The History of Language Learning and Teaching

VOLUME I

16th–18th Century Europe

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EDITED BY
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CHAPTER 2

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French Didactics in Late Medieval and Early Modern England: Thinking Historically about Method

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Recent commentators on the history of French education in medieval and early modern England argue that translation played a major part in the instruction of the language across both periods. In contrast, this chapter demonstrates that the prevalence of the technique in medieval French teaching is difficult to prove and that monolingual methods of instruction are equally likely to have been pursued, perhaps especially by those French teachers about whom we know the most, the Oxford *dictatores*. The argument highlights the sensitivity of both medieval and early modern teachers to the shifting material, linguistic, social, and geopolitical conditions that shaped the requirements of their students and defined the possibilities for instruction. As such, it illustrates the usefulness of a history of language learning and teaching that considers method as the product of a series of localized responses to particular teaching situations as well as of a teleological process of refinement and reform.

Introduction

In the Introduction to his *Esclarcissement de la langue francoyse* (London, 1530; *ESTC* S104266), John Palsgrave begins by itemizing the difficulty experienced by English learners of French:

> The diffyculte of the frenche tong / whiche maketh it so harde to be lerned by them of our nation / resteth chefely in thre thynges / In the diuersyte of pronunciation / that is betwene vs and them / in theyr analogie and maner of congruite / where in they be moche more parfyte and exquisyte than we be / and moche more approche towardes the parfection of the latin tong / than we do / And thyrdly in theyr propertes of spekyng where in theyr phrasys be dyfferent frome ours / and letteth vs / that thoughe we schulde gyue worde for worde / yet the sens shulde moche differ betwene our tong and theirs. (sig. [A6]v)[1]

Palsgrave goes on to offer some initial notes on these issues, each of which is

treated in progressively greater detail over the course of his tripartite grammar of French. Particularly striking is Palsgrave's handling of the last of the problems that he identifies, French syntax, for while numerous French language teaching and reference texts survive from the later Middle Ages — including wordlists, verb tables, collections of model letters and dialogues, and grammatical and spelling treatises — syntax is a topic that these texts do not address systematically or in detail.[2]

For example, Palsgrave includes in his Introduction a few opening remarks on the topic of the Middle French conjunctive pronoun *en*: 'Somtyme in affyrmation they put *En* / before the verbe / more than we haue in our tong in the same sentence / as for He is fledde / they saye *Il s_en_ est en fuy*' (sig. [C5]^r; underlining added). The *Esclarcissement* proceeds by stages, gradually introducing its readers to more complex forms of grammatical explanation. Thus Palsgrave comes back to *en* in his second book, where we are told among other things that often the word 'signifieth nothyng / but onely as a signe of affirmation / vsed rather to make the sentence more fulle in sounde to the eare / than for any necessite' (II: sig. 46^r). Then, returning to the matter for the last time in his third book, Palsgrave rounds out his exposition of this grammatical and stylistic phenomenon by referring to authoritative writers of French. Thus, we read, *en* is more frequently deployed by writers of verse than 'in comen speche' and, in particular, by Jean de Meun and Alain Chartier (III: sigs 131^{r-v}). At the same time as the authority of these writers is assumed, Palsgrave reveals himself to be an interested chronicler of language change and a keen judge of other writers' attempts to rationalize French. The thirteenth- and fifteenth-century poets Jean de Meun and Chartier are said to use *en* 'more oftenner than suche as write aboute this tyme' (III: sig. [131]^v), and the discussion ends with a quibble regarding the usage of another poet, Jean Lemaire de Belges, who was a rough contemporary of Palsgrave:

> Whereas Johan le Mayre writeth the indiffynite inducatyue *ie men fouys*, I do nat alowe that orthographie / for *ie fouys*, signyfyeth I digge / and cometh out of *fodio*, where *ie men fuys*, cometh out of *fugio*, except Johan le Mayre dyd it to make a difference bytwene the present and the indiffynite / but as I haue afore declared it is non inconuenyent that they be lyke in their first persons. (III: sig. [133]^v)

In his sourcing and evaluation of authoritative examples for the various grammatical propositions that he advances, Palsgrave partakes of the new Humanist practices of philological investigation. The author deliberately aligns the *Esclarcissment* with this project in his Introduction, where he claims that by adding a third book to his study that expands upon his second he was 'folowyng the order of Theodorus Gaza / in his grammer of the Greke tonge' (sig. A3^r). Originally published in Venice in 1495, Gaza's grammar enjoyed a good reputation throughout sixteenth-century Europe; Erasmus made a partial translation of it in the 1510s (cf. Pizzi 1953). Palsgrave was personally acquainted both with Erasmus and with Thomas More and he has been credited with adapting their pedagogical ideas in his own teaching.[3] Of particular relevance in this regard is Palsgrave's *Ecphrasis anglica in comoediam Acolasti* (London,

1540; *ESTC* S105662), a schoolroom parallel text edition of William Fullonius's neo-Latin play *Acolastus*

> translated into oure englisshe tongue, after suche maner as chylderne are
> taught in the grammer schole, fyrst worde for worde, as the latyne lyeth, and
> afterwarde accordynge to the sence and meanyng of the latin sentences: by
> shewing what they do value and counteruayle in our tongue. (sig. [A1]^r)

In the Epistle addressing this work to Henry VIII, Palsgrave laid out his priorities as a teacher, chief among which was his aim by means of his translations 'perfectly to open the diuersities of phrases betwene our tonge and the latyn' (sig. [A4]^r). While an explicit reference to this contrastive pedagogic approach is missing in the *Esclarcissment*, we have already seen that in this earlier work Palsgrave proposed to elucidate French through comparison with English. He also repeatedly makes clear his conviction that translation into the target language is one of the main ways in which he anticipates that his readers will improve their knowledge of French. For example, having learned the basic precepts outlined in his Introduction, Palsgrave writes that:

> the lernar may than by the helpe of my tables by his own study be able to
> translate any matter or sentence he wyll / out of our tong in to frenche / and
> so incontynente accustome hym to haue thyr commen speche / whiche by this
> meanes with a lytell study is sone attayned vnto. (sig. [C6]^r)

As part of a broader movement that has sought to highlight points of continuity between the Middle Ages and the early modern period, historians of French didactics have begun to look for evidence of the teaching of French via translation prior to the publication of the *Esclarcissement*. This approach garners justification both from Palsgrave's statement of his intention to proceed 'takyng light and erudition' (sig. A2^r) from the work of his predecessors and through comparison with the medieval practices of Latin instruction out of which the Humanists' own pedagogy grew by a process of development and reaction. It has, however, led to a narrowing of the perspective on medieval French education in England that this chapter proposes to correct by focusing on some of the monolingual modes of instruction that the extant teaching and reference texts might have supported. While I argue for broader recognition of the diversity of late-medieval language instruction, I also make the case for a more serious consideration of the material, linguistic, social and geopolitical conditions within which French education in England took place before the institutionalization of modern language instruction. It is hoped that the outcome will be a better sense not only of what historical practices of French instruction might have been like but also of the ways in which thinking historically about method necessarily problematizes popular narrative accounts of developments in language teaching and learning.

The Medieval Evidence and its Interpretation

The latest discussions of the history of French education in medieval England have focused on one manuscript: Oxford, Magdalen College MS 188.[4] This is a large

(345 × 220mm) parchment book that dates to the second quarter of the fifteenth century. It owes its interest for historians of French didactics first to the small anthology of teaching and reference texts compiled in its opening quire (fols 1ʳ–8ᵛ). These include (1) a treatise on French spelling that is given the title *Orthographia gallica* by its most recent editor, R. C. Johnston (1987); (2) a trilingual vocabulary list giving the words for numbers, the days of the week, the months, holidays, and other sundry items in French, English, and Latin; and (3) a fragment of a treatise on letter writing in French accompanied by two sample letters. The second, much longer portion of the manuscript (fols 9ʳ–102ᵛ) contains an incomplete copy of the *Somme le roi*, a popular compendium of catechetical texts compiled by one Friar Laurent at the request of King Philip III of France in 1279–80.[5] The particular attraction of this portion of the book for students of the French of late-medieval England lies in the partial glossing of its French text in both Latin and English.

In the first of a series of studies addressing this codex, Andres Max Kristol proclaimed it 'un grand manuscrit didactique' (1998: 185, cf. Kristol 2000, 2001a). Kristol's experience of cataloguing the extant French teaching and reference texts had persuaded him that, on their own, these works could not have provided sufficient grounding in French to enable a learner otherwise ignorant of the language to begin producing sophisticated utterances (1998: 177–78). In the trilingual *Somme le roi* Kristol saw a much-needed complement to the orthographic and morphological rules provided in the other French teaching and reference texts that he knew; it contained, he suggested, an implicit course in French syntax whereby the marked closeness of the Magdalen translator's English and Latin renderings of the French text were designed to highlight points of difference between Latin, French and English sentence structure.

Noting that in Continental French the *ne ... pas* structure had become the standard (i.e. not emphatic) negating formula by the fourteenth century, for example, Kristol (1998: 191–92) suggested that the Magdalen translator deliberately overdid the negation in the English and the Latin versions of his French source text in order to draw attention to the split structure. Thus in the following citation, the Latin and English translations replicate the French split negative and, in so doing, reinforce the negation in their original, giving the sense 'not at all' for the French 'not' (*not ... in eniwyse* in English and *non ... quovismodo* in Latin). The extract is taken from the rendition of the Ten Commandments with which the Magdalen copy of the *Somme le roi* opens. Throughout Magdalen 188, the French text of the *Somme* is given in a larger, more formal script than are the Latin and English translations; I give it here in bold:

> Thou shalt not take in eniwyse the name of god in vayn
> tu non assumas quovismodo nomen dei in vanum
> **Tu ne prendras pas le noun dieu en vain.**
>
> <div align="right">(Magdalen 188, fol. 9ᵛ)</div>

Later in the same essay, Kristol (1998: 192–93) posited that by offering a studied variety in his rendering of the problematic Middle French word *en*, the Magdalen translator provided an implicit commentary on the uses of a grammatical feature of

French that might pose difficulties for English learners. In the following citations, the use of *en* as an indefinite pronoun (cf. Modern French *on*) is at stake. In the first passage it is rendered by *unus* in Latin and *oon* in English and subsequently by an indefinite pronoun in Latin (*quis*) and by a personal pronoun in English (*he*); in the second, it is rendered by a plural form in Latin (*faciunt*) and an indefinite pronoun in English (*me*[n] *dooth*). The extracts are taken from the account of the sins of the tongue that Friar Laurent attaches to his rendition of the Seven Deadly Sins (the Magdalen copy of the *Somme le roi* ends incompletely with this text). They treat the swearing of oaths and the pain that this causes Christ:

Or whan that oon by hotith certaynly that thynge that he knowith not if he may it fulfille
Vel quando unus promittit certitudinaliter hoc quod quis nescit si hoc poterit ad implere
Ou quant l'en promet certainement ce que l'en ne set ce l'en purra a complir.
(Magdalen 188, fol. 99ʳ)

these rentyn hym more smal than me dooth an hogge in the bocherye
Sed isti ipsum dilacerant magis minutim quam faciunt porcum in macello
mes cist le depiecent plus menuement qu'en ne fet le porcel en la boucherie.
(Magdalen 188, fol. 100ʳ)

Thus, Kristol argued, the reader is introduced to the English and Latin forms for which French substitutes its indefinite pronoun.[6]

More recently, Christel Nissille has expressed scepticism regarding Kristol's claims as to the Magdalen translator's didactic intent. Instead, she views the variety of translation strategies deployed in the rendering of particular aspects of the French source text as evidence of the translator's attempts to get to grips with the unfixed and changing nature of the French of late-medieval England (Nissille 2014: 155–58). Judging that an instructor might choose to draw out the points that Kristol assumes were deliberately planted there, Nissille does not abandon Kristol's theory of the manuscript's use in group teaching, but she does admit to some trouble imagining its deployment in the French language classroom (2014: 159). This difficulty is understandable since it is far from certain that the book's first application was didactic.

Ralph Hanna (2005) has identified a series of running titles added to Magdalen 188 as being in the hand of John Dygon, a recluse at the Carthusian monastery of Sheen (Surrey) who moved there towards the end of his life, in 1435. It is possible that Magdalen 188 got caught up in the traffic of books between Sheen and the Bridgettine community at Syon across the Thames: Marilyn Oliva (2009) and William Rothwell (2001b) have stressed the continuing importance of French in England's late-medieval nunneries in other contexts, and the catechetical items anthologized in the *Somme le roi* might have been deployed in the basic instruction of the women at Syon, for whom Sheen's monks produced other edifying compilations, as Vincent Gillespie (2008) and Paul J. Patterson (2011) have shown. Since Hanna (2005: 136–37) counts Magdalen 188 among those books most likely to have been acquired by Dygon during his reclusion, however, it seems at least equally probable that its early application was private. During his secular life, Dygon must have acquired basic clerical skills, including a facility in French, in the pursuit of

the legal training that he is known to have completed at Oxford (cf. Hanna 2005: 128–29). It seems plausible that he obtained Magdalen 188 with a view to brushing up his French in his retirement. Thus Hanna (2005: 140) concludes that, although Dygon is not the manuscript's main scribe, Magdalen 188 'looks very much like an exercise combining both piety and foreign language practice'. In any case, Dygon's Carthusian profession and his status as a recluse at Sheen would normally have precluded his involvement in any kind of organized classroom teaching there.

Nissille (2014: 122–30) cites Hanna's work on Dygon's hand in Magdalen 188 and considers a variety of uses to which the manuscript might have been put before settling on her identification of the book as a 'manuel de langue' with a classroom application. Where the trilingual text of Magdalen 188 fosters a comparative approach to language study, she suggests, it links the practice of French instruction in medieval England with contemporaneous Latin teaching via the translation of *vulgaria*, that is, via the translation into and out of Latin of short, sample sentences.[7] At the same time, on Nissille's interpretation, Magdalen 188 would appear to adumbrate the procedures of comparative Humanist language pedagogy (Nissille 2014: 94–95). Thus Magdalen 188 is assumed to constitute a *passerelle* or little bridge that links each of these sets of trends; if the manuscript is unique in its combination of French teaching materials and a trilingual reading text, this is interpreted not as a potential indicator of the idiosyncratic interests of its first known owner, but as a demonstration of the 'silence des sources' (Nissille 2014: 8). Certainly, many of the surviving medieval books that contain language teaching and reference materials also contain sample texts that appear to have been selected with a view to providing reading practice. Brian Merrilees (1990) has demonstrated the popularity of the collocation of grammatical and reading materials in manuscripts containing Old and Middle French texts written to teach Latin, and Nissille herself (2014: 282–97) provides a useful account of the extant English manuscripts containing French teaching and reference materials that confirms the popularity of this mode of compilation among those books. Some of the reading texts in the manuscripts Nissille examines are, moreover, provided with glosses of greater or lesser completeness in Middle English, suggesting that an appetite for works prepared or adapted in this fashion extended beyond the walls of Dygon's reclusorium. In the extant manuscripts of Walter de Bibbesworth's *Tretiz*, for example, the French text of this verse vocabulary is often accompanied by Middle English glosses, and the *Femina*, a fifteenth-century adaptation of the *Tretiz*, is glossed throughout.[8] Nevertheless, Nissille's supposition regarding the capacity of Magdalen 188 to illuminate historical French didactics remains doubtful, not only because it relies on absent evidence but also because the motivations shaping the production of individual manuscript books are often difficult to grasp, even if broad patterns in the compilation of codices now containing French and Latin teaching and reference materials can be discerned.

The extant English manuscripts containing French teaching and reference materials have the appearance of having been put together for a variety of reasons. A few of these codices preserve what look to be student notes. In this category we might count Cambridge, University Library MS Additional 8870, a legal notebook that has been described by J. H. Baker (1989) and whose third quire contains

various subject-specific teaching and learning resources in French and Latin. Other books containing French teaching materials may perhaps be collections assembled by instructors themselves. Because their texts contain apparent references to an identified medieval French teacher, this is the function accorded to two early fifteenth-century manuscripts, London, British Library MS Additional 17716 and Cambridge, Trinity College MS B. 14. 40, by Merrilees and Beata Sitarz-Fitzpatrick in their edition of the *Liber Donati* (1993: 1–2), a medieval French grammar transmitted in these codices. But the identification of these books as works compiled by learners or more advanced users of the language remains largely conjectural, and there will inevitably be some slippage between these categories among the total corpus of manuscripts containing French teaching and reference materials. Indeed, it is often difficult to ascertain whether a book that would appear to lend itself to teaching was in fact used in a pedagogic context or whether it was produced with the intention of collecting together an anthology of reference texts that may or may not have been previously used to teach the language to the manuscript's commissioner. In this connection, it is salutary to recall A. P. R. Howatt and H. G. Widdowson's general observation that before the nineteenth century most learners of modern languages studied 'on their own' (2004: 2).

While manuscripts can tell us a good deal about the kinds of French that medieval English users of the language desired to master, they provide only limited information about the means by which they attempted to acquire it. Moreover, Howatt and Widdowson's statement encourages us to realize that it may be unwise to think about the medieval and early modern history of modern language teaching as constituting anything so uniform as a continuous tradition: the first practices of French teaching in England are likely to have been multiple and disconnected. The remainder of this chapter focuses principally on the situation of medieval French teaching about which the most is currently known: the schools of the Oxford *dictatores*, a group of teachers existing on the fringes of the late-medieval University who taught French and Latin alongside the skills required in order to perform a variety of basic legal and commercial functions. The guiding conviction here is that Palsgrave's adaptation of Humanist language teaching practices to French education supports a mode of instruction that is fundamentally different to that pursued by these medieval teachers (and, as we shall see, by several of Palsgrave's sixteenth-century peers). Whereas the *dictatores* developed content-driven curricula that were geared to the acquisition of certain professional skills, in his *Esclarcissement*, Palsgrave designed a more language-driven course whose primary aim was to facilitate learners' access to the riches of contemporary French literature.[9] Where Palsgrave afforded signal importance to translation in his French instruction, I shall argue that consideration of the extant medieval French teaching and reference materials suggests that they were eminently suitable to support monolingual teaching methods, including dictation and drills, as well as the targeted practice of specialized uses of the spoken and written language.

French in the Classrooms of the *Dictatores* and Beyond

Some organized French instruction did exist in late-medieval England. The instructor with whom Merrilees and Sitarz-Fitzpatrick associate the manuscripts of the *Liber Donati* listed above is William Kingsmill (fl. 1420–50), who, along with his predecessor, Thomas Sampson (fl. 1370–1409), is known to have taught French privately in late-medieval Oxford. As Martin Camargo (2007), M. Dominica Legge (1939), and H. G. Richardson (1941) have demonstrated, the priorities of these teachers' clients are reflected in the materials that they prepared for them. Among the texts associated with Kingsmill and Sampson there survive treatises on conveyancing and on the writing of letters and bills, as well as model texts written in French and Latin exemplifying these and related genres, a selection of which was reproduced and discussed by Richardson (1942). These texts reflect the important role that French continued to play in a wide variety of written contexts in England well into the fifteenth century. As Rothwell (2001a) points out, these contexts included legal records and the records of various ports, mercantile companies, cities, and religious establishments, as well as the writing of letters internally, between members of the English ruling classes, and externally, to addressees on the Continent.[10]

Spoken French was also apparently in demand among learners in medieval Oxford. A collection of model dialogues dated to 1415 gives a good impression of some of the kinds of oral French that early fifteenth-century learners wanted to use; it includes conversations in which speakers greet each other, exchange pleasantries on the road, organize lodgings, order food, and make provision for the care of their horses. In the form in which it is transmitted in Cambridge, Trinity College MS B. 14. 40, the final conversation in the manual is directly connected to Kingsmill. At the opening of this dialogue, a knight has been asked by a woman to take her twelve-year-old son with him to London and to secure him an apprenticeship there. Calling the boy before him, the knight begins a round of questioning:

> — Moun fiz, avez vous esté a l'escole?
> — Oy, syre, par vostre congé.
> — A quel lieu?
> — Syr, a l'ostelle de Will Kyngesmylle Escriven.
> — Beau fyz, comben de temps avez vous demurrez ovesque luy?
> — Sire, forsque un quart de l'an.
> — Cella n'est que un poi temps, mes qu'avez vous apriz la en ycel terme?
> — Syr, moun maystre m'ad enseigné pur escrire, enditer, acompter et
> frounceys parler.
> — Et que savez vous en frounceys dire?
> — Sir, je say moun noun et moun corps bien descriere. (Kristol 1995: 76–77)

> [— My son, have you been to school?
> — Yes, sir, by your leave.
> — In what place?
> — Sir, at the hostel of the scrivener, William Kingsmill.
> — Good son, how long have you stayed with him?
> — Sir, only a quarter of a year.

— That's only a little while, but what have you learned there in that time?
— Sir, my master has taught me to write, compose, cast accounts, and speak French.
— And what can you say in French?
— Sir, I can say my name and describe my body in detail.][11]

The boy gives his name as 'Jehan boun enfant' and goes on to specify at some length the French words describing the parts of the body. He also gives briefer lists of the vocabularies of clothing, ecclesiastical and secular rank, and household furniture.

This dialogue provides clear evidence of Kingsmill's teaching; in his edition of the text, Kristol calls this closing conversation a 'publicité *pro domo*', that is, for Kingsmill's own school (1995: 76). It indicates furthermore that a knowledge of spoken French might be desired alongside basic literacy and numeracy by young men hoping to make their careers as craftsmen, an apparently important group among Kingsmill's and Sampson's learners. Elsewhere I have argued that some of the students of the *dictatores* might have harboured the desire to use their French further afield than London, the destination specified in the citation above, in particular in the northern French territories opened up in the wake of Henry V's victory at the Battle of Agincourt in 1415 (Critten 2015). Indeed, explicit reference is made to this event in the second dialogue in Kingsmill's manual. In this extract, a speaker just out of France recounts the latest news from that country to a curious interlocutor:

> Et puis j'ay oye dyre qu'ore tarde, lez seignours de Fraunce ovesque la nombre de .l. ou .lx. mille persones armez ount encontrez le roy par le chymyn, et le roy ovesque la numbre de .x. mille persones ad combatuz ovesque eaux a un lieu apellé Agincourt, a quele bataille i sount pris et tuez .xi. mille personis dez Frounceys et sount tuez forsque .xvi. persones dez Englés, dount le duc d'Everwyk estoit un et le counte de Suffolk un autre. Et le roy avoit le champe et le victorie — loiez soit Dieu — et mist toutz les autrez Frounceys au fewer. Et issint le roy tient soun chymyn ver Calays et soy purpose de retourner en Engleterre par la grace de Dieu. (Kristol 1995: 70)

> [And then I have heard said that before long, the lords of France with the number of fifty or sixty thousand armed men met the King [Henry V] in the road, and the King with the number of ten thousand men fought with them at a place called Agincourt, at which battle eleven thousand men were taken and killed on the French side and only sixteen men were killed among the English, of whom the Duke of York was one and the Count of Suffolk another. And the King had the field and the victory — praise be to God! — and put all the other Frenchmen to flight. And so the King makes his way towards Calais and intends to return to England by the grace of God.][12]

The speaker goes on to recount the names of some of the prisoners taken on the battlefield, stating that they 'serrount anmesniez le jeody prochein aprés le feste de Seint Martyn envers Loundres' [will be brought next Thursday after the feast of Saint Martin to London].

While this is not the most developed of the extant dialogues associated with the *dictatores*, the conversation deploys both voices (active and passive) over a broad range of tenses (present, perfect, imperfect, past simple, future simple); the vocabulary of

warfare is likewise mobilized (*encontrer, combatre, bataille, prendre, tuer, mettre au fewer*). These linguistic features are demonstrated in the context of an engaging oral report, indicating one of the situations in which learners at Oxford might have expected to use French either at home or abroad: sharing news of important events with other travellers. Finally, the geopolitical context in which these learners are acquiring the language is brought clearly to their attention: the early fifteenth century saw a sharp upturn in English fortunes in the Hundred Years War that made trade with and travel to northern France attractive and potentially lucrative activities. If the totality of the extant medieval French teaching and reference materials is insufficient to allow a student otherwise ignorant of French to produce language of this sophistication, as Kristol argues, it nevertheless seems reasonable to assume that the learners using the Kingsmill conversation manual could fairly be expected to produce similar dialogues after a little work: what would be the point in providing sample material that was too elaborate to be emulated?

Rather than presupposing the loss of intermediate material, as Kristol and Nissille do, it is worth considering whether explicit treatments of French sentence structure were actually necessary in the classrooms in which Kingsmill's manual and manuals like it were used. In his work on the longevity of French in post-Conquest England, Richard Ingham (2010) demonstrates the vitality of the language as a contact variety of French that could enact influence upon as well as undergo influence from Middle English well into the fourteenth century. The potency of French throughout this period is suggestive of its naturalistic acquisition in middle childhood, either via elementary schools, as Ingham went on to argue (2012: 33–35, 2015), or, as Jocelyn Wogan-Browne has recently proposed (2015), via the more informal modes of education supported by women's involvement in children's learning. These are precisely the conditions under which monolingual teaching in French could flourish at later stages in the curriculum. They also provide a good explanation for the comparatively late appearance of the first grammar of French, the *Donait françois* commissioned or perhaps written by John Barton (*c.* 1409), and for the composition of that grammar not in English but in French, the target language. Like the Latin grammars in the *Donatus* tradition, the *Donait françois* is framed as a conversation between a teacher and his pupils. It begins with an account of the French alphabet:

> Quantez letters est il? Vint. Quellez? Cinq voielx et quinse consonantez. Quelx sont les voielx et ou seront ils sonnés? Le premier vouyel est *a* et serra sonné en la poetrine. (Colombat 2014: 112)

> [How many letters are there? Twenty. Which? Five vowels and fifteen conso-nants. Which are the vowels and where are they sounded? The first vowel is *a* and is sounded in the chest.]

As was the case with the previously cited dialogues, the most obvious pedagogic application for this text is not translation or even glossing but some kind of oral performance, in this case a drill.[13] In his introduction to this work, Barton claims to want to promote the acquisition of all four of the key language skills, attributing his decision to publish the *Donait* to his recognition that 'les bones gens du roiaume

d'Engleterre sont enbrasez a sçavoir lire et escrire, entendre et parler droit françois' [the good people of the kingdom of England are desirous to know how to read and write, listen to and speak correct French] (Colombat 2014: 108). This balanced approach is borne out both in the form of the *Donait*, which facilitates the practice of French pronunciation at the same time as it teaches orthography and morphology, and in the unique manuscript containing the text, Oxford, All Souls College MS 182. This book is an important collection of French teaching and reference texts that treat both the written and spoken language in model letters, petitions, and dialogues and in treatises on vocabulary, pronunciation and conjugation.[14]

Other works among the surviving French teaching and reference materials would appear to target spoken French specifically. Thus Bibbesworth's *Tretiz* proposes to teach 'le dreit ordre en parler e en respundre' [the correct manner of speaking and responding] required in order to manage a rural estate (Rothwell 2009: 1). Originally composed *c.* 1240–50, the *Tretiz* was continuously copied and used throughout the later medieval period. Part of its popularity doubtless derived from its form: its lessons are couched in rhyme. This is a formal feature that at once aids memorization and defies translation, particularly when homonymy is in focus, as it so often is in this work. The following lines detail the parts of the body and appear designed to draw in the children envisaged as the primary audience of the text:

> Vostre regarde est graciose
> Mes vostre eel est chaciouse.
> Des eus oustés la chacie
> E de nes le rupie.
> Meuz vaut la rubie par .b.
> Ki ne fet le rupie par .p.,
> Car ci bource eut tant des rubies
> Cum le nes ad des rupies,
> Mult serreit riches de pirie
> Qui taunt eut de la rubie.
> (Rothwell 2009: 3)

[Your gaze is gracious | but your eye is full of sleep | You remove sleep from your eyes | and snot from the nose | rubies [la rubie] with a 'b' are worth more | than is snot [le rupie] with a 'p' | For he who had a purse as full with rubies [des rubies] | as the nose is with snot [des rupies] | would be most rich in precious stones | having so many rubies [la rubie].]

The glossing tradition alluded to above suggests that some of the items of vocabulary covered in Bibbesworth's poem posed problems for his readers but the form of the work argues in favour of its consumption and reproduction across oral/aural channels. In his edition of the Kingsmill conversation manual cited above, Kristol (1995: 96–97) notes that Jehan boun enfant lifts entire passages from Bibbesworth in his rendition of the French vocabulary that he knows. The child is of course a fictional construct, but his familiarity with the *Tretiz* suggests that its learning by rote was one of the tasks given by Kingsmill to his younger students. Indeed, rote learning and repetition, drilling, and other modes of oral instruction must perforce have played a large role in medieval language education owing to

the difficulty of obtaining books. Outside the universities, the time, cost, and skill required in order to produce even a basic manuscript militated against the common provision and possession of textbooks among learners, especially before the widespread introduction of paper. Texts such as the model letters and petitions whose forms were taught by the *dictatores* would most likely have been delivered to students by dictation in a preliminary phase of instruction before the study of their defining characteristics could begin.

As Rothwell argues (2001c: 7), it would be a mistake to assume that English was entirely absent from the classrooms of the medieval teachers of French, a point that receives reinforcement from John Trevisa's oft-cited comments about the use of English in Latin instruction after 1385 (cf. Baugh and Cable 2013: 145). Certainly, a preference for bilingual learning can be perceived in the 'double' language manuals that appeared from the close of the fifteenth century, among which there survive copies of Caxton's *Cy commence la table* (Westminster, 1480; *ESTC* S109594), de Worde's *Lytell treatyse for to lerne Englysshe and Frensshe* (Westminster, 1497; *ESTC* S100727), and Pinson's reissue of de Worde's manual under the title *Good boke to lerne to speke French* (London, [1500]; *ESTC* S100705). While he ultimately overstates his case, Christopher Cannon (2015) has also recently reminded scholars of the role that Latin must often have played in the instruction of French.[15] Still, many of the extant French teaching and reference materials seem well suited to support monolingual instruction. Even where they focused on the acquisition of writing skills, either by choice or by necessity, the *dictatores* must also have engaged the aural competencies of their learners via the practice of dictation. The medieval French teaching and reference works and the methods that they were apt to engage seem designed to serve the needs of students who approached their studies of French not as beginners but with a view to acquiring specialized forms of the written and spoken language in order to be able to function in a variety of professional and social environments. Looking at the scattering of sources associated with alternative locations of French instruction, such as Chester, the English county with which Barton associates himself, the priorities, methods, and clientele of the *dictatores* would appear to have been paralleled in similar learning situations throughout England.[16]

Shifting Priorities in Early Modern French Education

Rather than marking a continuation of the kinds of instruction offered by the medieval teachers of French, then, the French education supported by Palsgrave's 1530 *Esclarcissement* would seem to have marked a break with the practical concerns and frequently monolingual methods pursued by his predecessors. These changes are best understood as the result of the different conditions in which the medieval teachers and Palsgrave worked. Most obviously, whereas men such as Kingsmill and Sampson had taught pupils of relatively modest means and ambitions, Palsgrave was tutor to, among other nobles, Mary Tudor, the sister of Henry VIII. For men and women of the sixteenth-century court, mastery of French was an accomplishment that might be desired without necessarily having the kinds of direct practical application for which the medieval teachers sought to equip their clients. Second,

the political and social status of French in England had changed markedly by the beginning of the sixteenth century. The only continental territory still held by the English in 1530 was Calais, and Edward IV had formally renounced his claim to the French throne when he signed the Treaty of Picquigny with Louis XI in 1475, a date traditionally held to mark the end of the Hundred Years War if this is not predated to the English defeat at the Battle of Castillon in 1453.[17] French had also largely been displaced by Latin or absorbed into English as the language of official record in England by this time (cf. Rothwell 2001a). The conditions that had prompted English clerks and artisans alike to acquire the language thus no longer prevailed to the same degree, and from the end of the fifteenth century the interests of bourgeois learners of the language in particular are imagined to be more narrowly bound up with international trade. Thus Caxton's *Cy commence la table* attempts to engage a student desirous to make his fortune on the world market:

Qui ceste liure vouldra aprendre.	Who this booke shalle wylle lerne
Bien pourra entreprendre	May well entreprise or take on honde
Marchandises dun pays a lautre	Marchandises fro one land to anothir
Et cognoistre maintes denrees	And / to knowe many wares
Que lui seroient bon achetes.	Which to hym shalbe good to be bouȝt.
Ou vendues pour riche deuenir.	Or solde for riche to become.
Aprendes ce liure diligement	Lerne this book diligently.
Grande prouffyt y gyst vrayement.	Grete prouffyt lieth therin truly. (sig. [2]ᵛ)

In this context, Palsgrave's interest in the pedagogic applications of translation is easier to understand: the teaching he offers is designed, firstly, to afford his learners access to the cultural riches of French literature. At the close of his second book, Palsgrave promises his imagined reader that, barring a few difficult constructions not yet covered, he may now with the help of his French word lists 'be sure to vnderstande any authoure that is written in the frenche tong / by his owne studye without any techar' (II: sig. [59]ᵛ). Writing in the era of print and after the widespread adoption of paper as the principal writing support, Palsgrave's teaching is alive to the increased availability of reading matter in England, much of which continued to be in French, as Ardis Butterfield points out (2010: 36). Even Palsgrave's opening section on the pronunciation of French is geared towards the consumption of French literature. It closes with a series of prose and verse samples drawn from popular authoritative texts that are accompanied by a rough phonetic guide. The following lines, for example, are quoted from the opening of Chartier's *Quadrilogue invectif* (1422). The original French is given in a heavier, gothic type than the transliteration; I give it here in bold:

> **A la tres haulte et excellente maieste des princes /**
> Alatreháutoeevssellántomaiestédeprínsos /
> **A la tres honnoree magnificence des nobles /**
> Alatresovnnoréomanifisánsodenóbles .
> <div align="right">(*Esclarcissement*, I: sig. 22ʳ)</div>

Introducing the third book of the *Esclarcissement*, Palsgrave makes clear that he hopes his learners will proceed from reading French to producing their own utterances in

the language (III: sig. 1^r) but the gradual plan of his work is manifestly designed to cater to the requirements of users whose needs did not stretch so far. As it turns out, users of any kind of Palsgrave's book do not appear to have been numerous: Gabriele Stein (1997: 37–45) notes that the diffusion of the *Esclarcissement* was narrow and that it was never reprinted in its author's lifetime. Significantly, the most popular French teaching texts of the early sixteenth century were shorter than the *Esclarcissement* and attempted to strike a closer balance between grammatical instruction and language practice. Giles du Wes's *Introductorie for to lerne to rede to pronounce and to speke Frenche trewly*, for example (London, [1533]; *ESTC* S109850) went through several editions and four printings (cf. *ESTC* S105412; S109637; S109634). Du Wes mocked Palsgrave's assumption that he, an Englishman, might be able to teach French at the same time as he manifested scepticism regarding the existence of 'rules infallybles' (sig. [A3]^v) that might define the vernacular language, which du Wes spoke as a native. The *Introductorie* is written in French with running interlinear translations into English but, like his peers, who also published fully bilingual texts, du Wes seems little interested in commenting specifically upon the grammatical differences between the two languages that such a layout might make visible.[18] Du Wes provides basic information on pronunciation, conjugation and vocabulary in the first section of his book but differs from Palsgrave in the inclusion of a series of dialogues in his second book, via which spoken French might be more actively practised. The rather highfaluting topics addressed in some of these conversations, which treat the nature of the soul and the mysteries of the mass, distinguish them markedly from the more practically minded conversations used by the medieval teachers of French, but du Wes's understanding of the importance of modelling the spoken language is one area where some continuity between medieval and early modern French didactics might be perceived.

Conclusion

At the same time as it disrupts the narrative of French teaching proposed by Kristol and Nissille, this contrastive analysis of the instruction offered by the medieval teachers of French and by Palsgrave has registered both the sensitivity with which the extant material evidence must be treated and the difficulties inherent in attempting to generalize about the educational methods pursued by teachers and learners of modern languages in the period before organized modern languages teaching became widespread. I have thus sought to underline the pertinence of Howatt and Smith's recent critique of teleological histories of language learning and teaching that present didactic methods as discrete moments in time 'strung together as in a necklace of beads' (2014: 91, cf. Besse 2014: 42). The process of reform so familiar to historians of modern languages education whereby teachers turned away from translation at the opening of the twentieth century towards more communicative modes of instruction in the twenty-first century can be viewed otherwise than as a self-evident amelioration in theory and practice. After all, the extant evidence would seem to suggest some flow in the opposite direction among

the developments taking place in early modern language instruction. But the main point to be made here is not that modern teaching practices are unoriginal insofar as they may have been pursued in some form at Oxford or elsewhere in England in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Instead, this study has attempted to demonstrate the necessity of considering a broad range of historical factors when attempting to reconstruct the teaching methods of earlier periods. Even after the introduction of organized language instruction and the advent of modern applied linguistics, language teaching methods would continue to be influenced by the same fundamental pressures: the availability of classroom technologies, the political and social status of the target language, and, above all, the abilities and requirements of learners.

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Notes to Chapter 2

1. The early printed books discussed in this essay are cited by signature and (where given) section number; any abbreviation marks in the original texts have been silently expanded. The *English Short Title Catalogue (ESTC)* citation numbers for these works are given within parentheses. While the *ESTC* makes a wealth of bibliographic information freely available online, the older *Short Title Catalogue (STC)* numbers are needed to call up facsimile images at Early English Books Online (EEBO), from where most of the primary texts have been cited. For ease of reference, ESTC numbers are supplemented by STC numbers in the list of works cited.

2. While, as Besse (2014) points out, French language education in the Middle Ages has been largely ignored in the publications of the Société Internationale pour l'Histoire du Français Langue Étrangère ou Seconde (SIHFLES), the bibliography is nonetheless substantial. Beginning researchers can consult two studies by Rothwell (1968, 2001c) as well as the surveys of the extant French teaching and reference materials by Kristol (1990, 2001b) and Dean and Boulton (1999: 157–78). Readers with an interest in the longer *durée* can consult Kibbee's history of early French teaching in England (1991). Most recently, see the revisionist account by Ingham (2015).

3. On Palsgrave's biography, see Stein (1997: 1–36). In her reassessment of princely education in early modern England, Aysha Pollnitz suggests that Palsgrave's proposal of a key to idiomatic French commonplaces in the third book of the *Esclarcissement* is a direct tribute to Erasmus's *Adagia* whereby the Englishman 'extended Erasmus' pedagogical method to the French tongue [...]. Palsgrave's pedagogical compass', Pollnitz concludes, 'pointed straight to Rotterdam' (2015: 95–96).

4. In her monograph on Oxford, Magdalen College MS 188, Nissille provides a detailed description of the book accompanied by several colour images of it (2014: 96–130). Nissille includes a transcription of the trilingual *Somme le roi* as an appendix to her study (2014: 305–492) and it is from this transcription that the text is cited below by folio number. Nissille's expansion of the abbreviation marks in the manuscript has been silently adopted.

5. On the contents, audiences, text, and manuscript tradition of the *Somme le roi*, see Brayer and Leurquin-Labie's Introduction to their edition of the work (2008: 7–89).

6. Kristol went on to develop a more detailed account of the Magdalen translator's handling of *en* (2001a: 156–59). Nissille (2014: 198–210) also provides extensive accounts of the Magdalen translator's treatment of negation and the indefinite pronoun.

7. Compare the recent edition of a group of late-medieval English school notebooks by Nicholas

Orme (2013), which usefully highlights the importance played by the translation of *vulgaria* in the instruction of Latin from the beginning of the fifteenth century.

8. Rothwell has edited both these works (2005, 2009). On the English glosses in the extant copies of the *Tretiz*, see further Knox (2013).

9. On the distinction between content and language driven instruction, see further Met (1998). I am grateful to my colleague at the University of Fribourg, Raphael Berthele, for pointing out this reference to me, and for offering helpful feedback on an early draft of this paper.

10. Britnell moderates Rothwell's claims regarding the prevalence of French among urban records, claiming that the use of the language in such contexts 'peaked around 1350–1415' (2009: 89).

11. All translations into English in this chapter are my own.

12. On the patriotic arithmetic in this passage, see Kristol's note (1995: 93).

13. As Merrilees points out (1985: 109), when the explanations given in the *Donait* become more complex, the dialogue established at the work's opening breaks down. Dictation probably played a part in the reception of the work.

14. Oxford, All Souls College 182 has been described and partially edited by Legge (1941). The manuscript offers an interesting parallel to Magdalen College MS 188 insofar as Legge suggests that it anthologizes French teaching and reference works with a view to facilitating its owner's pursuit of his professional clerical activities (1941: ix–xxi).

15. Cannon's claim (2015: 649) that 'Latin was the language every [English] reader of French could be assumed to know well' is not supported by the reports of medieval French teachers, who complain about their students' imperfect grasp of the classical language. Thus Richardson (1942: 335) cites one of Thomas Sampson's treatises on composition in which the author explains that though the text types he will treat are conventionally written in Latin, he will write his preface in French 'a cause qu je [...] ay conceu qe plusours enfantz sont si tenuement lettrez' [because I have observed that many children have such slight Latin], acting in the belief that his schoolboys 'purront le pluys legerement entendre les reulez en frounceys q'en latyn' [will be more easily able to understand the rules in French than in Latin]. French is the language of approach to Latin in this instance, not vice versa.

16. In the introduction to the *Donait*, Barton calls himself an 'escolier de Paris, nee et nourie toutez voiez d'Engleterre en la conté de Cestre' [scholar of Paris, born and brought up nevertheless in the county of Chester] (Colombat 2014: 110). On the various locations of medieval English business education, which most likely always contained an element of French training, see Orme (2006: 68–73).

17. Deanne Williams (2000) suggests that when he dedicated his work to Henry VIII, Palsgrave was offering the king an opportunity to parallel the military dominance over the French that he hoped to achieve on the battlefield with a symbolic dominance of their language. In the Introduction to the *Esclarcissement*, Palsgrave describes both his attempt to bring the language under 'rules certayn & precepts grammaticall' at the same time as he repeats Geoffroy Tory's lamentation that no Frenchman had achieved the same purpose (sig. [A3]ᵛ).

18. One exception is Pierre Valence, who, in defence of the English translation he includes as part of his *Introductions in frensshe* ([London 1528]) asserts that the English version has been included 'for better / and more euydently [to] shewe the dyuersite of one tongue to the other / & torne worde for worde / and lyne for lyne / for to be to yonge chyldren more easy / and lyght' (sig. [A3]ᵛ). Valence closes his brief text with a nod to the *Esclarcissement*: he suggests that his readers will be able to do without the vocabulary that he would have liked to add to his work since the 'lucubracyons / & werkes of mayster pollygraue' are soon to come to light (sig. [Q3]ᵛ). The *Introductions in frensshe* is not listed in the ESTC or the STC. It is cited here from the facsimile edition by Alston (1967).