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Un approccio storiografico

a cura di

Alessandra Vicentini
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Indice

Innovation, Prescription and Pedagogy

Which English is presented in English language teaching materials published in Italy in the late nineteenth/early twentieth centuries?

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RIASSUNTO: L'analisi dei libri di testo per l'insegnamento linguistico non fornisce solamente esempi concreti di come siano stati interpretati i metodi glottodidattici nel corso dei secoli, ma può dare informazioni importanti riguardo al tipo e alla natura di lingua che è stata utilizzata come input e riferimento normativo in contesti ed epoche differenti. Questo saggio si propone di analizzare due tra le più importanti grammatiche della lingua inglese per italofoni pubblicate tra la seconda metà del XIX e i primi decenni del XX secolo. L'analisi mira a evidenziare che tipo di inglese viene presentato nei due libri di testo e come vengono presentate e discusse alcuni importanti innovazioni a livello sintattico che interessarono la lingua inglese a cavallo del XIX e XX del secolo.

PAROLE CHIAVE: didattica dell'inglese, storia delle categorie grammaticali, storia degli insegnamenti linguistici, divulgazione della linguistica, storia dei libri di testo per l'insegnamento dell'inglese.

ABSTRACT: The analysis of language teaching materials does not only provide tangible evidence of the implementation of methods but may also yield important information about the type and nature of language that has acted as input and normative reference for language learners in different contexts and different times. Previous research into ELT (English language teaching) materials as sources of information about English language norms and usage has almost exclusively targeted materials aimed at native English speakers. This article shifts the focus on to ELT materials aimed at learners of English as a foreign language, in particular Italian learners of English. The study is based on two highly successful ELT textbooks published in Italy between the second half of the 19th and the first few decades of the 20th centuries. Through a grammaticological investigation, the study seeks to provide a picture of the kind of English that is presented in historical Italian ELT materials, focusing in particular

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on how these materials evaluate syntactic changes occurring in English at the end of the 19th and into the 20th centuries.

KEYWORDS: English language teaching, history of grammatical categories, history of language teaching, popularization of linguistics, history of English grammar books.

0. Introduction

While the history of English language teaching (ELT) has traditionally been represented as the unfolding of a string of methods, with a later method effortlessly replacing the previous one (Howatt and Smith 2014), recent research seems to paint a less homogeneous picture. Finer-grained investigations have been carried out into the extent to which methods have actually been taken up in specific geographical and educational contexts, and how they have been adapted and refashioned to suit local educational needs and traditions (McLelland and Smith 2018). Instrumental to these more sophisticated investigations have been close analyses of ELT materials (e.g. Nava 2018, Pedrazzini 2018).

ELT materials not only inform us of the actual take-up of methods, however, but, as "repositories of information on a language" (Leitner 1986: 1), also provide us with insights into the type and nature of English that has acted as input and normative reference (target of metalinguistic comments in e.g. grammar books and dictionaries) for learners/users of English in different contexts and different historical periods.

As summarised in Yañez-Bouza's (2016) recent review, in historical English linguistics, ELT materials (in particular, grammar books) have been used not only to identify "sources for the norms of present-day written standard English" but also "as evidence of language use, variation, and change" (Yañez-Bouza 2016: 165). In order to gauge "the effect of linguistic thought on actual language usage" (Yañez-Bouza 2016: 168), historical English grammars have been sampled to create *precept corpora* which have been compared with corpora of historical English usage (letters, literature, transcripts of court proceedings etc.). Three possible effects have thus been identified in the relationship between English grammars and actual English usage as it underwent changes at specific times: "precept triggered change, precept reinforced an existing trend, precept had only a marginal influence on usage" (Yañez-Bouza 2016: 169). Underpinning this research framework is a more sophisticated view of

grammar books as prescriptive forces potentially impacting on language development, which is based on the assumption that prescriptivism may not only aim at "resist[ing] language change", but may also seek to "improve upon the language, either by introducing new forms or distinctions or by proposing a return to older, more conservative forms" (Curzan 2014: 3).

The relationship between precept and usage corpora has also been studied through the lens of historical sociolinguistics to ascertain "whether language change responds to a change from below – unconscious natural development – or a change from above – imposed consciously by normative precepts" (Yañez-Bouza 2016: 172). Additionally, studies of historical English grammars have pursued the no less important aim of assessing grammars' degree of "descriptive adequacy" (Yañez-Bouza 2016: 172). A subsidiary focus of such investigations has been on the authors as both commentators on English usage and users of English themselves – e.g. "did the grammarians live up to their own standard of correctness?" (Sundby et al. 1991: 3).

One possible limitation of existing research into ELT materials as sources of information about English norms and usage at different stages of the history of English and in different contexts is that it has almost exclusively targeted materials aimed at native English speakers (cf. e.g. Anderwald 2016, which will be presented in more detail below). Materials for the teaching of English as a second language, particularly those produced in more recent times (19th-20th centuries) and in non-Anglo Saxon contexts have hardly been considered for the insights they may provide into the type and nature of English they use as both input and target of metalinguistic reflections.

The investigation which will be presented in this paper attempts to redress the balance by focusing on a restricted sample of ELT materials aimed at Italian learners of English published in Italy between the second half of the 19th and the first half of the 20th centuries. Through a grammaticological investigation, the study seeks to address the questions of what kind of English was represented in Italian ELT materials and how language use and syntactic changes occurring in English at the end of the 19th and into the 20th centuries are accounted for. Before illustrating the study in more detail, I will introduce some of the changes that were taking place in the English language in the period under consideration and will review previous work that has attempted to show how such changes have

been represented in English grammaticography.

1. Innovation and prescriptivism in Late Modern English usage and grammaticography

In his 1998 chapter on Late Modern English syntax for the *Cambridge History of the English Language*, Denison (1998: 92) wrote that "the topic of syntactic change in Late Modern English is only just beginning to get its share of serious scholarly attention". Since Denison's article several important studies have explored aspects of the syntax of Late Modern English (e.g. Auer 2009, Hundt 2014, Smitterberg 2005). It is beyond the scope of this paper to provide a review of such works (for a recent review of studies on the verb phrase, cf. Anderwald 2016). In this section, following Anderwald (2016), I will focus on a few phenomena of English syntax that were in flux in the period under consideration (mid-19th century/first few decades of the 20th century): the progressive aspect, the passival, the progressive passive, and the *get* passive. It should first be pointed out that none of these four syntactic aspects originated in the 19th century – what did happen to them in this period was a remarkable statistical change in their frequency of occurrence, with three of the constructions becoming increasingly more common and one virtually disappearing.

With regard to the English progressive, Visser (1973) provides convincing evidence that "expanded forms" of the verb have been present throughout the history of the English language. In Middle English, the progressive ("he is hunting") vied with two other expanded forms ("he is huntende", "he is on (an, a) hunting" (Visser 1973: 1993)). Since 1500, the *be* + *ing* expanded form has seen its frequency increase steadily. Although not all grammarians would agree (cf. the debate in Anderwald 2016: 158), it appears to be in the 19th century that the grammaticalization of the progressive took place as its use became obligatory in certain specific contexts and no longer an optional alternative as had been the case until then. This was of course accompanied by a marked rise in frequency of occurrence of the construction in all types of texts. According to Hundt's (2004) and Anderwald's (2016) corpus-based studies, the use of the progressive went from 128 per 100,000 words of running text (the so-called Mossé coefficient) in the period 1800–1849 to 233 in the period 1850–1899 in British English, and from 75 in the 1810s to 196 in the 1890s

in (written) American English. Moreover, Anderwald's fine-grained text-type analysis found that the highest frequency of occurrence was in fiction throughout the 19th century, followed by newspapers. On the whole, in the 19th century the progressive appeared to be mostly associated with more informal, "speech and near-speech genres" (Anderwald 2016: 163).

The progressive passive (*be* + *being* + past participle) was still a relative newcomer at the end of the 19th/first few decades of the 20th centuries. According to Denison (1993), it did not really enter the language until the last quarter of the 19th century, when *being* in the three-word verb phrase stopped being viewed as a main verb and took on the role of an auxiliary. On the other hand, Mugglestone (2006: 282) claims that by the 1930s it was already "well established". Before reviewing some features of the progressive passive in the period under consideration, I should say a few words about a construction that for a long time occupied a similar semantic space as the progressive passive, the "passival" (after Visser 1973). Until at least the middle of the 19th century, the sentence "the king is dressing" could be interpreted in two different ways (out of context): in the first interpretation, "the king" is the agent of the action, in the second, "the king" takes on the role of patient, the sentence having a passive meaning, equivalent to what would now be expressed by "The king is being dressed". The latter interpretation embodies what Visser has called the "passival".

The development and gradual spread of the progressive passive has been associated by Visser (1973: 2426) to "the urge, permanently inherent in English as an analytic language, to signal separately every separate shade of meaning, function or connotation". In terms of frequency, the progressive passive was (and remains to this day) a relatively infrequent construction in Late Modern English, its Mossé coefficient at the end of the 19th century standing at 14 (Hundt 2004). Interestingly, since its origin, the progressive passive has been typically used in contexts which do not match those where its active counterpart is most frequently found. In her study based on the *Corpus of Historical American English* (COHA), Anderwald (2016) found that only one text-type stands out as the locus for the spread of the progressive passive, newspapers, while "fiction texts overall seem to be the least likely texts for the progressive passive to appear" (Anderwald 2016: 193).

Another syntactic phenomenon which appears to have been in flux in the 19th century is the *get* passive and, more generally, all constructions

get enters into. Ever since its origin in the 17th century (Visser 1973), the *get* passive has been a relatively infrequent construction, although in the period under investigation its frequency increased slightly. Its development (as well as that of many other *get* constructions) was a result of *get* losing much of its original semantic import. Anderwald's (2016) corpus-based analysis of COHA found that the *get* constructions increased overall from a Mossé coefficient of "around 36 occurrences per 100,000 words, to over three times this amount, a Mossé-coefficient (…) of over 110 in the 1890s" (Anderwald 2016: 220). Of the latter 110, only 4 were instances of the *get* passive. Similarly to other *get* constructions, the *get* passive had an informal connotation in the 19th century and, among the four (written) text types making up COHA, Anderwald found that it was in fiction that the *get* passive occurred most frequently.

Even from this brief review of language developments taking place in English usage in the 19th and into the 20th centuries, it would appear that this period was far from being one of stasis, much in contrast to what has traditionally been claimed (cf. Anderwald 2016). How were these developments represented in contemporary English grammaticography? The extensive review carried out by Anderwald (2016) covers 258 grammars published in Great Britain and the USA between 1800 and 1910. An important premise of Anderwald's study is that "linguistic features (pronunciation, lexemes, constructions) which undergo change will become subject to criticism" (Anderwald 2016: 18), with such criticism usually triggering "a normative response" (Mugglestone 2006: 282). Current views of linguistic prescriptivism tend to emphasise that individual or institutional attempts to somehow influence or consciously engage with the development of a language are not artificial impositions that stifle its natural evolution but are wholly naturally occurring phenomena affecting language use at all times (Cameron 1995). In particular, faced with changes in their language, speakers have been known to adopt what Labov has called the "Golden Age Principle":

> A great deal of evidence shows that whenever speakers become aware of a change in the mechanism of the language – the grammar or the sound system – they reject that change. (…) The most general and most deeply held belief about language is the Golden Age Principle: At some time in the past, language was in a state of perfection. It is understood that in such a state, every sound was correct and beautiful, and every word and expression was proper, accurate, and appropriate. (…) Given this principle

> it is obvious that language change must be interpreted as nonconformity to established norms, and that people will reject changes in the structure of language when they become aware of them. (Labov 2001: 513-514)

Given that language change has been convincingly shown to be a trigger for prescriptivism, Anderwald (2016) argues that it should be reasonable to expect in English grammars a negative portrayal of those grammatical features that were in flux in 19th century English. Anderwald's extensive review spans both morphological and syntactic features of the verb phrase but I will limit myself to summarising her findings with regard to the four phenomena mentioned earlier – the progressive aspect, the passival, the progressive passive, and the *get* passive.

From Anderwald's detailed report of findings of her analysis of the progressive in 19th century grammars we will single out two issues. Did grammars actually deal with the progressive and if so did they view it as a grammaticalized construction (obligatorily required in some contexts)? Did grammars evaluate the progressive in any way?

The vast majority of grammars in Anderwald's corpus did deal with the progressive and, as the century advanced and this construction gradually underwent grammaticalization, grammars increasingly represented it as a construction obligatorily required in specific contexts. Its meanings were also largely identified in ways that accurately reflected contemporary usage.

As regards the evaluation of the progressive, the expectation that as a feature undergoing change in 19th century English this construction would be the target of negative comments is not actually borne out. As Anderwald (2016: 182) remarks at the end of her analysis, "although most grammars do not evaluate the progressive, where evaluations are encountered, these are always positive". An interesting strand of evaluation highlights that this "peculiar beauty" (Crane 1843: 211, quoted in Anderwald 2016: 171) lent superiority to the English language over not only other modern languages but even Latin and Greek. On this view, as Anderwald (2016: 185) points out, "the traditional hierarchy of languages, where Latin was usually seen as the perfect language, and all others only moderately successful in imitating this perfection" gets turned upside down.

The passival and the progressive passive – two other constructions that were undergoing change in the 19th century – were often mentioned

in the same breath in 19th century grammars, and Anderwald's analysis of these features takes up a long chapter of her book-length study. It seems that the passival went from being a disfavoured construction (in the 18th century) to being reappraised (in the 19th century) as it was somehow viewed as "the lesser of two evils compared to the new progressive passive" (Anderwald 2016: 196). The treatment of the progressive passive underwent a change as the century advanced, and differences can be detected between American and British grammars. American grammars started to notice the progressive passive in the 1820s, although still in the 1890s quite a large number of grammars in Anderwald's corpus failed to mention it. However, when it *was* mentioned, it often attracted long commentaries. In British grammars, the progressive passive showed up from the 1830s. By the end of the century, British grammars seemed to have accepted this construction as a normal facet of English usage as it appeared in all those published in the last decade of the century in Anderwald's corpus. Descriptions of the progressive passive in 19th century grammars centred around three aspects (as summarised in Anderwald 2016: 203): the fact that its use was yet limited to present and past tenses, its "text-type sensitivity", i.e. the fact that it was particularly common in newspapers, and the fact that it "closed a gap in the system of the English verb phrase", as it extended the progressive aspect to those domains that still lacked it.

In order to analyse how the progressive passive was evaluated in 19th century grammars, Anderwald (2016) tackles the following questions: Was the progressive passive mentioned at all? If so, was it juxtaposed / evaluated vis-à-vis the passival? Were the evaluations positive or negative and did they refer to language-internal or language-external factors? Anderwald (2016) uncovers a very complex situation which again seems to rest on a divide between American and British grammars: the former are said to be "twice as likely to condemn the progressive passive as their British counterparts" (Anderwald 2016: 205). Negative evaluations involve language-internal factors (the supposed impossibility of the form *be being* or the illogicality of the sequence of what is viewed as an imperfect (*being*) and perfect participle (*done*)) as well as sociolinguistic issues (its early adoption by newspaper writers). Arguments against the progressive passive hinged on "logic, aesthetics, morals, nature, and society" (Anderwald 2016: 235).

As regards the *get* passive and the *get* constructions more generally,

it should be said that they were very infrequently remarked upon in 19th century grammars. They were more often mentioned in American grammars where, when they were evaluated, they were judged more critically than by British grammarians, although never with the same scathing terms as those used for the progressive passive. The targets of criticism tended to be mainly *have got* (possessive), to a less extent *have got to* (obligational), the *get* passive as well as *get* used in idiom-like fixed expressions (e.g. *get rid of*). In general, grammarians' criticism of these constructions hinged on two aspects: the first was redundancy (*got* is superfluous in the construction *have got*) and the second was departure from the original meaning (*get* originally means obtain using effort hence cannot be used in constructions which do not feature this meaning).

On the whole, the findings of Anderwald's analysis of a large corpus of 19th century grammars show that, of the four grammatical aspects considered in this study, it is the progressive active that was mentioned the most, while the other constructions were dealt with much less frequently. Evaluative comments were present even more sporadically and, although the features under consideration were in flux in the 19th century, evaluations were not consistently negative. American grammars appeared to be more consistently prescriptive than their British counterparts, although Anderwald is able to demonstrate (matching grammaticographical analysis with corpus-based research) that the effect of prescriptive injunctions on language use was negligible. Anderwald also provides a list of general principles that could underlie grammarians' attitudes towards the four language constructions (e.g. the Principle of One Right Way, the Principle of Original Etymology) but notes how even the application of these principles was less straightforward than one may be led to believe. For instance, despite relevant to two grammatical features, a given principle might have been applied to one feature and disregarded for the other.

2. Innovation and prescriptivism in Italian ELT textbooks (end of 19th century/early 20th century)

In this section, the focus will shift on to ELT textbooks aimed at non-native speakers, in particular Italian learners of English. The analysis will be restricted to two books published between the latter half of the 19th and the first few decades of the 20th centuries (Cann's *Grammatica Teorico-*

Pratica della Lingua Inglese and Hazon's *Corso di Lingua Inglese Moderna*) and will attempt to identify how such books conceived of their subject matter and in particular how they presented and evaluated changes taking place in contemporary English. Both Cann's *Grammatica* and Hazon's *Corso* enjoyed great commercial success (they both went through a large number of editions, the latest ones appearing several decades after the original publications had been issued) and arguably exerted a significant impact on how English was perceived and developed as an academic discipline and was taught in both secondary schools and universities in Italy.

2.1. Cann's Grammatica teorico-pratica della lingua inglese

Cann's grammar came out in its first edition in 1872, but the analysis which will be presented here is based on the third edition (1875). Like most 19th century English grammars for native speakers, Cann's grammar also viewed itself as having mostly practical goals. English grammars for native speakers aimed at teaching their addressees, who obviously already mastered the language, to speak and write in English with propriety, in such a way, that is, as was thought to be required to enter the more prestigious and/or lucrative professions (Finegan 1998). Cann aimed at different kinds of readers – Italian native speakers who needed to learn how to read in English (to access the best English literature) and, as a subsidiary aim, to understand spoken English and speak it fluently.[1] It is perhaps ironic that many of the institutions listed at the end of the book as places where the first two editions had been adopted were technical institutes or commercial schools, where the teaching of English had a vocational purpose which hardly included the pursuit of high English literature in the original language.

In the introduction, Cann acknowledges his debt to Murray's

[1] "Ardisco di offrire al Pubblico un metodo per lo studio della lingua inglese, che spero sia per riuscire facile, celere e sicuro agli studiosi; sicché questi possano nel minor tempo possibile leggere correntemente ed intendere con facilità i migliori scrittori inglesi, come pure comprendere gli idiotismi della lingua parlata e parlarla speditamente" (Cann 1875: 5).

grammar (1795)[2] but points out that his work took account of grammatical changes that had occurred since Murray's time as a result of usage (Cann 1875: 5). The structure of the book is rather different from Murray's grammar. We no longer find the typical four-part organization (Michael 1991) but the contents are divided into two parts, ideally designed according to the two grammatical courses which featured in technical institutes and other Italian schools (Cann 1875: 12). The short section called *syntax* is appended to the second part and is claimed to provide further clarifications on points of grammar already dealt with in the previous parts. Given the brevity of this section, one gets the impression that it was included in the book as lip service to the grammaticographical tradition, which, as the century wore on, paid increasingly more attention to syntax.

Before I zero in on the analysis of the four verb phrase features which, as was illustrated above, were undergoing significant changes around the time this grammar was written, I will spend a few words on the general linguistic approach followed in the grammar. English is presented from the viewpoint of the addressees' L1 (Italian) and in a few cases of the other languages the readers were assumed to be familiar with (e.g. French), as the following extracts illustrate:

> *Da* si traduce con *to* dopo *avere* ed avanti un altro verbo all'indefinito. *Per* e *di* si traducono pure con *to* avanti un verbo all'infinito. (Cann 1875: 43)

> Non c'è che una sola coniugazione per il verbo, il quale non avendo terminazione distintiva dell'infinito, si fa precedere dal segno *to*, che corrisponde alla desinenza italiana *re.* (Cann 1875: 47)

> *To* equivale al francese *pour*, e *in order to* equivale al *afin de* francese. *To* indica una intenzione; *in order to* un fine più lontano. (Cann 1875: 180)

Most of Cann's work in presenting English grammar was aimed at identifying supposed equivalences between these languages and English, and further explanations were usually only given when it was felt that a comparison with one of these familiar languages did not provide enough

[2] Lindley Murray (1745-1826)'s *English Grammar* (1795) was "the most popular of eighteenth-century English grammars" (Fens-de Zeeuw 2011: 16) and went through over 60 British and American editions throughout the 18th and 19th centuries.

help for the reader to be able to solve a linguistic puzzle. In at least one case (the presentation of the cases of the noun), this approach was implemented by drawing upon a Latin grammatical category which was imposed on both Italian and English, as shown in this extract:

		Singolare
Nom.	L'amico	The friend
Gen.	Dell'amico	The friend's *oppure* Of the friend
Dat.	All'amico	To the friend
Acc.	L'amico	The friend
Voc.	O amico!	O friend!
Abl.	Dall'amico	From *opp.* By the friend

(Cann 1875: 77).

In keeping with what was happening in European grammaticography in the second part of the 19th century, where the science of New Philology had found its way into grammar books (although British and American grammars were latecomers in espousing this trend, cf. Finegan 1998), Cann's book also features philological remarks, which are usually rather unobtrusively placed in footnotes. These notes sometimes give the author the opportunity to put forward his views on contemporary grammatical debates:

> *Andare* è considerato dalla maggior parte delle grammatiche come un verbo irregolare, ma veramente sarebbe un verbo difettivo dacché manca del tempo preterito, e *went* non è che la contrazione di *wended*, il preterito del verbo to *wend* (poet.) *andare.* (Cann 1875: 116)

On the other hand, less technical remarks about the Latin and Saxon origins of English lexis and its domains of usage are scattered throughout the book.

How does Cann's *Grammatica* deal with the progressive, the passival, the progressive passive and the *get* passive? The progressive is first mentioned in a section devoted to the present participle. It is thus not given the status of a self-standing grammatical category and does not show up in conjugation tables listing the morphosyntactic features of the English verb phrase. Similarly to what was usually the case in contemporary British and American grammaticography, two main meanings of this construction are presented (ongoingness and unfinished

action), the former being afforded pride of place. In such uses, the progressive is presented as wholly grammaticalized – not as an optional alternative to the nonprogressive aspect. The futurate use of the progressive is also mentioned, albeit merely as an alternative to *be going to* when verbs of movement are involved. Largely ("per lo più") excluded from a combination with the progressive are said to be verbs expressing a spiritual act or an action of the senses (Cann 1875: 304). No evaluative terms are associated by the author with the progressive.

The passive constructions undergoing change in Late Modern English are given short shrift in Cann's book. Both the passival and the progressive passive are not conceived of by the author as grammatical categories. Among the many uses of the present participle summarised in the syntax section of the book, a passive meaning is said to be sometimes conveyed when the present participle is combined with the auxiliary *to be*.[3] This brief remark is more than what is reserved for the progressive passive, which, apart from on two or three occasions in the reading passages, only shows up in a note in the translation exercises:

> *It is being washed*, *viene lavato*, cioè *lo lavano*. Quando si tratta di un'azione che non fa la persona della quale si parla, ma viene fatta a questa persona da un'altra, bisogna servirsi del verbo *essere* con *being*, e col participio passato del verbo da coniugarsi. (Cann 1875: 358)

The explanation provided focuses on the passive rather than the progressive meaning conveyed by *it is being washed* and does not really shed any light on the use of the progressive passive. As a construction alternating with the active voice, the passive is, however, given comparatively more space in Cann's *Grammatica*, in spite of passive verbs being deemed very easy (Cann 1875: 225) for Italian students to learn.

The *get* constructions lend the author an opportunity to reveal his voice and make somewhat extensive evaluative comments. Cann follows the convention, first introduced in Withers's *Aristarchus, or the Principles of Composition* in 1789 (Anderwald 2016), of providing a textual excerpt (in this case, divided into three instalments) in which *get* is almost the only verb used. The *get* passive is not explicitly identified as a grammatical

[3] "Coll'ausiliare *to be* nel qual caso fa le veci di un verbo passivo, p.e. *The horses are saddling, si sellano i cavalli*" (Cann 1875: 439).

category but examples of this construction are encountered on more than one occasion in reading passages. The pleonastic use of *got* in possessive *have got* is mentioned, but semi-modal *have got to* does not show up in the book. What is particularly interesting is the long comment that Cann appends to his presentation of *have got*:

> Il dire *I have got* invece di dire *I have* è veramente un errore, ma è un errore tanto consentito dall'uso poiché gli Inglesi di tutte le classi lo dicono (…) Molte grammatiche non fanno parola di questo verbo (…) io invece pregherei lo studente a mettere maggior attenzione all'uso di questo verbo che a quello di tutti gli altri, perché gli Inglesi lo hanno sempre sul labbro. (Cann 1875: 308-309)

This extract highlights a contrast between grammar and usage, with the former following different laws from the latter. According to grammar, which, as was often maintained by 19th century British and American grammarians (Finegan 1998), is ruled, among other principles, by logic, *got* in *have got* is redundant and the combination has to be judged ungrammatical. However, Cann points out that this construction is upheld by usage which is widespread among all classes. This is reason enough to lead him to contravene grammaticographical practice and advise readers to pay more attention to the use of this verb.

To sum up, in Cann's *Grammatica*, constructions undergoing change in Late Modern English are either ignored (passival, progressive passive) or presented without any authorial evaluation (progressive). Only the *get* constructions are evaluated. Unlike much previous grammaticography, Cann acknowledges that the laws of grammar and those of usage do not always match and counsels his readers not to disregard the constructions with *get*. Cann's unconditional support of these constructions appears even more surprising if one considers that elegance of expression was often resorted to as a criterion by the author when it came to teasing apart lexical or grammatical alternatives, as in the extract below:

> *beneath* è l'opposto di *over*, *beneath* è più elegante di *under.* (Cann 1875: 112)

2.2. Hazon's Corso di lingua inglese moderna

Like Cann's *Grammatica*, Hazon's *Corso* underwent several editions since its first publication in 1933. For the purposes of this article, the 18th edition (1951) has been analysed, which does not seem to have changed

in any significant way from the original edition. The book's title – "corso", not "grammatica" – betrays the author's intentions, i.e. writing a language teaching textbook which included more than grammatical explanations and translation exercises into and out of English. For example, great store is said to be placed on providing a thorough knowledge of lexis (Hazon 1951: 13). Nonetheless, the grammatical part still appears to have pride of place, as it opens each lesson and takes up more space than any other part of the book. The forty lessons which make up the theoretical-practical part are preceded by an introductory part, which includes a chapter giving essential information for the (scientific) study of the English language (origin of the language, main features vis-à-vis other European languages, notions about geographical and social varieties) as well as other short sections devoted to pronunciation rules, stress placement, abbreviations etc.

The introductory part also features information about the variety of English which the author has drawn upon:

> lingua dell'uso vivo e corrente parlata e scritta dalla colta classe media di Londra, non senza però introdurre alcune espressioni dello *slang*, accette peraltro anche nella buona società, e qualche americanismo. (Hazon 1951: 13)

The ideal English speakers Hazon looks to for providing a model are educated middle-class London dwellers, but the author is open to acknowledging the role that slang (to the extent it is accepted in good society) and Americanisms play in contemporary English usage.

Unlike Cann, Hazon does not mention any author from the British and American grammaticographical tradition that might have inspired his work. On the other hand, he is keen to emphasize that, within the limits of a pedagogical work, he has taken a scientific approach and presented the results of his own original investigations into the workings of the English language. The philological approach, some instantiations of which are to be found in Cann's *Grammatica*, has a far minor role in Hazon's *Corso*. By contrast, Hazon delves into the reasons why English is such a peculiar language, which also accounts for the fact that its grammar is rather easy (Hazon 1951: 13). Like Cann, Hazon looks on the comparative approach (English and Italian, but also English and other languages which are thought to be familiar to the book's addressees, i.e. French and Latin) favourably, as having both pedagogical and scientific merits.

Hazon's *Corso* does not evaluate all the four grammatical features of the verb phrase which are targeted in this paper. The progressive is identified as a self-standing construction and referred to as progressive form (Hazon 1951: 174) but does not appear in verb conjugation tables. Only one main meaning is singled out – ongoingness (continuation of an action, Hazon 1951: 174). A comparison with Italian is carried out to show the possible ambiguity of the Italian verb phrase as regards aspect and a practical way of resolving this ambiguity is suggested:

> La forma progressiva si usa per indicare continuità d'azione in tutti i tempi e modi dei verbi che ammettono per il loro senso tale continuità. Ogni qual volta in italiano si possa svolgere un verbo con stare seguito da un gerundio in inglese si userà la forma progressiva.
>
> Che cosa facevi (stavi facendo) a quest'ora ieri?
>
> *What were you doing at this time yesterday?* (Hazon 1951: 174)

Verbs that rarely appear in the progressive form (Hazon 1951: 175) are also mentioned. Uses of the progressive which are not explicitly singled out in the grammatical explanations do sometimes crop up in the readings and translation exercises, as is the case of what is now known as progressive of affect (Depraetere and Langford 2012):

> Listen to that silly man. He's always paying compliments to the ladies. (Hazon 1951: 230)

In Hazon's *Corso*, the progressive is not evaluated in any way. This is in spite of the fact that in the introductory part the author rates the analytic English verb phrase as superior to the synthetic Latin one, on account of its clarity and accuracy, using arguments that remind one of those resorted to by 19th century British and American grammarians (Anderwald 2016).

As regards the passival and the passive progressive, the former construction is briefly mentioned (verbs used in the active form with a passive sense, Hazon 1951: 330) while the latter is again not dealt with systematically in the main grammatical part. Examples of the progressive passive do crop up at different stages, sometimes accompanied by brief comments:

> *I saw him running towards the river. I saw him saved by a sailor*. Nell'esempio I sono sottintese, prima di *running*, le parole *while he was*

> (mentre egli stava); quindi si ha la forma progressiva. Nell'esempio III sono sottointese, prima di *saved*, le parole *while he was being* (mentre egli veniva); quindi questa è una forma passiva e progressiva. (Hazon 1951: 350)

Hazon's rather cursory treatment of the progressive passive runs counter to the fact that the author does acknowledge (in the introductory part) that in no other language as much use of the passive is made as in English (Hazon 1951: 24).

While the progressive and the passive constructions do not attract any evaluative comments, the *get* constructions are commented on extensively:

> Nello stile elegante si rifugge dall'uso soverchio delle locuzioni formate col verbo to *get*. D'altra parte, nella lingua parlata esse ricorrono sovente, senza che ciò rappresenti un'improprietà. Alcune, però, appartengono allo *slang*, ossia gergo, e chi non conosce bene l'inglese deve andar cauto nell'usarle per evitare stonature. (Hazon 1951: 376)

A contrast is established between elegant style and spoken language. Elegant style does not look favourably on an overuse of the *get* constructions; by contrast, in spoken language these occur frequently as a matter of course. Hazon also extends the remit of English usage to slang and cautions readers that the use of expressions with *get* which are perceived as slangish may lead the novice English speaker to commit linguistic *faux pas*.

Among the *get* constructions, the pleonastic use of *get* is mentioned by Hazon, as was done by Cann, but this time both the possessive *have got* construction and the semimodal *have got to* are considered. On the other hand, the *get* passive is not dealt with in the section on the passive; nonetheless, a few examples do show up in the readings and dialogues in different lessons of the book.

3. Conclusion

The aim of this paper was to carry out an explorative study of ELT materials published in Italy between the second half of the 19th and the first half of the 20th centuries for the insights they can yield as to how English was conceived of in the Italian context. In particular, four features of the English verb phrase undergoing change in Late Modern English have been focused on and their presentation and evaluation in two Italian ELT

textbooks have been investigated.

Research on English grammars aimed at native speakers has shown that the representation and evaluation of grammatical phenomena which were in flux in the 19th century were determined by the authors' perceptions (whether founded or otherwise) of the sociocultural import of each phenomenon – for instance, was a given phenomenon associated with good usage (mainly intended as written, literary English)? The application of these principles was, however, not necessarily consistent – for example, the progressive was often evaluated positively by British and American grammarians, despite its origin and more widespread use in spoken, more informal English. On the whole, according to Anderwald (2016: 245), native speaker grammars remained prescriptive throughout the 19th century, "even with the introduction of a more philologically informed approach in the middle of the century". Nonetheless, a divide can be detected between American and British grammars, with the former being "much more critical, and thus more prescriptive" (Anderwald 2016: 245) than the latter.

Cann's *Grammatica* and Hazon's *Corso* were aimed at Italian native speakers learning English as a second language within a sociocultural and educational context where the most important role accorded to the learning of foreign languages – whether classical or otherwise – was to access the great authors of the foreign literature (cf. e.g. Balboni 2009). This factor and the fact that language teaching materials aimed at foreign learners are usually thought of as inherently prescriptive (Dirven 1990) would lead us to expect that the four features of the English verb phrase under consideration in this paper were either ignored or evaluated negatively in Italian ELT materials. By contrast, it has emerged that while the *get* passive and the progressive passive were not identified as grammatical categories, despite sometimes showing up in the readings/dialogues and the translation exercises in the books, the progressive active was and it was also represented in ways that were largely in keeping with its use in Late Modern English. If we consider the *get* constructions more generally, the findings of the analysis appear even more surprising. Both Cann and Hazon counsel their readers to pay attention to the various constructions *get* enters into, irrespective of the fact that many other contemporary grammarians discouraged their use. Hazon goes as far as to raise the readers' awareness of slang, both as a general linguistic phenomenon, whose pragmatic effect he compares to

the occasional switch to dialect that Italian speakers make in informal conversation, and with regard to the *get* constructions.

It thus appears that the two grammarians writing for Italian learners of English adopted an innovative and forward-looking stance in the way they represented English. Although still wedded to the idea that English language learning should mainly aim at providing a gateway into its literature and culture, they acknowledged that the type of English usage that a grammarian should refer to as a model was to be given a wider remit – not exclusively the usage of the great authors, i.e. those belonging to previous generations, but the usage of contemporary, living English speakers.

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