; whereas <em>older</em> and <em>oldest</em>, respect the number of years only.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>comparison of certain disyllabic adjectives (p. 77)</td>
<td>“like polysyllables”</td>
<td>Mr. Johnson (S.J. Dictionary)</td>
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<td>deviant uses of <em>that</em> (p. 92)</td>
<td>“In all these cases, however, <em>it should seem that the common construction is generally preferable</em>”</td>
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<td><em>which</em> to refer to the name of a person, but not the person (p. 99)</td>
<td>“<em>which</em> ought to be used, and not <em>who</em>”</td>
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<td><em>which</em> to refer to person (p. 100)</td>
<td>“when we want to distinguish one person of two, or a particular person among a number of others. We should say, <em>Which of the two</em>”</td>
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<td>preposition &amp; case (p. 105)</td>
<td>“the oblique case should follow prepositions”</td>
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<td>comparatives &amp; case (p. 105)</td>
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<td>use of ‘conjugate preter tense’ (pp. 117–118)</td>
<td>“analogy of the language seems to require that both the tenses be put upon a level in this respect”</td>
<td>“We shall overtake him though he run/runs”</td>
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<tr>
<td>different forms for preterite and participle (p. 123)</td>
<td>“ought to take advantage of every variety that the practice of good authors will warrant”, “make a participle different from the preterite of a verb”</td>
<td>“a book is written, not wrote” “the ships are taken, not took” Hume Essays, p.262</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>feature</td>
<td>prescription/rule</td>
<td>example /source</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>use of <em>be</em> or <em>have</em> with mutative intransitive verbs (p. 128)</td>
<td>“when I say, <em>I am fallen</em>, I mean at this present instant”, “if I say, <em>I have fallen</em>, my meaning comprehends, indeed, the foregoing; but has, likewise, a secret reference to some period of time past [...] implying some continuance of time, which the other form [...] does not”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>a</em> with <em>h</em>-initial nouns (p. 147)</td>
<td>“It should seem, that as <em>a</em> without <em>n</em> is prefixed to a consonant, it ought to suffice before an <em>h</em> that is sounded”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>use of prepositions (p. 154)</td>
<td>“Different relations, and different senses, must be expressed by different prepositions”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>word order: articles &amp; Adj. (p. 172)</td>
<td>“When a sentence begins with the words <em>all, many, so, as, how, too</em>, and perhaps some others, the article <em>a</em> is elegantly preceded by the adjective and followed by its correspondent substantive”</td>
<td>Addison <em>On Medals</em>, p.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>word order: articles &amp; Adj. (p. 172)</td>
<td>“Most other particles must be places before the adjectives”</td>
<td>Smollet <em>Voltaire</em> vol.1 p.181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>number agreement (pp. 183–187)</td>
<td>“A number of persons [...] should, nevertheless, be spoken of as in the plural number”; “It is a rule, that two distinct require the verb to be in the plural number [...] if the subjects of the affirmation be nearly related, the verb is rather better in the singular number”; “In the former case, the verb ought to be plural, in the latter it ought to be singular”</td>
<td>Account of Geneva, p.19 Johnson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>person agreement (p. 192)</td>
<td>“as the word you is confessedly plural; the verb [...] ought to be plural too”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>corresponding particles (p. 193)</td>
<td>“when one of them is found towards the beginning of a sentence, the other is expected to follow in some subsequent part of it”; “<em>The same seems to require that</em>”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Appendix 9. Sources for the Joseph Priestley Letter Corpus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>archive &amp; collection</th>
<th>number of letters used</th>
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<tr>
<td>American Philosophical Society. Joseph Priestley Papers; Benjamin Vaughan Papers;</td>
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<tr>
<td>Benjamin Franklin Papers – Hays Calendar 1-I, 1-II, 2-I, 2-II, 4-I, 4-II, 5-I,</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-II, 6 –II; Franklin-Bache Papers, Scientists Collection. Philadelphia, PA, USA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Birmingham City Archives. Soho Collection (NRA 22549 Watt, NRA 9497 Boulton) MS3219/</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/86, MS3219/4/110, MS3219/4/112, MS3782/12/24, MS3782/12/25, MS3782/13/35; Joseph</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Priestley Collection by Samuel Timmins [<a href="http://www.search.revolutionaryplayers.org.uk/">http://www.search.revolutionaryplayers.org.uk/</a></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>ngine/custom/people.asp?theme=47&amp;t=0] (accessed 1 April 2010). Birmingham, UK</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bodleian Library. MS. Eng Misc. c.132. Oxford, UK</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Williams’ Centre for Dissenting Studies. Letters of Dr. Joseph Priestley. London,</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haverford College Library. Charles Roberts Autograph Collection – coll 220. Haverford,</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>PA, USA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historical Society of Pennsylvania. Benjamin Smith Barton Papers; Dreer Collection;</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grate Collection; Conarrow Collection; Logan Papers; Elting Collection; Thomas McKean</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Papers. Philadelphia, PA, USA</td>
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<tr>
<td>collections/jefferson_papers/mtdigit.html] (accessed 1 April 2010). Washington D.C.,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>Massachusetts Historical Society. letters from various collections. Boston, MA, USA</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noord-Hollands Archief. Archief van Martinus van Marum. Haarlem, NL</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>Nottinghshire Archives. Sir George Savile, vol. XIII, ref. DD/F/J/11/1/7/100, ref.</td>
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<td>DD/F/J/11/1/7/107, ref. DD/F/J/11/1/7/211, ref. DD/F/J/11/1/7/366. Nottingham, UK</td>
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<tr>
<td>North Yorkshire County Record Office. John Wyvill. Northallerton, UK</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pennsylvania State University. Special Collections Library, Rare Books and Manuscripts.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joseph Priestley Papers, 1777-1835, Accession 1961-0022R. University State Park, PA,</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Royal Society of London. Royal Society Manuscripts Collection; Josiah Wedgwood</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Papers MM/5/1 to MM/5/33, MM/20/46 to MM/20/50; Canton Papers MS/597, MS/598, MS/</td>
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<tr>
<td>599. London, UK</td>
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<tr>
<td>State Library of New South Wales. Series 06.189, Series 06.128.</td>
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<tr>
<td>[<a href="http://www2.sl.nsw.gov.au/banks/series_06/06_189.cfm">http://www2.sl.nsw.gov.au/banks/series_06/06_189.cfm</a>],</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sydney, AUS</td>
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<tr>
<td>University of Birmingham. Special Collections, Main Library, JP. Birmingham, UK</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warrington Public Library. Correspondence with John Wilkinson NRA 9201. Warrington,</td>
<td>45</td>
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<tr>
<td>UK</td>
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### Appendix 10. Reference abbreviations for the Joseph Priestley Letter Corpus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>organisation</th>
<th>letters</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>American Philosophical Society</td>
<td>APS, Benjamin Vaughan Papers, Benjamin Franklin Papers, Joseph Priestley Papers, Franklin-Bache Papers, Scientists Collection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bodleian Library</td>
<td>BLO, Letters to Richard Price</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birmingham City Archives</td>
<td>BCA, Soho Papers, Priestley Collection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British Library</td>
<td>BRL, British Library Collection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr Williams’s Library</td>
<td>DWL, Letters of Joseph Priestley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haverford College Library</td>
<td>HCL, Charles Robertson Autograph Collection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historical Society of Pennsylvania</td>
<td>HSP, Benjamin Smith Barton Collection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library of Congress</td>
<td>LOC, Thomas Jefferson Papers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Massachusetts Historical Society</td>
<td>MHS, George Thatcher correspondence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Library of New South Wales</td>
<td>NSW, Joseph Banks Papers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noord Hollands Archief</td>
<td>NHA, Martinus van Marum archief</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nottinghamshire Archives</td>
<td>NOA, Sir George Savile correspondence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Yorkshire County Record Office</td>
<td>NYR, Letters to Christopher Wyvill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pennsylvania State University</td>
<td>PSU, Joseph Priestley Papers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Royal Society of London</td>
<td>RSL, Josiah Wedgwood Papers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Birmingham</td>
<td>UOB, Special collections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warrington Public Library</td>
<td>WPL, John Wilkinson correspondence</td>
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### Appendix 11. Addressees in the Joseph Priestley Letter Corpus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Date Range</th>
<th>Occupation/Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abercrombie, James</td>
<td>(1758–1841)</td>
<td>American Episcopal minister</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adams, John</td>
<td>(1735–1826)</td>
<td>American politician, second US president</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashdowne, William</td>
<td>(1723–1810)</td>
<td>Unitarian preacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Banks, Sir Joseph</td>
<td>(1743–1820)</td>
<td>Naturalist, president of the Royal Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barbauld, Anna Laetitia</td>
<td>(1743–1825)</td>
<td>Poet, essayist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barton, Benjamin Smith</td>
<td>(1766–1815)</td>
<td>Naturalist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belsham, Thomas</td>
<td>(1750–1829)</td>
<td>Presbyterian minister</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boulton, Matthew</td>
<td>(1728–1809)</td>
<td>Manufacturer, entrepreneur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bretland, Joseph</td>
<td>(1742–1819)</td>
<td>Presbyterian minister, schoolmaster</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canton, John</td>
<td>(bap. 1718–1772)</td>
<td>Electrician, schoolmaster</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canton, William</td>
<td>(fl. 1773–1804)</td>
<td>Schoolmaster</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cappe, Newcome</td>
<td>(1733–1800)</td>
<td>Unitarian minister, preacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cardale, Paul</td>
<td>(1705–1775)</td>
<td>Presbyterian minister &amp; theologian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carey, Matthew</td>
<td>(1760–1839)</td>
<td>Publisher, author</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constable, William</td>
<td>(1721–1791)</td>
<td>Collector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crouch, Martha</td>
<td>(fl. 1786–1791)</td>
<td>Sister of Joseph Priestley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eden, William</td>
<td>(1744–1814)</td>
<td>1st Baron Auckland, reformer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Emans</td>
<td>(fl. 1788)</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Franklin, Benjamin</td>
<td>(1706–1790)</td>
<td>Politician, diplomat, inventor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gurney, J.</td>
<td>(fl. 1793)</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jefferson, Thomas</td>
<td>(1743–1826)</td>
<td>American politician, third US president</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Johnson, Joseph</td>
<td>(1738–1809)</td>
<td>Bookseller</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lind, James</td>
<td>(1716–1794)</td>
<td>Naval surgeon (or perhaps 1736–1812 physician)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lindsey, Hannah</td>
<td>(fl. 1770–1803)</td>
<td>Wife of Theophilus Lindsey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lindsey, Theophilus</td>
<td>(1723–1808)</td>
<td>Unitarian minister, theologian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Livingston, Robert R.</td>
<td>(1746–1813)</td>
<td>American politician</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Logan, George</td>
<td>(1753–1828)</td>
<td>American physician, politician</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mansell, Judith</td>
<td>(fl. 1791–1797)</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>van Marum, Martinus</td>
<td>(1750–1837)</td>
<td>Dutch physicist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McKean, Thomas</td>
<td>(1734–1817)</td>
<td>Chief Justice of Pennsylvania</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. McKinney</td>
<td>(fl. 1794)</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michell, Henry</td>
<td>(fl. 1780)</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

6 This list does not include a few addressees that could not be identified.
Mitchell, Samuel Latham (1764–1831) professor at Columbia College
Morse, Jedediah (1761–1826) geographer
Parker, William (1762–1818) master glassmaker
Parks, Samuel (fl. 1789) unknown
Percival, Thomas (1740–1804) physician
Phillips, R. (1767–1840) bookseller
Price, Richard (1723–1791) dissenting minister, mathematician
Robins, R. (fl. 1781) unknown
Dr. (James?) Ross (fl. 1798) unknown
Rotheram, Caleb (1738–1796) Presbyterian minister, tutor
Savile, Sir George (1726–1784) politician
Scholefield, Radcliffe (fl. 1772–1799) dissenting minister
Seddon, John (1724–1770) librarian Warrington Academy
Smith, William (1756–1815) member of parliament
Thatcher, George (1754–1824) United States congressman
Turner, William (1714–1794) dissenting minister
Walker, George (1734–1807) Presbyterian minister, mathematician
Vaughan, Benjamin (1751–1835) diplomatist, political reformer
Vaughan, John (1756–1841) businessman
Vaughan, William (1752–1850) promoter of the London docks
Watson, Richard (fl. 1795) nephew of John Wilkinson
Watt, James (1736–1819) inventor, industrialist
Wedgwood, Josiah (1730–1795) master potter
Wedgwood, Thomas (1771–1805) chemist
Wilkinson, John (1728–1808) ironmaster
Withering, William (1741–1799) physician
Wyvill, Christopher (1738–1822) political reformer

Protestant Dissenters of Great Yarmouth
### Appendix 12. Mutative intransitive verbs (after Rydén & Brorström 1987)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>abate</th>
<th>crawl</th>
<th>fade</th>
<th>lessen</th>
<th>repair</th>
<th>stay</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>abide</td>
<td>creep</td>
<td>fail</td>
<td>lie</td>
<td>rest</td>
<td>steal</td>
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<tr>
<td>abscond</td>
<td>darken</td>
<td>fall</td>
<td>light</td>
<td>retire</td>
<td>step</td>
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<tr>
<td>advance</td>
<td>decay</td>
<td>fare</td>
<td>march</td>
<td>retreat</td>
<td>stir</td>
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<tr>
<td>age</td>
<td>decease</td>
<td>finish</td>
<td>meet</td>
<td>return</td>
<td>stray</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a/light</td>
<td>decline</td>
<td>flee/fly</td>
<td>melt</td>
<td>revive</td>
<td>stroll</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>alter</td>
<td>decrease</td>
<td>flit</td>
<td>mend</td>
<td>ride</td>
<td>subside</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a/mend</td>
<td>depart</td>
<td>freeze</td>
<td>miscarry</td>
<td>rise</td>
<td>succumb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>amount</td>
<td>descend</td>
<td>frisk off</td>
<td>mount</td>
<td>roam</td>
<td>sup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ascend</td>
<td>desert</td>
<td>get</td>
<td>move</td>
<td>run</td>
<td>swell</td>
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<td>a/waken</td>
<td>deteriorate</td>
<td>glide</td>
<td>obtain</td>
<td>rush</td>
<td>swerve</td>
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<tr>
<td>approach</td>
<td>die</td>
<td>go</td>
<td>pack</td>
<td>sail</td>
<td>swoon</td>
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<td>become</td>
<td>diminish</td>
<td>grow</td>
<td>part</td>
<td>set</td>
<td>transpire</td>
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<td>befall</td>
<td>dis/appear</td>
<td>happen</td>
<td>pass</td>
<td>shrink</td>
<td>travel</td>
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<tr>
<td>begin</td>
<td>dive</td>
<td>haste/n/</td>
<td>penetrate</td>
<td>sink</td>
<td>troop</td>
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<td>bide</td>
<td>do</td>
<td>heal</td>
<td>perish</td>
<td>sit</td>
<td>trot</td>
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<tr>
<td>blow over</td>
<td>drop</td>
<td>hurry</td>
<td>plunge</td>
<td>slide</td>
<td>turn</td>
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<tr>
<td>bolt</td>
<td>dry up</td>
<td>improve</td>
<td>progress</td>
<td>sink</td>
<td>vanish</td>
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<td>break</td>
<td>e/lapse</td>
<td>increase</td>
<td>rally</td>
<td>slink</td>
<td>walk</td>
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<td>burst</td>
<td>elapse</td>
<td>intrude</td>
<td>reach</td>
<td>slip</td>
<td>wade</td>
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<td>enter</td>
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<td>relapse</td>
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<td>escape</td>
<td>lapse</td>
<td>relent</td>
<td>speed</td>
<td>withdraw</td>
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<td>cling</td>
<td>evaporate</td>
<td>last</td>
<td>remain</td>
<td>spring</td>
<td>wither</td>
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<tr>
<td>cool</td>
<td>expire</td>
<td>leap</td>
<td>remove</td>
<td>start</td>
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</table>
Samenvatting

*Joseph Priestley, Grammaticus: Laatmodern Engels normativisme en taalgebruik in een sociohistorische context*

Inleiding

De achttiende-eeuwse veelzijdige geleerde Joseph Priestley (1733–1804) staat vooral bekend als chemicus en theoloog. Hij was de ontdekker van zuurstof en andere gassen en de grote voorvechter van de flogistontheorie, en van het unitarisme dat hij in de Verenigde Staten van Amerika introduceerde. Minder bekend is hij als grammaticus en codificeerder van de Engelse taal. In dit proefschrift wordt een antwoord gezocht op de volgende vragen: Wat is Priestleys invloed op het laatmoderne Engels geweest? Welke normen lagen ten grondslag aan zijn grammatica *The Rudiments of English Grammar* (1761) en hoe prescriptief of descriptief was deze grammatica? En hoe verhouden de regels in deze grammatica zich tot Priestleys eigen taalgebruik, zoals af te leiden is uit zijn persoonlijke correspondentie? Dit proefschrift wordt gekenmerkt door een kwalitatieve en kwantitatieve aanpak van deze vraagstukken. Om een zo breed mogelijk palet van invalshoeken in deze materie te verwezenlijken, maar ook om het noodzakelijk multidisciplinaire karakter van de sociohistorische linguïstiek te illustreren, zijn biografische, bibliografische en filologische, alsmede tekstanalytische en historisch taalkundige analyses gebruikt. De kwantitatieve analyses zijn gebaseerd op de corpuslinguïstiek en worden voornamelijk toegepast op het brievenkorpus dat voor dit doel samengesteld werd (zie hieronder).

Milroy & Milroy (1999) onderscheiden zes stadia in de standaardisatie van een taal: 1) selectie van een taalvariëteit die als de standaard moet gaan dienen, 2) acceptatie hiervan door invloedrijke personen, 3) geografische verspreiding, 4) uitbreiding van de functies van de taal, 5) codificatie, het vastleggen van de
standaard, en 6) prescriptie, waarin de standaard wordt voorgeschreven aan de taalgebruiker. De achttiende eeuw was een belangrijke periode in de ontwikkeling van het moderne Engels, aangezien in deze eeuw de omslag van codificatie naar prescriptie plaatsvond. Uit de analyse van Priestleys grammatica zien we dan ook dat deze zowel codificerende als prescriptieve elementen bevat. In deze periode vonden ook grote veranderingen plaats in Engeland, zoals de Verlichting, het begin van de Industriële Revolutie, urbanisatie en de opkomst van de middenklasse. Deze veranderingen maakten sociale mobiliteit mogelijk, die bij de middenklasse leidde tot een behoefte om zich wat taalgebruik betrof te kunnen mengen en meten met de hogere sociale klassen. Dit verlangen om toe te kunnen treden tot de zogenaamde "polite society" leidde tot linguïstische onzekerheid en een vraag naar codificerende en prescriptieve werken, zoals grammatica's en cursussen in welsprekendheid.

Joseph Priestley
Het is als eerbetoon aan Priestley dat direct na zijn dood in 1804 de eerste biografische werken gepubliceerd werden en dat deze tot op de dag van vandaag blijven verschijnen. De biografieën uit de eerste helft van de twintigste eeuw richtten zich voornamelijk op één van de vele aspecten van zijn professionele leven: wetenschap, religie of politiek. In de tweede helft van de vorige eeuw wordt er geprobeerd deze verschillende aspecten met elkaar in verband te brengen. Dit proefschrift, dat zich richt op Priestley als grammaticus en taaldeskundige, is een aanvulling daarop.

Priestley stamde af van een familie van calvinisten uit Yorkshire in het noorden van Engeland. Zijn professionele leven nam een vlucht na zijn aanstelling als docent bellettrie en talen aan de non-conformistische academie in Warrington in 1761. In dat jaar werd ook, niet geheel toevallig, zijn Rudiments of English Grammar (1761) gepubliceerd, het grammaticaboek dat hij enkele jaren daarvoor schreef voor gebruik in zijn eigen school in Nantwich. Een interessant detail is dat de grammatica het tweede werk was van Priestley dat ooit gepubliceerd werd en dat we dus kunnen zeggen dat zijn carrière daarmee
al was begonnen, en niet pas, zoals vaak is aangenomen, met de later gepubliceerde *Chart of Biography* (1765) en de *History and Present State of Electricity* (1767). Dit laatste werk was het resultaat van een ontmoeting in een Londens koffiehuis met de toen al beroemde Amerikaanse geleerde Benjamin Franklin, op dat moment de grootste autoriteit op het gebied van elektriciteit. Nadat Priestley de academie in Warrington had verlaten verscheen er een tweede editie van de *Rudiments of English Grammar* (1768), die twee keer zo lang was als de eerste editie. Hierna vinden we zo goed als geen verwijzingen meer naar grammatica in Priestleys brieven, uitgezonderd enkele brieven aan de non-conformistische schoolmeester Joseph Bretland, die in 1786 een heruitgave van Priestleys grammatica op de markt bracht.

De oorsprong en verspreiding van Priestleys grammatica


Zoals beschreven in hoofdstuk 4 betekent dit dat de verspreiding van Priestleys grammatica een stuk breder was dan aanvankelijk gedacht werd. De populariteit van zijn grammatica blijkt uit het bestaan van een vertaling in het Frans en van geplagieerde edities, alsmede uit het gebruik van het boek als bron voor latere grammatica’s, zoals bijvoorbeeld het anoniem uitgegeven *Elementary Principles of English Grammar* (1785) en het succesvolste Engelse grammatica boek uit de laatmoderne tijd, Lindley Murray’s *English Grammar, Adapted to the Different Classes of Learners* (1795).

De taalfilosofie van Priestley

In de geschiedschrijving van het Engels in de twintigste eeuw werd Priestley in eerste instantie vaak voorgesteld als de enige descriptieve grammaticus in de prescriptieve achttiende eeuw. In de tweede helft van de vorige eeuw begon dit beeld te veranderen en werd er kritischer naar hem gekeken. Zoals is betoogd in hoofdstuk 5, blijken Priestleys opvattingen over taal hun oorsprong te
vinden in zijn filosofische opvattingen: het associationisme, het determinisme en het millenialisme. Het werk van David Hartley was van grote invloed op Priestleys filosofie in bredere zin. Dit gold met name voor zijn determinisme, dat ontsprong uit zijn geloof dat alles onder invloed van de Voorzienigheid tot een goed eind geëindigd zou worden. Dit eind was het duizendjarig Godsrijk van Priestleys millenialisme, dat door mensen (naar Gods plan) teweeg zou worden gebracht.

Samen met het geloof en vertrouwen in vooruitgang dat tijdens de Verlichting ontstond, beïnvloedden deze filosofieën Priestley in zijn descriptieve aanpak. In Priestley's optiek was de ontwikkeling van het Engels naar een staat van (relatieve) perfectie onvermijdelijk, ondanks eventuele tijdelijke corrumperende invloeden. De beste vormen van taal zouden zich, door hun inherente excellentie, als vanzelf kenbaar maken en zich gronden in de standaard. Vanuit dit gezichtspunt stelde hij zich dan ook op als tegenstander van een Engelse taalacademie, naar het voorbeeld van de Franse Académie Française, waarover in zijn tijd hevig gediscussieerd werd; een discussie waaraan Priestley zich overigens grotendeels onttrok. Hij zag de rol die was weggelegd voor de grammaticus niet zozeer als een autoriteit maar als een gids die taalgebruikers door de taal heen leidde naar de uiteindelijke vestiging van een perfect en onveranderlijk Engels, dat vervolgens door grammatici kon worden vastgelegd.

**De norm voor correct Engels**

Priestleys taalexpertise brengt een taalkundig bewustzijn, en linguïstische en metalinguïstische inzichten aan het licht, die we in verband brengen met moderne taalkundigen. We kunnen Priestley dan ook zien als een protolinguïst, maar tegelijkertijd was hij ook een normatief grammaticus. In hoofdstuk 6 laat ik zien dat zijn normatieve bronnen de volgende waren: het algemene taalgebruik (usance), andere grammatica’s, de ‘beste auteurs’, sociale klasse en wetenschappelijk taalgebruik. Priestleys reputatie als descriptivist is grotendeels gebaseerd op zijn welwillendheid algemeen taalgebruik als grotere autoriteit te presenteren dan regels gebaseerd op logica of analogie, in
tegenstelling to de meeste andere grammaticuss uit die tijd. Wanneer hij naar
andere grammatica's verwees, was dat meestal om te zeggen dat hij het niet
eens was met een daarin gestelde regel. Verwijzingen naar het taalgebruik van
de 'beste auteurs' als voorbeeld voor correct Engels begon in Priestleys tijd een
gemeenplaats te worden in grammatica's en zijn werk is hierop geen uitzonder-
ing. Vanuit een sociohistorisch perspectief gezien is Priestleys norm voor
correct Engels gebaseerd op het taalgebruik van de intelligentsia uit de midden-
klasse, waartoe hij zelf ook behoorde. Ook de invloed van de 'eenvoudige stijl'
van de Royal Society of London, waarvan Priestley ook lid was, is terug te
vinden in zijn norm voor correct Engels.

In de normatieve opmerkingen in de Rudiments of English Grammar kan
een onderscheid worden gemaakt tussen prescripties en proscripties. Prescripti-
ties zeggen de taalgebruiker hoe de taal correct te gebruiken. Proscriptties
daarentegen geven onacceptabel taalgebruik aan. Het aantal prescripties bleef
ongeveer gelijk, maar het aantal proscripties, dat aanvankelijk klein was, nam
in de tweede editie sterk toe. Voor de tweede editie had Priestley zijn houding
ten opzichte van het materiaal veranderd. Dit gebeurde waarschijnlijk gedeeltel-
lijk onder invloed van het succes en de autoriteit van de grammatica van Lowth.
Ook zien we verschillen in Priestleys linguïstische metataal met betrekking tot
de twee soorten normatieve opmerkingen. Om de normatieve opmerkingen in
zijn grammatica te verzachten gebruikte Priestley het modale hulpwerkwoord
ought to bij prescripties en het werkwoord seem bij proscripties. In
prescriptieve opmerkingen die niet verzocht hoefden te worden, daarentegen,
vinden we het hulpwerkwoord must. Het is echter niet eenvoudig het aantal
prescripties in zijn grammatica vast te stellen, aangezien descriptieve
opmerkingen, verwoord in declaratieve, de kracht van een prescriptie kunnen
aannemen als de lezer die er in besluit te zien.

Anne Fisher introduceerde in de derde editie van haar New Grammar, with
Exercises of Bad English (1753) oefeningen met voorbeelden van 'slecht Engels'.
Net als de voorbeelden van de 'beste auteurs' werden deze oefeningen ook snel
in andere grammatica's ingevoerd. Ook Priestley geeft voorbeelden van slecht
Engels en het opvallende is dat de geciteerde auteurs hiervan grotendeels dezelfde zijn als die van de meest bekritiseerde auteurs in achttiende-eeuwse grammatica's in het algemeen, maar ook als die van de beste auteurs in zijn grammatica. Deze schrijvers behoorden blijkbaar tot het normatieve canon van de achttiende-eeuwse Engelse grammaticus.

Priestleys descriptieve aanpak is zichtbaar in onder andere zijn discussies met betrekking tot de regels voor het gebruik van de hulpwerkwoorden shall en will in de eerste en tweede persoon en het gebruik van de hulpwerkwoorden be en have met mutatieve onovergankelijke werkwoorden in de voltooide tijd.

**De grammatica's van Priestley en Lowth vergeleken**

Zoals gezegd is Priestley in de geschiedschrijving van het Engels altijd gezien als de enige descriptieve grammaticus in zijn tijd en is Lowth altijd genoemd als de grote prescriptivist. In hoofdstuk 7 toonde ik dat het gebruik van de hulpwerkwoorden can, could, may, might, must, should and would indicatief is voor de mate van prescriptiviteit en descriptiviteit in een grammatica. Een kwantitatieve vergelijking van het gebruik van deze hulpwerkwoorden in de eerste twee edities van de grammatica's van Priestley en Lowth laat zien dat deze helemaal niet zo verschillend zijn. Ook laat ik in dat hoofdstuk zien dat prescriptivisme en descriptivisme elkaar niet uitsluiten maar naast elkaar in één grammatica kunnen bestaan.

Eerder onderzoek heeft aangetoond dat Lowths prescripties zich voornamelijk bevonden in de voetnoten van zijn grammatica en dit is ook zo in de eerste editie van die van Priestley. In de tweede editie zit het leeuwendeel van de normatieve opmerkingen in een apart deel van het boek, getiteld 'Notes and Observations'. Om deze reden werden de noten en de rest van de tekst van de grammatica ook afzonderlijk geanalyseerd. Het resultaat was dat de grammatica's zonder de noten van Priestley en Lowth, wat Priestley de "rudimenten" noemde, nog steeds erg op elkaar lijken en dat het voornamelijk het deel 'Notes and Observations' is dat Priestleys grammatica wezenlijk anders maakt dan die van Lowth. Dit deel kan derhalve gezien worden als een
voorstadion in de formatie van de taaladviesgids, die voor het eerst vorm vindt in Robert Baker's *Reflections on the English Language* (1770).

**Het brievenkorpus**

Voor de analyse van Priestleys eigen taalgebruik werd een elektronisch corpus samengesteld uit 433 van zijn persoonlijke brieven: het Joseph Priestley Letter Corpus (JPLC). Deze brieven zijn het meest representatief voor Priestleys natuurlijke idiolect. Het corpus is opgebouwd uit de originele handschriften van Joseph Priestley, die hiervoor zo diplomatisch mogelijk getranscribeerd werden (zoals beschreven in hoofdstuk 8). Om de representativiteit van het corpus voor Priestleys idiolect te garanderen, werden er brieven aan zoveel mogelijk geadresseerden in opgenomen, zestig in totaal. Ook werden brieven uit een zo lang mogelijke periode van zijn leven gebruikt: de eerste brief is uit 1762 en de laatste uit 1804, enkele dagen voor zijn overlijden. Het corpus werd onderverdeeld in zes periodes, alsmede in formele en informele brieven.

Voor de analyse van dit corpus maakte ik gebruik van het programma WordSmith, waarmee onder andere woordenlijsten en concordanties kunnen worden gemaakt. Een analyse van het corpus door het maken van woordenlijsten en lijsten van sleutelwoorden (zogeheten 'keywords', verkregen uit een statistisch proces waarin de woorden in twee woordenlijsten met elkaar vergeleken worden) gaf een goede indicatie van de onderwerpen in de brieven van Priestley. Zijn betrokkenheid bij zijn elektrische en chemische experimenten komt uit deze lijsten duidelijk naar voren. Grammatica komt er niet in voor, noch de gewone contemporaine dagelijkse bezigheden, wat blijkt uit een lijst van keywords, verkregen uit de vergelijking van het Joseph Priestley Letter Corpus met een referentiecorpus van achttiende-eeuwse brieven.

**Normativisme en gebruik**

In hoofdstuk 9 wordt een vergelijking gemaakt van Priestleys eigen taalgebruik met de regels in zijn grammatica aan de hand van drie casestudies: het gebruik
van de hulpwerkwoorden be en have met mutatieve onovergankelijke werkwoorden in de voltooide tijd, het gebruik van verschillende realisaties van werkwoorden in de subjunctief, en voorzetselfplaatsing. Uit de analyse van Priestleys hulpwerkwoordselectie met de voltooide tijd van mutatieven blijkt dat hij in zijn grammatica beschrijvend te werk ging en dat het er sterk op lijkt dat hij zijn eigen taalgebruik beschreef.

De analyse van de subjunctief liet echter iets anders zien. Ondanks de afname van de inflecterende subjunctief in het algemene gebruik, toonden Priestleys brieven een redelijk consequent gebruik van deze vorm. Er was geen significant verschil in zijn taalgebruik tussen formele en informele brieven. Ook is zijn gebruik van de subjunctief anders dan aangegeven in de regels in zijn grammatica, die de contemporaine prescripties uit andere grammatica’s lijken te volgen. Wat dit aspect betreft is Priestleys grammatica dus niet descriptief.

De plaatsing van voorzetsels in Priestleys brieven liet een interessant patroon zien. In zijn grammatica lijkt Priestley een voorstander te zijn van het plaatsen van voorzetsels na het complement van de voorzetselfrase, aan het einde van een zin, het zogeheten stranding van voorzetsels. Echter, in zijn brieven vinden we dat hij zijn voorzetsels voornamelijk vóór het complement plaatst, wat een stijvere, formelere constructie oplevert. Met betrekking tot dit aspect is Priestleys grammatica wel descriptief, maar beschrijft hij niet zijn eigen taalgebruik.

Conclusies
Het belang van grammatica in het leven van Priestley moet niet overschat worden. Zijn bezigheden in de studie van de elektriciteit en de chemie, als predikant, en zijn vele publicaties lijken het grootste deel van zijn aandacht opgeëist te hebben. Priestleys persoonlijke brieven refereren voornamelijk naar zijn onderzoek en publicaties en maar zeer weinig naar zijn activiteiten als grammaticus. Desondanks moet ook het belang van Priestleys bijdrage aan de codificatie van het Engels niet onderschat worden. We kunnen concluderen dat de rol van Priestley als codificeerder van de Engelse taal ondergewaardeerd is.
geweest in de geschiedschrijving daarvan en dat zijn invloed als grammaticus veel groter is geweest dan tot nu toe werd aangenomen.

Priestleys grammatica, hoewel tot op zekere hoogte descriptief, blijkt ook veel prescriptiever te zijn geweest dan tot nog toe is aangenomen. Een vergelijking van Priestleys grammatica met die van Robert Lowth, die de meest prescriptieve van die tijd zou zijn geweest, laat dit goed zien. De grammatica past hiermee in de normatieve traditie van de achttiende eeuw. Ondanks dat Priestleys werk als grammaticus slechts een klein deel van zijn leven in beslag heeft genomen, heeft hij duidelijk zijn sporen nagelaten op de ontwikkeling van het laatmoderne Engels.
Curriculum Vitae

Robin Straaijer was born on the 4th of May 1973 in Zaandum, The Netherlands. He went to secondary school at the Copernicus in Hoorn where he received his secondary education (VWO) diploma. From 1991 to 2001 he attended the University of Amsterdam, studying chemistry and English. He received an MSc in chemistry in 1997, specialising in bio-organic chemistry and graduating on the research project "Potential Inhibitors of Adenosine Deaminase: Synthesis and Screening". In 1998-1999 he spent a year at the University of Edinburgh, taking courses in the departments of English language and English literature. In 2001, he received a cum laude MA in English language and literature with the thesis "Jane Austen’s Emma and Pride & Prejudice: an Exercise in Literary Stylistics". After working as a bookseller for seven years, he joined the Leiden University Centre for Linguistics as a PhD candidate attached to the project “The Codifiers and the English Language: tracing the norms of standard English”, supervised by Ingrid Tieken-Boon van Ostade. There he did research on the grammar and language of Joseph Priestley, which resulted in this dissertation.