The importance of prescriptivism in the development of 'schemes for respelling' in eighteenth-century pronouncing dictionaries

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La construcció de les llengües : Mites, Normes i Emocions
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Research Question

How did lexicographers whose aim was to eliminate variation end up creating a system perfectly suited to record variation?
Outline

- Some context

- The evolution of transcription systems:
  - The multipurpose «accent»
  - Diacritics: the limits of «signposting»
  - True «respelling»
Some context

- the influence of printers in the 17\textsuperscript{th} century: a practical outlook

- by 1700, stabilized orthography; attempts at reform abandoned
Some context

- Socio-economic and political pressures (urbanization, Acts of Union) brought people of different origins together.

- Pronunciation standards hardened and became key marker of social status.

- Manuals and grammars proliferated, and a new genre appeared: pronouncing dictionaries.
Thomas Dyche 1707, 1723

- in *Dictionary of All Words*, simple stress mark

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<th>concórdant</th>
<th>concórpate</th>
<th>concóurse</th>
<th>concréte</th>
<th>concrétion</th>
<th>concúbìnage</th>
<th>concúbine</th>
<th>concúlcate</th>
<th>concúpìscence</th>
<th>concúpìscible</th>
<th>concúr</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>hor-net</td>
<td>jaffper</td>
<td>ladd-der</td>
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<td>hor-ror</td>
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<td>horse-leech</td>
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<td>ho'ftage</td>
<td>jea'lous</td>
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- but in earlier *Guide to the English Tongue*, «Double Accent» shows graphic convention and spoken reality simultaneously
An Universal Etymological Dictionary, 9th edition

“discriminant accent”

- develops from practice of placing stress mark after syllable;
- distinguishes open vs. closed syllables, and thereby long vs. short vowels
“Signposting”: Buchanan 1757

Linguae Britannicae Vera Pronunciatio

- «quiescent letters» shown to have different status, but not removed
- array of diacritics derived from linguistic tradition (macrons, breves, diaeresis)

“Signposting”: Buchanan 1757

Linguae Britannicae Vera Pronunciatio

Accquittal, or acquittance, (S.) 1. A ādāge, (S.) A proverb. L. being discharged from the sulficion Adāgio, (A.) In music, flow in move-
ment, grave, solemn. ācre, (S.) A superficial measure of ādāmānt, (S.) A diamond. L.

First metaphonological representation:

stage in the «second revolution of grammatisation» (Auroux 1994)
“Signposting”: Kenrick 1773

A New Dictionary of the English Language

- Numerals as diacritics: eliminating vagueness, lending entries a “scientific” air
- Modification of conventional orthography remains unthinkable
“Respellling”: Sheridan 1762

*Dissertation on the Causes of the Difficulties, which Occur in Learning the English Tongue*

- inventor of superscript numbers (Kenrick uses them as diacritics, whereas Sheridan creates new graphemes)
- gives four clear rules for achieving bijectivity
- system adopted not bijective – for prescriptive reasons
“Respelling”: Sheridan 1780

A General Dictionary of the English Language

New representational system, using **new set of graphemes**:

- simple, *i.e.* most of the consonants;
- complex, *i.e.* most of the vowels;
- digraphs, several consonants and some diphthongs

- di2-le1k'-shu1n
- di2-le1m'ma1
- di1l'-y1-je1nse
- di1l'-y1-je1nt-ly1
- di1l'
Thomas Spence 1775

The Grand Repository of the English Language

New representational system, using **new set of graphemes**:

- Extended alphabet, with ligatures, half-letters and modified letters
- Bijective, phonemic, most like the IPA
Spelling reformer

- reformed spelling different from dictionary «respellings»
- condescension? ("laborious part of the people")
- internalized graphic-phonic conventions from traditional orthography
Analysis

- Nostalgia
- Classicism
- Authoritarianism

- Aestheticism
- Coherentism
- Logicism
- Commonsensism
- Functionalism
- Asceticism

Conservative

Reformist

(Pullum 2004)
Conclusion: layers of prescriptivism

1. “Right” pronunciation:
   - external social factor that is completely internalized into intellectual framework
   - usage-based not rule-based
   - pedagogical intent: motivation for every innovation, but also limitation
Conclusion: layers of prescriptivism

2. graphocentrism

first phase: orthography cannot be changed

second phase: orthography can be modified, but remain benchmark (in transcription choices, in spelling pronunciation)
Conclusion: layers of prescriptivism

3. transcription systems themselves:
   - reformist prescriptivist principles are applied to representation as opposed to language form itself
   - “monmodèle” (Ballier 2007)
Thank You!

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Analysis

Prescriptivism about spelling
prescriptivism about spoken language

- the *Ormulum*
- Dyche 1707
- Bailey 1740
Conclusions

Prescriptivism about spelling, prescriptivism about spoken language

- Kenrick 1773
- Sheridan 1780
- Spence 1775, and 1782

prescriptivists with different objects