TEACHING ENGLISH IN THE 18TH CENTURY: ANN FISHER

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RESUMEN

La enseñanza del inglés como asignatura no se desarrolló por completo hasta el siglo dieciocho. Precisamente en este siglo un grupo de mujeres escribieron por primera vez libros de texto dirigidos al aprendizaje de la lengua materna. Lo que caracteriza a estas obras es su énfasis en todo lo relacionado con la enseñanza de dicha lengua. La pionera de estas mujeres gramáticas, y también la más importante, fue Ann Fisher, una profesora que dirigió su propia escuela para señoritas y que fue autora de una serie educativa muy popular en la época. Siguiendo sus comentarios pedagógicos, incluidos en varios de sus libros, nos adentraremos en la práctica habitual de clase, así como veremos los ejercicios en uso y las importantes innovaciones que aportó dicha autora.

ABSTRACT

The teaching of English as a subject did not develop fully until the eighteenth century. It is precisely in this century that a group of women wrote their school textbooks. A peculiarity of their work was its emphasis on methodological issues. The pioneer, and the most important, of these female grammarians was Ann Fisher, a teacher herself who ran her own ladies' academy and who was the author of a popular educational series. Following her pedagogical comments included in her books, we will approach the actual classroom practice, the exercises used during the lessons and the popular innovations introduced by Fisher.

1. ENGLISH AS A SUBJECT

The teaching of English was part, though a very small one, of the English curriculum from the end of the sixteenth century. Latin, not English, was the subject that consumed most of the school time, as it was the language used for communicative purposes in the international panorama. But this situation did not last for ever, and the decline of the prestige of Latin was followed proportionally by the raise of the status of the English language. The change was due to an alliance of factors like the rise of nationalism, which fostered the development of vernacular languages as a sign of national pride; the desire to regulate and fix the English language, as a product of the age of reason that took place during the eighteenth century; and the rise of the middle class, which sought a more practical education that would help them in their daily life, rather than a classical and less useful education. A consequence of the shift in favour of the English language was that, by the beginning of the eighteenth century, the three main components of "English", i.e. interpretation, expression and linguistic study, started to be combined systematically in the school syllabus, displacing the classical studies. Though we would have to wait until the last decade of this century to see this subject finally settled as a major part of the school programme of studies (Michael 1987: 382).

The progress in the teaching of English went hand in hand with the increase in the number of English textbooks that offered a guide to the teacher and a reference book to the student. A good command of English was necessary to speak and write properly, for everyday purposes, and for commercial life, as it becomes obvious when we have a look at contemporary advertisements in demand of house service or school teachers:

> WANTED an Usher to a School, who understands the English Grammar, is a very good Accountant, and who writes a very fine Hand; he must be well recommended for Sobriety and Diligence.

> A Gentlewoman who has lately lost her Husband, and in Consequence thereof unable to live in the Manner she used to do, would be happy to superintend the

> Family of a single elderly Gentleman, or a Widower with Children (She being particularly fond of them, and capable, of teaching them to read and speak English with Propriety) [...] (*Daily Advertiser* 1775, in Percy 2004:167, 169)

The demand for manuals that would help to speak and write English correctly was such that an incredibly high number of English grammar books, dictionaries, and the like, flooded the market:

> Whereas fewer than fifty writings on grammar, rhetoric, criticism, and linguistic theory have been listed for the first half of the eighteenth century, and still fewer for all the period before 1600, the publications in the period 1759-1800 exceeded two hundred titles (Leonard 1929: 12)

Writing English grammars was, therefore, a profitable business during the eighteenth century and, as a consequence, the stage was set for teachers, priests, scholars, etc., who did not want to miss the opportunity to benefit from it. One of these was Ann Fisher (1719-1778), an English teacher who ran her own ladies' school in Newcastle between, at least, 1745-1750, where she taught reading, writing, grammar and syntax (Rodriguez-Gil 2002: 144-147). As a fruit of her labour, she wrote *A New Grammar* (1750[2] [1745?]) becoming thus the first female English grammarian (Tieken 2000: 1). The reception of her grammar was so good, publishing many editions in consecutive years and, as a maximum, every third year, that she felt encouraged to write more. Her grammar was the first of a successful series Fisher wrote for the education of youth, which dealt mainly with several aspects of the English language, and which included the titles: *The Pleasing Instructor* (1756[2]), *A New English Exercise Book* (1770), *The New English Tutor: or, Modern Preceptor* (1774[3]), *An Accurate New Spelling Dictionary of the English Language* (1773[2]) and *The Young Scholar's Delight; or, Familiar Companion* (1802[5]).

The teaching of English grammar was enhanced with the writings of several other women, most of them schoolteachers, who followed the path opened by Fisher. These women were Ellin Devis, Mrs M.C. Edwards, Lady Eleanor Fenn, Jane Gardiner, Blanch Mercy and Mrs. Eves (Percy 1994: 122). Their grammars, including Fisher's, could be used either at school or at home, and were addressed to young scholars and especially to young ladies who wanted to learn or improve their competence in the English

language. A particularly interesting feature of the grammars written by these female grammarians is their concern about methodology, which was influenced, if not determined, by the fact that during this century there was "an increasing responsibility of women for their children's elementary education" (Percy 1994: 126). Their pedagogical interest is obvious even in the titles of their works: *The Art of Teaching in Sport* (Fenn 1785), *The Grammatical Play-Thing* (Eves 1800), *English Grammar: Adapted to the Different Classes of Learners* (Gardiner 1808). In their grammars, these authors advocated conversational learning and instructional play, providing even some games for learning grammar (Percy 1994: 136). An example of this is Fenn's *Art of Teaching in Sport* (1785) which included *The Figure Box*, the *Spelling Box* and the *Grammar Box*. The latter, the *Grammar Box*, was "a small wooden box, divided into compartments, each containing a bundle of cards" engraved with a grammatical term on one side and an example on the other, with pictures or with grammar lessons (Percy 1994: 127). The pedagogical interest of these eighteenth-century female grammarians seems, then, rather obvious in their literary production.

Three of the educational books written by Fisher, namely, *A New Grammar* (1750), *The Pleasing Instructor* (1756) and *The New English Tutor* (1774), contained separate sections dealing with education in general, as well as some remarks scattered throughout the books related to the teaching of English in particular. We will draw upon these works to learn about some of the teaching techniques, aids and exercises used, since:

> In the absence of the pupil's actual work or the master's teaching notes the best remaining guide to the detailed material taught, and to the approach adopted by the individual master, is the summary of that master's experience written down in the form of a text-book. Many of the teachers and lecturers in the north did venture into print in this form; their surviving volumes provide the most accurate guide available to the actual practice of teaching in this period from the elementary level up to university entrance. (Robinson 1972: 329)

2. TEACHERS

Many believed that the quality of a teacher's worth could be judged by his or her ability to keep good order in the schoolroom. Maintaining order in the classroom was of the utmost importance during the eighteenth

century, and to achieve it schoolteachers fell back too easily on force and corporal punishment. Discipline depended, therefore, on pain, intimidation, fear, and even terror. Punishing a pupil by whipping and flogging was within the rights of a teacher, and as such it was regarded by the educative community, including parents. We can read among the instructions to parents on the admittance of their children into the charity-schools:

> That in regard the Subscribers to this School will take due Care that the Children shall suffer no Injuries by their Masters Correction, which is only designed for their Good; the Parents shall freely submit their Children to undergo the Discipline of the School when guilty of any Faults,and forbear coming thither on such Occasions. So that the Children may not be countenanced in their Faults, nor the Master discouraged in the performance of his Duty. (in Lawson & Silver 1973: 183)

Fortunately, there were teachers who disagreed with this way to manage the classroom, though they were the exception rather than the rule. One of these exceptions was Ann Fisher, who claimed that, by using physical punishment, teachers obtained precisely the contrary to what they sought. She defended a more pedagogical approach that would inculcate the love for learning:

> An austere or learned Pedant has sometimes *whipped Latin, Greek*, &c. into a Lad; whose very Disgust is increased, perhaps, with the Acquisition thereof; but it is a *manifest* Absurdity to maintain or imagine that *any one* can be *owed* into a *Love* of Learning and Virtue. A Boy is not at all cured of a Fault who only *avoids* it for Fear of Punishment, he must be *influenced* by a Love for Honour and Credit, with a laudable Ambition to *pursue* them: Any Master, who, if himself a GOOD and DISCERNING Man, will not be *much* at Loss how to *confirm* and *ratify* him in his Choice, being capacitated as a *good* Man, to communicate to him the secret Impulses, the benign Reflections, of his own honest, and, therefore, happy Mind; (Fisher1756: ii)

A teacher should be, in her opinion, a model for the students, "a good and discerning man". The character of the teacher is regarded as one of the keys to become a good teacher. So much so, that Fisher expands largely on the essentials of teachers by illustrating two opposite characters "Candidus", the good and amiable teacher, and "Denuncius", the bad

and contemptible teacher. The main idea lying behind these two characters is, again, that teachers should be liable to imitation and should render a good example, so that pupils could learn from them the polite knowledge. Whereas "Candidus" is very much idealised, "Denuncius" is that teacher none would like to have. Regarding the former, Fisher describes him as follows:

> CANDIDUS is a Man of *extensive* Learning, has an exact knowledge of human Nature, a *great* Experience of the World, and of *those* Differences which result from Constitution, Age, *received* Opinions, *external* Fortune, Education, Custom, and Conversation; manages the Tempers of his Pupils with *indescribable* Artfulness, so consequently can adapt or address his Admonitions or Instructions to the most *salutary* Ends, be his Scholars ever so *numerous* or their Dispositions ever *various*.
> As to the *Qualities* of his Mind he is *mild*, *affable*, *affectionate*, and even invitingly *accessible*, *encouraging* his pupils in the display of all their little Doubts, Queries, and *divided* Opinions [...] thus as his Character is *uniform*, his Temper *serene* and *steady*, the influence acquired in his Schools is unlimited: He applauds with so *much* Pleasure, and reproves with so *much* tender Concern and Affection, that they *love* him as a Parent. (Fisher 1756: iii-iv)

Fisher did not consider that the human mind was born with an innate capacity which could not be modified by any exterior force. She clearly states in this quote that there are differences among pupils, and that these are a result of "Constitution, Age, *received* Opinions, *external* Fortune, Education, Custom, and Conversation". She joins thus many other English educationalists like Priestley, Thomas Sheridan or the Edgeworths[1] who consider that a child is like a blank sheet when he is born and that it is experience, the environment, training, and education, which makes this blank sheet evolve.

Denuncius is described in the following terms:

> DENUNCIUS too is a Man of Learning, but not so *notorious* for his Learning as the *Ostentations* of it: Therefore knowledge he *cannot* have *much* of, because if he had, he would see so *much* Weakness *even* in the Perfection of human Reason, that he would in Consequence *despise*, not be *proud* of his own *miserable* Pittance. [...]
> I have observed before, that he is *vain* and *ostentatious*. I should have *added* passionate,

> pedantic, arrogant, morose, and illnatured, *the natural Produce of a narrow and ignorant Mind.* [...]
> [the students] of *Denuncius* not having had their Senses and reasoning Faculties *exercised*, or their Judgments *cultivated*, but tyrannized into *implicit* Obedience, and perhaps in so *irreparable* Meanness, Abjectness, and Slavishness of Spirit, sally forth into Action and the World at random, *ignorant* of the Roads that lead to *true* Honour or Happiness, and *unapprised* of the latent Dangers of vice and Error till they are perhaps *surprised*, *swallowed up*, or otherwise *undone* by their Consequences. (Fisher 1756: v-vii)

However impossible it may seem to find such a teacher, this description fits with that of some eighteenth-century teachers. For instance, William Hutton complains in his memories about the lack of abilities of many teachers who "do not consider whether their talents are suited to teaching, but are simply concerned with what profit they can derive from the job" (Neuburg 1971: 26). He describes one of such teachers:

> It is curious to enter one of those prisons of science, and observe the children not under the least government: the master without authority, the children without order: the master scolding, the children riotous... They act in a natural sphere, but he is in opposition: he seems the only person in the school who merits correction: he, unfit to teach, is making them unfit to be taught. (in Neuburg 1971: 26)

Fisher reproaches those people who are blinded to see that "narrow Reserve and *Pedantic* Moroseness have *passed* for *sound* Wisdom and *profound* Discretion" (1756: vii). This misconception triggered, in turn, that 'the most *laudable* and *honorary* Profession in the World, i.e. the *Instructing* of Youth, is esteemed *mean*, *dependent* and *servile*' (Fisher 1756: vii). Similar complaints about the low consideration of teachers were repeated by other eighteenth-century authors. For instance, Richard Browne (1700: the preface) says that the English scholar is looked down because of the "small Encouragement and Respect that is usually allow'd to Persons of that inferior (or as too many took upon it contemptible) Employ". Among so negative comments, there were, however, contemporaries who valued the teaching of English very highly, as James Buchanan, who stated vehemently:

You, Gentlemen, have a glorious and joyful Prospect before you, a noble Opportunity of doing much good indeed! Of constituting real Merit, and securing the warmest Returns of Gratitude, by perfecting the Flower of Youth in speaking and writing that Language, in which alone they are to serve their King and Country, and become the Mouths of the People. (Buchanan 1762: xxxvi).

3. CLASSROOM PRACTICE: FISHER'S INNOVATIONS

Schooling was used in the eighteenth century for learning by rote what was given in the textbook or what the teacher dictated. Learning by rote or by memory alone, without understanding or thought was the rule in class. Memorisation implied an arbitrary, verbatim, non-substantive incorporation of new knowledge into cognitive structure. Learning did not relate experience with events or objects, and there was not affective commitment to relate new knowledge to prior learning. Few teachers had the ability, or the will, to broaden their views and change this system into one that got the student involved in a more meaningful learning.

This teaching method was palpable in the textbooks used at school. For instance, the spelling-books provided long lists of words divided into syllables arranged according to the number of syllables. This sort of book was designed to make pupils repeat these lists until they had memorised them. The drawbacks of this method were obvious:

Having noticed that bawls, bawling out, in monosyllables, or in any certain quantity, gives the first rise to that odious monotonical manner of speaking, so common in schools, and is the grand impediment to that easiness of expression which is natural to a language promiscuously constituted of long and short words. (Fisher 1774: viii)

Besides, these textbooks were so often used by the school teachers as a means to train memory when learning to read, that many children got used to the words in their spelling-books by guessing at words by their shape, or frequent occurrence. The immediate consequence of this was that there were many children who could read in their own books but could not read in any other (Fisher 1774: viii).

Other school textbooks, like English grammars, more complex and for upper levels,used several forms to expose their theories as clearly as possible. Some, like Harris (1752) and Ussher (1785), wrote their English

grammars as treatises; others, like Ward (1765), wrote theirs in verse "for the ease of memory" (Ward 1765: xii); and others, like Fisher (1750), and Dilworth (1787), wrote their grammar books in the question-and-answer format:

> Q. *What is a* Sentence?
> A. A *Sentence* comprehends at least a *Name* and a *Verb*; by which some Sentiment, or Thought of the Mind, is expressed.
> Q. *How many Sorts of* Sentences *are there*?
> A. Two; *Simple* and *Compound*.
> Q. *What is a* Simple Sentence?
> A. A *Simple Sentence* is, where there is but one *Verb* and one *Name* the Subject of that *Verb*, either expressed, or understood; as, *Jesus wept. A Lye is abominable.*
> Q. *What is a* Compound Sentence?
> A. A Compound Sentence is, when two or more Sentences are joined together; as, *God created Man, and Christ redeemed him; therefore let us love our God and our Saviour.* (Fisher 1750: 116-7)

This last method was frequently found in eighteenth-century English grammars, though it was already in use in the classical and medieval tradition, in grammatical and scientific writing (Taavitsainen 1999: 245). It had the obvious advantage that the questions were already made and the answers given, so neither teacher nor pupil could be at a loss. In fact, they were used by teachers in the same way as the spelling-books, that is, for rote learning.

One of the exercises used sometimes in class was the dictation, though it was not, however, a common practice before the nineteenth century (Michael 1987: 127-8), and very few eighteenth-century teachers, Fisher among them, refer to it. Fisher advised, for this kind of activity, the use of prose texts taken from various sources: (i) from standard contemporary papers such as the *Spectator*, the *Rambler* and the *Guardian*, (ii) from magazines such as the *Gentleman's Magazine*, and (iii) from some authors, such as Swift, Grey, Moore and Pope. Fisher's emphasis on the use of writings from the daily press presumably points towards the author's preference for texts portraying contemporary language[2].

She explains how dictations should be done:

> [pupils] should be employed for some Time in copying from Print; after which, let the Master, or one of the Scholars, read a Paragraph from the *Spectator*, *News Papers*, &c. and let all that are appointed to write, copy, from his Reading; then, to create an Emulation[3], compare their Pieces, placing the Scholars according to the Desert of their Performances. (Fisher 1750: 7)

and she even suggests what to do with the mistakes made in the copy:

> Let the Master write down all their mis-spelt Words right in their Writing-books to be got by Heart ere they leave them; and withal, make the Scholar write take down into alphabetical Pocket-Books, kept for that Purpose: Thus, in a short Time, a great Reduction of their false Spelling may be expected, especially if the Master insists upon their Care in the Perusal of those inserted in their Lists, and make a second mis-spelling of the same Word a great Fault. (Fisher 1750: 8)

Fisher's proposal that pupils used a 'pocket-book' as a record of their mistakes was rather innovative, since no follow-up of the mistakes was usually made. For instance, the anonymous author of *The Expert Orthographist* states: "when they have done, let the *Master* take away every ones *Writing*, and examine each by itself, correcting the *faults*, according to the *Rules* and *Tables* of this *book*" (1704: "introduction", in Michael 1987: 127). We have to wait until the beginning of the nineteenth century to find another example of a 'pocket-book' with the use explained by Fisher. William Bearcroft describes a similar process of correction to hers: first the pupils correct their mistakes in their writing-books and then "each pupil keeps a record of his correction in a personal spelling-book" (Bearcroft 1826, in Michael 1987: 129).

But Fisher still recommends another use for the 'pocket-book'. She explains that the indeclinable parts of speech would be best distinguished by the following method:

> Make the Scholar write them down in their respective Pocket-books, as under Adverbs, now, to-day, already [...] all the Adverbs without Dis-tinction of Time, Number, Place, &c. and so with the Conjunctions, Pre-positions, and Interjections. Thus, having them in a little Space under their Eye, any one may soon be made acquainted with the Nature and Properties of each. (Fisher 1750: 9)

The scholars could, with this method, see these four grammatical categories together and then, by observing them, they could discover by themselves the "Nature and Properties of each". This technique is inductive in the sense that: "we understand an explanation of a thing more easily if we have first met, and examined in our own way, instances of the thing itself" (Michael 1987: 364). The inductive method is, however, an innovation for linguistic control developed during the nineteenth century (Michael 1987: 364), and therefore, Fisher seems to be ahead of her time also in this regard.

Michael (1987) mentions several teaching methods as well as exercises used for the teaching of English grammar from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century, but nowhere there is a reference to an abstract of the parts of speech. This is precisely, another of Fisher's innovations. Fisher introduced, in *A New Grammar*, the chapter "Etymology Abstracted and Exemplified"[4] (1754: 107), which was a summary of the grammatical categories and a parsing example. In eighteenth-century English grammars, it was a common practice to write more or less extensively about the different parts of speech and then to offer exercises of parsing, transposition or examples of bad English. These were inserted frequently either after the section "etymology" or at the end of the book, usually as an appendix, so that pupils read the theory first, and then did the exercises. There was a gap between theory and practice that in many grammar books was simply ignored. In the best cases, some grammarians made attempts to provide further practice. For instance, Browne puts forward his theory of grammatical categories under the title of "an Accidence to our Native Language by way of Question and Answer" (Browne 1700: 89). At the end of it, he introduces some practical questions to be used as a revision or test when parsing any sentence:

> In any Sentence, ask,
> What such a Word signifieth.
> Of what part of Speech it is.
> Whether the Word be Simple or Compound,
> If a Compound, of what it's Compounded. (Browne 1700: 111)

Greenwood (1711) presents the theory of the different parts of speech in a treatise-like manner and then, at the end, adds some questions and their corresponding answers that, apparently, aimed to test whether learners have understood. The attempts of these grammarians, however successful they may have been, show an interest in making things easier for learners. This same concern is shown in Fisher's "etymology abstracted and exemplified"[5], which was devised as a bridge between the long exposition of theory and the practical exercises. This teaching aid was a handy summary with the key points of every part of speech that would help the learner to identify the various parts of speech, their classifications and characteristics.

3. "I CANNOT EAT NONE"[6]: THE EXAMPLES OF BAD ENGLISH

There were two kinds of exercises that, up to mid eighteenth century, pupils practised when learning English grammar and syntax: parsing and transposition. In the first one, the student had to describe grammatically each of the words in a sentence, by stating the part of speech and explaining the inflection and syntactical relationships. For instance:

> I believe in god, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth.
> *I* is a personal pronoun, first person, singular number. *Believe*, an active verb, indicative mood, present tense, first person singular, agreeing with its nominative *I*. (Fenning 1771: 119)

The other type, transposition, consisted of placing "Words of a Sentence out of their natural Order of Construction; as *Happy is the Man,* for *the Man is happy*" (Gough & Gough 1754: 108). To these two types joined a third one in 1750 known as the "examples of bad English", which were first introduced by Fisher in the second edition of her English grammar. To solve the problem proposed in the exercise, pupils had to correct the mistakes in the sentences given. These mistakes could be syntactical or grammatical, like, for example: "This Men are exceeding wise" (Fisher 1750: 128). The relevance of this new type of exercise is accredited in the following quote: "the correction of error is a pedagogically significant

procedure, well documented and important in the history of English teaching, although now discredited" (Michael 1979: 200).

The technique of correcting mistakes had already been used in the teaching of spelling and pronunciation. William Baker had included spelling mistakes in *Rules for True Spelling and Writing English* (1736, in Michael 1987: 326), and James Howell (1662) and Christopher Cooper (1685) had included errors in pronunciation in a list of solecisms for correction (Mitchell 1988). But this technique had not been introduced in syntax until Fisher did it. With this new kind of exercise, Fisher demonstrated "the interdependence of rhetoric and grammar by requiring students to learn style when corrected false syntax" (Mitchell 1988).

Fisher justifies the need for this new type of exercise stating that:

> In learning Latin, making Exercises from FALSE CONCORD, is reckon'd the most expedient Method, to a through Knowledge of SYNTAX; and tho' our Language is less tedious and difficult in this Part, having Fewer Genders, Cases, Times, &c. yet I think Exercises of bad English under the few Rules we have, after the Manner of Clark's or Bailey's Examples for the Latin tongue, must needs be altogether as requisite to a critical knowledge of our own. (Fisher 1750: 9)

As the author says, she took the idea from John Clark, author of *A New Grammar of the Latin Tongue* (1733) and *An Introduction to the Making of Latin* (1798), and from Nathaniel Bailey and his work *English and Latin Exercises for School-Boys* (1706)[7]. Many other contemporary scholars, who also read Clark and Bailey's grammars, might well have thought of transferring this skill to the teaching of English grammar, but they did not. Fisher did read them and decided to include this new type of exercise into English grammar books under three steps: (i) to explain all the rules giving examples of correct English; (ii) to repeat all the rules again but this time with exercises of bad English for pupils to practice; and (iii) to include exercises to practice all the rules of syntax mixed-up.

The examples of bad English could go from very short, simple and straightforward sentences with only one mistake referring to only one syntax rule, such as:

> George and Daniel has been fishing.
> My Father loves I.

> Them Fellows always stand by one another.
> Thou art him.
> These are them. (Fisher 1750: 128)

to more or less long paragraphs so full of errors under all the rules of syntax that it was a near impossible task to catch them all. For instance:

> Sir,
> Since I had the Happiness to see you last, I have encountered as Many misfortunes as a knight-Errant. I had a Fall into the water as Calais, and since that has had several bruises upon the Land, Lame Post-horses by day, and hard Beds at night, with many other dismal adventures. (Fisher 1801: 194)

The new school practice gave Fisher fame and acknowledgement among contemporary English grammarians, as it became the most popular at school from 1750, and maintained its popularity for 100 years (Michael 1979: 200). The reception of her new exercise was so favourable that even in her lifetime Fisher could boast:

> The Abstract of Etymology and Syntax is plain, concise and more practicable to learners than more tedious treatises, and is compiled from FISHER'S ENGLISH GRAMMAR, the first that exhibited an Etymology on the plan and system of Syntax rules peculiarly adapted to the genius and idioms of the English language, independent of any other tongue, with Exercises of false English, &c, all of which, most grammarians have since pirated, or *humbly* imitated, without improving upon, or even allowing me the originality of them.(Fisher 1773: iv)

Many English grammarians incorporated examples of bad English in their works: "between 1750 and 1800 they appeared in about eighty texts, of which more than half dealt only with syntax and about twenty with syntax and spelling" (Michael 1987: 327). Some of these grammars were so important as Gough & Gough's *A Practical Grammar of the English Tongue* (1754), J. Buchanan's *The British Grammar* (1762), Spence's *The Grand Repository of the English Language* (1775), Harrison's *Institutes of English Grammar … with exercises of true and false construction* (1777), and Murray's *An English Grammar* (1798). In sum, they were included in grammars printed all over the country and even farther, in places such as Dublin, Edinburgh,

London, Kent, Leeds, Manchester, Newcastle, York, and, crossing the Atlantic, in Boston, Concord and Connecticut (Rodriguez Gil 2002: 495-517).

4. CONCLUSION

In the eighteenth century there was a wholly teacher-centred environment. Instruction meant that the teacher controlled what was taught and under what conditions. Teachers had the right to punish and to "torture" their students with pages and pages that had to be memorised. You could be in heaven if your teacher was good and amiable like "Candidus", or in hell if he was mean and tyrannical like "Denuncius". In this paper, we have analysed the writings of one of those teachers who, if she followed what she preached, was a "Candidus". Ann Fisher rejected physical punishment as an appropriate means to manage classroom discipline, and dismissed an excessive reliance on memory. But she also introduced some novelties that were ahead of her time, such as the use of dictation, the abstract of etymology, and the exercises of bad English and the "pocket-book", which allowed teachers to vary significantly the kind of exercises practised at school. The pedagogical concern was so strong in this author that her most popular and important work, *A New Grammar*, became "one of the early didactically oriented grammars" (Görlach 2001: 107). In fact, all the teaching devices mentioned or first incorporated by Fisher show, on the one hand, that she, a teacher herself, knew very well what happened in the schoolroom, and, on the other hand, that her spirit was highly innovative.

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NOTES

1   See Simon, 1960: chapter I.

2   Percy (2003) has found this same interest in contemporary language use in another eighteenth-century female grammarian, Ellin Devis and her work *The Accidence, or first Rudiments of English Grammar* (1775), in which the following contemporary publications were used to exemplify the section called "Maxims and Reflections": J. and L. Aickin's *Miscellaneous Pieces in Prose* (1773), Hester Chapone's *Letters on the Iimprovement of the Mind* (1773), Lord Chesterfield's *Letters written by the late Right Honourable Philip Dormer Stanhope. Earl of Chesterfield, to his Son* (1774), Thomas Franklin's *Matilda* (1775), George Lyttleton's *The Works of George Lord Lyttleton* (1774), Hannah More's *Essays on various Subjects, principally designed for Young Ladies* (1777), M.D. Stretch's *The Beauties of History; or, Pictures of Virtue and Vice, drawn*

from Real Life; designed for the Instruction and Entertainment of youth (1770). This might point out a female interest in portraying current language usage.

3   Emulation was explained by Lancaster as the key to proper motivation since it "provided the 'most useful... stimulus' to learning, even for 'those scholars who possess no more than common abilities'. Emulation promoted ambition and ambition, learning" (Hogan 1989: 400).

4   This small chapter was called "etymology exemplified" in the second (1750) and third editions (1751/1753) and it only included a parsing exercise. It is in 1754, the fourth edition, when the abstract of the grammatical categories is added to the parsing example, and it would be kept in all subsequent editions.

5   I have examined some seventeenth- and eighteenth-century English grammars looking for other similar abstracts or summaries. These grammars are, in alphabetical order: Aickin (1692), Ash (1763), Bayly (1772), Bird (1639), Browne (1700), Buchanan (1762), Busby (1647), Clare (1690), Collier (1735), Dilworth (1787), The English Accidence (1733), Fell (1784), Fenning (1771), Fogg (1792/96), Gil (1621), Gildon & Brightland (1711), Gough and Gough (1754), Greenwood (1711 and 1729), Harris (1752), Hewes (1621), Hugh (1724), Johnson (1640), Johnson (1755), Kirkby (1746), Lowth (1762), Maittaire (1712), Martin (1748), Metcalfe (1771), Oliphant (1781), Poole (1646), Priestley (1761), Smith (1674), Spence (1775), The True Method (1696), Ussher (1785), Wallis (1653, Wallis 1653, translation by Kemp 1972), Ward (1765), Wharton (1654), Wood (1777). The fact that none of them has got anything similar to Fisher's suggests that she introduced a novelty with this new teaching aid.

6   Fisher 1750: 120.

7   That Ann Fisher was able to read these grammars, which contained rules and exercises formulated in Latin, means that she must have had a knowledge of this classical language. This can give us an idea of her exceptional cultural background, since Latin was usually not part of eighteenth-century women's education.