Patriotism and patriarchy as obstacles to the adoption of reform methods in the English school system

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ABSTRACT
The Reform Movement has often been framed as a “[...] remarkable display of international and interdisciplinary co-operation [...]” (Howatt 1984: 169), yet adoption of the Movement’s core principle that “[...] the spoken language should be emphasized [...]” (Howatt and Smith 2002: ix) met with considerable opposition in the teaching of modern languages in English schools and universities. In this paper I consider how the aims of the Reform were circulated and debated in England through the newly established professional fora of conferences and journals and I examine these aims against the discursive and structural formations that inhibited the adoption of Reform methods. In particular, I focus on the cultural belief that ‘speaking’ foreign languages was “[...] unmanly, even unpatriotic” (Bayley 1998: 56; Cohen 2003) and on the concomitant institutional bias against native-speakers (Mclelland 2018) as the teaching profession anglicized at the end of the 19th century (Radford 1985), consciously seeking to match the prestige of the classics through emphasizing modern languages as a liberal rather than a utilitarian discipline.

Introduction
In this paper I consider the resistance, or at best apathy, to the methods proposed by language teaching reformers in 19th century England. The two intersectional themes that I develop, namely patriotism and patriarchy, thread through the entire history of language teaching in England, but were especially salient in the late Victorian period as modern languages became a widely taught and newly professionalised activity along with the expansion of schooling and the broadening of the curriculum. Indeed, the lenses of gender and nationalism remain decisive, albeit under-theorised, factors in debates – today as vigorous as ever – surrounding modern languages education. The intersectionality of the terms patriotism and patriarchy is explicit in their common derivational reference to the image of the father (respectively ‘of one’s fathers’ [πατριώτης patriotis] in the sense

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of one having a shared lineage or fatherland, and ‘the rule or authority of the father’ (πατριαρχία patriarkhia) and I intend this double reference to denote the antagonistic framing of language learning as both unpatriotic (disloyal to nation) and unmanly (conflicting with masculine values and associated, negatively, with femininity). It is my contention that patriarchal values (the privileging of certain forms of normative and hegemonic masculinity) have discursively constructed preferred and dispreferred forms of engaging with foreign languages, including especially ‘speaking’.

Current discussions pertaining to modern languages in English schools are invariably overshadowed by the ubiquitous discourse of ‘crisis’ and anxiety across the sector about falling numbers of students. Clearly, the field of language teaching and learning is not a science of method restricted to classroom contexts, but extends to how teaching and learning intersects with historically constituted wider cultural narratives. Research into modern languages education in particular cannot disregard how the value of learning languages is perceived variably by stakeholders and how these perceptions shape the pedagogic encounter.

Compared with other European countries, the tradition of gender segregation remains a feature in the English education system and difference by gender is systematically monitored and reported in performance league tables at every level. Research into the gender differential in modern languages (e.g. Carr and Pauwels 2006; Clark and Trafford 1995) typically reveals variation in interest and take-up according to teacher and pupil reported responses. Findings generally point to gendered perceptions of subjects and that ‘[…] gender expectations are stricter for boys than for girls and may prevent men from entering more feminine career tracks’ (Maaike et al. 2016: 181), although single-sex schooling typically shows a narrowing of ‘[…] the gender gap in self-concept […]’ (Sullivan 2009: 259). This type of gender research has spawned a considerable body of professional development material aiming at making language learning more attractive to boys (more ‘boy-friendly’) in the same way as schools are encouraged to make science, technology and maths more appealing to girls.

However, research that relies on self-reporting perceptions of curriculum subjects stops short of unpacking the forms of knowledge and the substrata of interactional modes that any given curriculum subject may comprise. In other words, a modern language such as French, while following a nationally set programme of study, is curricularised (Coffey and Leung 2019) into a set of language content and skills that call on students to perform particular identity positions through engaging with that language in a given setting. Furthermore, binary categories of gender as boy-girl / male-female sit

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1 And also especially ‘French’, although space constraints do not permit differentiation between the languages to be dealt with extensively here.
awkwardly with current, constructivist understandings which take gender to be more than reducible to dichotomous biological predispositions. It is therefore apposite to consider how forms of knowledge and language performance are the product of attitudes and cognitive frames that align with specific ideological matrices. In the case at hand I am referring to the ideologies of patriarchy and patriotism that characterised the sociocultural and geopolitical landscape of 19th and 20th century education.

Among the range of curriculum subjects, which are constructed within a national and nationalising educational framework of citizenship, modern languages represent, arguably, a particularly problematic challenge inasmuch as they entail learning about and even performing supranational behaviours which conflict with internal cohesion of the national identity. This potential conflict reaches beyond the question of language study itself and research into the emotional dimension of language study shows that some skills, namely speaking, are more threatening and anxiety-inducing than others. ‘Foreign language anxiety’ is a long established variable in second language acquisition research that speaks not only to classroom contexts but also to wider cultural narratives. An example of this is shown in the following extracts are taken from Richard Watson’s (1995) language memoir

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It [speaking French] was like diving naked and alone into ice water. I was frozen with panic. (p. 8)

A great suspicion came over me: Real Men Don’t Speak French. (p. 10)

Although I loved learning to read French and enjoy reading French philosophers and writers, I have a distinct dislike for the sound of spoken French. Many Americans do. Why? Because it’s weak. For American men at least, French sounds syrupy and effeminate. (p. 52)

What made me realize how much I dislike the sound of French was the continual, unctuous, caressing repetition of ‘l’oiseau’ (‘the bird’). It is a word the French believe to be one of the most beautiful in their language. It is a word that cannot be pronounced without simpering, a word whose use should be restricted to children under five . . . American men don’t like to simper. (p. 53)

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Watson’s description of his anxiety at speaking French, while recounted in a witty tone, calls attention to a psychological fear that is both individual and cultural. This has profound consequences for ways that different individuals feel able to engage with languages and how agency is constrained by normative models of being, in this case, ‘male’ and ‘American’. Boys in particular are likely to be dissuaded from engaging with languages for fear of

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2For more on Watson’s memoir see Kramsch (2009) and Schumann (1997). Although Watson was writing from an American perspective, I include the example here as I believe it could be equally representative of a British standpoint.
what Kissau (2007) describes as the ‘sissy’ stigma that translates as homophobic peer pressure. This stigma has deep roots in historical language ideologies that graft onto a language in the quality of primacy as masculine virility that must be protected from degeneracy into effeminacy.3

In the next section I provide some background to the context of modern language teaching in the 1870–80s. I then characterise the circulation of ideas and variation in take-up of the Reform methods, offering an analysis of reasons for the systemic inertia in implementing these methods in England. I draw on and develop discursive stances reported from some secondary sources as well as those located in primary source publications, namely the journals and pedagogical treatises that record the professional dialogue and disputes of the time.

Language learning in English schools at the time of the Reform Movement

School education expanded during the mid-Victorian period following some key legislation in the 1860s which enacted recommendations from government commissioned reports.4 Aside from altruistic intention, this state intervention was prompted by a perceived need to equip an increasingly clerical workforce, enjoying gradually widening suffrage,5 with basic literacy skills. Prior to 1870 modern languages were virtually ‘[. . .] unknown in the elementary schools which served the mass of the population’ (Bayley 1989a: 58) and the Newcastle Commission (1861) had ‘[. . .] made no mention of modern languages as a subject in the curriculum [. . .]’ (Bayley 1989a: 58).

Although English grammar schools, effectively established in their current form by the 1869 Endowment Act, were in some ways comparable with the Prussian Gymnasium and French lycée in their ambition to prepare a generation of future leaders, the English system also differed, remaining more de-centralised. While the lycées and the Gymnasien had been conceived from around the turn of the 19th century (Anderson 2004) at the service of the state, education in England was characterised, in contrast, by

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3 For more on the historical construction of English as a ‘masculine’ language see Sklar’s (1989) analysis of 18th century commentaries by, among others, Samuel Johnson, Joseph Priestly, Jonathan Swift.

4 The 1868 Public Schools Act (following the 1864 Clarendon Report which classified the nine ‘great’ public [i.e. ancient, private] schools) confirmed a model of schooling for the upper classes. These fee-paying schools retained the ideal of a generalised classical education for entry to the universities and the old, elite professions. The 1868 Taunton Report reported a critical shortage of post-elementary and proposed a massive expansion of secondary education across three ‘grades’ of school which were ranked strictly by socio-economic categories, to correspond to the ‘gradations of society’ (Taunton Report 1868: I, 16), notably the needs of the loosely labelled middle classes. For the masses, the 1870 Elementary Education Act (the so-called ‘Forster Act’) enacted the recommendations of the Newcastle Commission (1861) in providing free elementary education focusing on basic skills (reading, writing, basic arithmetic and religion) and local school boards were created to regulate this provision, with elementary schooling becoming compulsory in 1880.

5 The Reform Acts of 1867 and 1884 substantially increased suffrage rights, though still only for men and far from universal.
a laissez-faire approach. British ‘public’ schools (fee-paying elite institutions) retained their autonomy and their ingrained tradition of classical education that continued to provide the aspirational model of learning for the grammar schools of the burgeoning middle-classes.6

In terms of pedagogy, the expanded systematisation resulting from school reforms in England was propitious to the development of pedagogical ‘methods’ which could be applied to a massified student body, and this encouraged an entrenchment of the Grammar-Translation Method (henceforth GTM) as a preferred pedagogy, not just in the elite public schools but in the aspirational grammar schools for the middle classes. It is convenient therefore to use the term GTM to describe the prevalent language pedagogy against which to contrast the advent of proposals for Reform in English schools, but the term itself merits a brief note of problematisation as GTM itself was not enacted in England with the same measure of uniformity found, for example, in Prussia.

Schoolteachers of the 18th and 19th centuries would not have said they were using a method called ‘grammar-translation’ and the origin of the term remains somewhat obscure, though probably stems (see Kirk 2018) from Viëtor’s criticism of the ‘grammatisierend-übersetzende’ [grammatical-translating] pedagogy that prevailed in the Prussian Gymnasien as well as in the elite public and middle-class grammar schools of England.7 As for the actual pedagogy of GTM itself, it worth noting that, while the term is used almost always disparagingly, this disparagement often points to a lack of sympathy with the original intention of the approach. Early tutor-grammarian authors of what would become GTM manuals (e.g. Chambaud 1750; Wanostrocht 1780) did not intend their grammar and translation approach to be an exclusively written method but as part of a programme of learning that included different forms of speaking practice, including conversation (see Coffey 2020a).8 The negative associations of GTM, therefore, result more from ‘[…] the mechanical, mindless way that unskilled teachers implemented it […]’ (Kirk 2018: 28) during the 19th century than a fault inherent in the procedures of the method itself.

The newly systematised models of education of the 19th century cemented a trend already begun in the 18th century to privilege writing over speaking as a form of pedagogical dialogue and as an assessable exposition of knowledge. By the time of the RM, modern languages, the most notable of which remained French, were taught largely using GTM and so had effectively

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6 As McCulloch (2006: 698) states, ‘[…] grammar schools gained significance during this period for the middle classes both as an effective means of securing social advantage, and as an eloquent expression of social anxieties’.

7 For a fuller discussion of the Prussian origins of GTM see Siefert (2013) and Vermes (2010).

8 It is important, therefore, for critics to remember that explicit grammar teaching – where this involved parsing (identifying parts of speech and their cases) and practising specific grammar points through focused gap-fills and translations – developed as a reaction against the wearisome rote-learning of extended texts, whether literary or conversational dialogues, that had characterized earlier methods (Coffey 2020a: 165).
become a written subject, consolidated by the introduction of written exams (see Stray 2005 on the move to written exams at the universities). Oral elements were eventually introduced to university assessments but were optional and ‘at most universities, the oral aspect was delegated to junior members of the department […]’ (Bayley 1998: 50).

There was already a gender difference in the degree to which GTM was applied (a point developed below); with the Girls’ Public Day Schools Trust, set up in 1872, ‘private schools [for girls, SC] were greatly improved, thus encouraging parents who formerly would have employed governesses to instruct their daughters to send them to day or boarding schools’ (Bayley 1989b: 29). The increase in the number of girls’ schools in the final decades of the 19th century targeted girls from the expanding industrial and commercial middle classes, and French (with German to a much lesser extent) was ‘solidly entrenched’ (Bayley 1989b: 29) in these new schools, enjoying considerably higher regard than at the endowed grammar schools for boys. Girls’ schools were freer of the shackles of a rigid GTM.

**Key tenets of the Reform Movement (RM) and variation in their take up**

While the RM ‘[…] was an umbrella term for a variety of approaches […]’ (Bayley 1998: 42), for the purposes of this paper I refer to RM’s emphasis on orality and the ideal of developing an instinctive, ‘direct’ language competence through avoidance of translation and through immersive engagement with language. This is summarised in the four pedagogical principles of the RM listed by Howatt and Smith (2002: ix):

1. the spoken language should be emphasized;
2. class work should be based on coherent texts, not absurd sentences;
3. grammar should be taught after the texts [have] been studied and not before; and
4. translation should be avoided and replaced by exercises in the foreign language.

In this list of core tenets we see clearly the ‘[…] the primacy of speech; the centrality of the connected text […]], and the absolute priority of an oral methodology in the classroom’ (Howatt 1984: 171) which stands in stark contrast with the accreted practices of the GTM approach.

Although it is worth noting that there had been some criticism of the state of language teaching in English schools and universities, the launch of the RM is usually taken to be the call for change set forth in Viëtor’s manifesto (1905).9 This is relevant because, while the RM is considered to have been

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9 Howatt and Smith (2002: ix) define the RM as lasting twenty years, beginning with Viëtor’s manifesto and ‘ending’ with Otto Jespersen’s *Sprøgundervisning* (Jespersen 1901 in Danish) and *How to Teach a Foreign Language* (Jespersen 1904 in English), although they later extend the time parameters of the period to 1880-1920 (Howatt and Smith 2014).
‘[...] truly pan-European [...]’ (Howatt and Smith 2002, vol II: ix), its principles were not uniformly interpreted or practised. If, in substance, within the different methods associated with the RM, the ‘[...] only area of serious internal disagreement was whether or not to use phonetic transcription’ (Howatt and Smith 2014: 83) the implementation and take up of methods varied according to the institutional cultures of different systems and ‘[...] England [...] was to prove the most resistant to the new ideas [...]’ (Howatt and Smith 2002, vol I: xiii).

Several factors have been suggested for this relative resistance to the RM in England compared with other countries (e.g. by Bayley 1998; Kirk 2018; Howatt and Smith 2002; McLelland 2018; Radford 1985) and can be summarily listed as follows:

- The hegemony of the classics and what had become perceived as classical pedagogy.
- The hegemony of the universities and their opposition to the utilitarian and communicative aims of the RM.
- The lack of direct, centralised intervention (in contrast with other European countries).
- GTM maintained its ‘[...] stranglehold on the examinations systems [...]’ (Bayley 1998: 56).
- The relative shortage of teachers who were able to teach RM methods, specifically who had the proficiency in speaking to implement oral-based pedagogies in the foreign language (a point already mentioned in the Taunton Report (1868, I: 551: ‘Good [French SC] teachers are hard to find [...]’).

My aim here is not to extend the list of variables per se, the interplay of which I fully acknowledge, but to probe and articulate the deeper context in which these factors manifested in the English context. As suggested above, I believe that, though historical, these are embedded in longstanding matrix ideologies which continue to shape views of language learning and teaching.

The most notable reformer in England was Henry Sweet (1845–1912), whose 1877 Handbook of Phonetics contributed internationally to a more scientific approach to the study of both historical and modern languages. Sweet would later develop this explicit dimension in his 1899 The Practical Study of Languages but even in the preface to his 1877 handbook he lamented that

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10The Universities of Oxford and Cambridge introduced their Local Examinations, including for French or German, in 1857 and 1858 respectively and the Oxford and Cambridge Schools Examination Board was set up in 1873. The national School Certificate and Higher School Certificate, also including a language, did not appear until 1918.
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[...]

if our present wretched system of studying modern languages is ever to be reformed, it must be on the basis of a preliminary training in general phonetics, which would at the same time lay the foundation for a thorough practical study of the pronunciation and elocution of our own language – subjects which are totally ignored in our present scheme of education (Sweet 1877: v-vi).

Unlike his continental counterparts, Sweet was not a language teacher by training, but a philologist with a special interest in Anglo-Saxon as well as Icelandic. It is significant that continental reformers were teachers themselves and not only interested in linguistics but, ‘moved’ by the perceived ‘overloading’ (Überbürdung) (Howatt and Smith 2002: x) of the extant system, sought a pragmatic solution to improve the lot of their students. It has also been noted that continental reformers were often, though not always, teachers of English rather than more mainstream French or classical languages, and as such were more predisposed to an anti-GTM stance.

In terms of how ideas were circulated, this period saw an unprecedented dialogue between language educators facilitated by the new fora of professional journals issued by learned societies, channels of communication which were instrumental in the professionalising of teaching. Unlike the individual treatises of the sort traditionally published, these early journals, which were much closer to the classroom than current academic journals (see Coffey 2020b), allowed the body of ideas that constituted the RM to build collectively within publications.

The integration of phonetics in language teaching to help pupils’ pronunciation – an important element in the RM – was indicative of the emphasis on orality and a key international body that promoted RM principles was the International Phonetics Association founded in Paris in 1886. It is telling to note that most members of the Association were from Germany, followed respectively by Sweden, Denmark and France, with members from England trailing at only 54 out of a membership of 743 in 1897. While the contribution of English scholarship (Melville Bell, William Jones, Sweet) to the science of phonetic transcription was prominent, the application of phonetics to language teaching was not as immediately salient in England as elsewhere, and the relative importance attributed to phonetics remained a key variable in reforming language teaching.

Of the reasons cited for the limited take up of RM principles, two factors that underpin resistance to the goal of oral proficiency are the changing status of the teaching profession and an ideological resistance to the goal of oral proficiency as a threat to the coherence of national identity.

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11Technological advancements supporting the exchange of RM ideas, cited by Howatt and Smith (2002, 2014), include facilitation of conferences by improved and cheaper transport networks and a boom in journal publication due to new wood pulp technology producing cheaper paper.

12First called the Phonetic Teachers’ Association (Dhi Fonêtik Tîcîrz’ Asîçiécon, FTA) then the Association Phonétique des Professeurs de Langues Vivantes (AP), and, from 1897, to the Association Phonétique Internationale (API).
Professionalisation – and anglicisation – of the teaching profession

The integration of modern languages as legitimate fields of study both in schools and universities that accompanied the institutionalisation of the language teaching profession\(^{13}\) led to a concomitant bias against native speakers. The reasons for and consequences of this bias are critical to our understanding of why the development of more innovative and oral-based pedagogies were stymied in English schools.

In England, language teaching had long been both a practical asset for travelling and business but also an important social marker, especially for ‘gentle’ women who were expected to converse in French. Tuition had been largely undertaken by private tutors in the homes of the nobility or private academies, and, where modern languages were offered in schools from the 18\(^{th}\) century, there was an extra charge for tuition along with other ‘accomplishments’ such as fencing or art. Language tuition in this model was provided by native-speakers, of whom there was a steady supply, especially in London and urban areas. For many migrant language tutors, employment was precarious, and language teaching offered a means to an end rather than a vocational choice. Languages tutors (‘maîtres de langues’) had traditionally been in competition with each other for clients, although there was clearly some move to collectivise into an association as early as the 1830s from the mention in the *Quarterly Journal of Education*\(^{14}\) of a recently formed ‘Society of French Teachers […] recently established in London by the teachers of the French language […]’ (QJE 1834: 184).

When modern languages (and this mostly meant French) did gradually become integrated into schools,\(^{15}\) the languages tutor was often viewed reductively both by pupils and other members of the teaching staff, as demonstrated in personal letters and diary entries which record the experience of being marginalised, ‘[…] la risée de ses élèves, et […] mis à l’écart par les autres professeurs de l’établissement’ (Poirier 2010: 160). As the role of language teacher became systematised across Europe (Lillo 2016) rivalry developed between native-speaking teachers (foreign nationals) and British teachers of languages, who were keen to emphasise their greater capacity in maintaining classroom discipline and in applying higher status methods of teaching that were aligned to the pedagogy of the classics, namely by focusing on written text and translation.

The thorny question of who was most suited to teaching languages brings into relief contentious notions of competence which go beyond linguistic proficiency. The debate can be charted through the exchanges recorded,

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\(^{13}\)The first national teachers’ union in England, the forerunner of the *National Union of Teachers*, was established in 1870 as the *National Union of Elementary Teachers* at King’s College London.

\(^{14}\)The first English journal specifically for education, that ran for just ten volumes between 1831 and 1835.

\(^{15}\)Thomas Arnold, the Master of Rugby School, being the first to do so in the 1830s, whereby ‘[…] mathematics and modern languages, hitherto regarded as extra, were incorporated in the regular scheme’ (Rouse 1898: 232).
both as conference proceedings and letters published by the newly created professional associations: la Société Nationale des Professeurs de Français en Angleterre (founded in 1881 exclusively for French expatriate teachers) and the Modern Language Association (1892). The MLA, with Max Müller (1823–1900) as its first president, sought to attract a broader range of professionals from across the language teaching sector and listed as one its key aims to ‘[…] obtain for modern languages the status in the educational curricula of the country to which their extrinsic value, as instruments of mental discipline and culture entitles them – apart from their acknowledged commercial and utilitarian importance […]’ (The Educational Times 1894: 64). This is an important statement of intent to extend languages beyond their instrumental value or their status as a mere accomplishment.

Unsurprisingly, it was native speaker teachers who were more likely to be open to the ideas of the RM, whereas British modern languages teachers, having been educated themselves in a classical system and often lacking in advanced oral proficiency, were more aligned to the status quo. The elite model of language learning therefore posited a model of foreign languages without foreigners, reducing the development of linguistic competence to a discrete set of skills that included parsing grammar and translation. These skills did not require the face-threatening work of imitating the accent of the other or destabilising a British national identity position. Even Sweet’s advocacy for a more ‘practical’16 dimension in language teaching, is steeped in rhetoric of patriotic sentiment that it would be hard for a 19th century English scholar to disavow:

The more civilised and influential a nation is the worse linguists are those who speak its language; but when Englishmen (and even Frenchmen) really devote themselves to the practical study of language, they prove quite equal to other nations […] (Sweet 1877: xiii-xiv).

As already cited, native-speaking teachers were easy targets for mockery17 and seen as unable to control boys. In particular, their foreign pronunciation was ridiculed and ‘[…] horror stories abounded’ (Radford 1985: 209) of the deliberately poor pronunciation of English teachers of French. For instance, Douglas Savoury, who would become a Professor of French and author of The Sounds of the French Language as well as a distinguished Member of Parliament, recounts the anecdote of a master who always ‘inflicted upon his pupils the same three Molière texts, the titles of which

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16Sweet’s use of the term ‘practical’ reflects the understanding of the term within the RM which nudges closer to its current, instrumental connotation signalling development of communicative (usually oral) skills rather than the sense conveyed by the ‘practical grammars’ of the 18th century of practising grammatical rules (praxis) through written exercises.

17The scorn shown to native-speakers can be seen even in the 16th century, in John Eliot’s (1593) savage parody of native-speaker teachers’ supposed sense of superiority, denouncing them as ‘[…] beasts and serpents who have poisoned England […]’ (see Howatt 1984: 28).
he mispronounced as “Tar-tough” (Tartuffe); “Lez Farm Save-aunt” (Les Femmes Savantes); and “Ler Miss Anthrowp” (Le Misanthrope)’ (Radford 1985: 210). Savoury states that the only boy in the class who spoke with a natural French accent was ridiculed and obliged to imitate ‘the manly British accent of his master’ (Savoury in Modern Language Teaching, [1906: 24] cited by Radford 1985: 210). Although told as an anecdote to make a point, the scenario evoked is a striking example of how identity boundaries might be maintained through ridicule. Historiographically, this anecdote provides a potent reminder, in the absence of ethnographic data, of the limits of generalising statements found in official reports and educational treatises about boys’ and girls’ propensities in language learning.

Even those sympathetic to the development of oral proficiency separated speaking practice from the central business of language study. Mary Brebner, who had visited schools in Germany and compared the different systems, confirmed in an address to the MLA the

[...] general consensus of opinion that the Englishman is the better teacher of English boys, just as the Frenchman is the better teacher of French boys, the German of German boys and so forth, were it only for the inevitable reason that he understands their character better and understands their difficulties better (Brebner 1903: 38).

Brebner’s point was in fact to argue for the importance of foreign language assistants to develop oral proficiency but she makes clear this should not be the responsibility of the higher status teacher. Similarly, the suggestion of pioneering schools inspector Daniel Fearon is cited by the Taunton Commission ‘[...] to appoint as the master of modern languages in a grammar school an Englishman who has had a superior education but who has also resided abroad, and to supplement his labours with those of a visiting French master’ (Taunton Report 1868, I: 236).

It would be too simplistic, however, to over-emphasise the opposition as one simply of differential proficiency between native and non-native speakers. Resistance to oral methods also came from scholars who had a more classical or ‘liberal education’ vision of modern languages, and who feared a reductive instrumentalism in the focus on developing speaking skills. It is significant that Max Müller, for example, a German native-speaker, was a leading orientalist scholar and an Oxford don (in fact their first Professor of Comparative Philology). While, therefore, he would have no interest in wishing to align with the protective chauvinism of British modern languages teachers in the school sector, the MLA’s vision of language study for ‘mental discipline’ was concomitant with, or at least used in the service of, the defence of GTM. In arguing that languages should be ‘rigidly learnt’ through ‘hard and dry studies’, Richard Hiley, author of popular school grammars for English and Latin as well as other school textbooks, described the mental discipline of grammar training as ‘[...] the pith and marrow of a language,
and not the mere jabbering taught by a “bonne” […]’ (Hiley 1887: 310) and this argument was a recurrent theme in the journals put forth by scholars who insisted on language learning for intellectual rigour and spoke disparagingly of any focus on oral methods.18

**Taciturnity and the cult of manliness**

While girls traditionally learnt languages more orally through home tutoring and governesses, and girls’ supposed ‘natural tendency to be talkative’ (Bayley 1998: 42) had been recorded since at least the 17th century,19 the gender divide in desiring speaking proficiency as an outcome, Cohen argues, has not always been the case. Cohen’s extensive scholarship on the gender distinction in language teaching and learning charts how constructions of masculinity evolved throughout the 18th century to increasingly value taciturnity among the aristocratic and gentlemanly classes in contrast to verbosity, perceived as the exuberant chatter characteristic of women and lower class men.20

As languages and other ‘modern studies’ were gradually becoming accepted into English schools, the influence of public schools continued to perpetuate ‘[…] an aristocratic element in English education, and the proprietary and endowed schools continued to uphold it as the educational ideal. The sons of the expanding commercial and industrial middle class were being trained in the older traditions and codes of gentleman’ (Lawson and Silver 1973: 344–345). The indexing of taciturnity with an idealised manly nobility has a long lineage and is known across different cultural settings. In Victorian England, the discourse of manly silence as a desirable quality for upper class men intensified and in the public schools in particular there was an increasing emphasis on sports and physical prowess as ‘the accent moved from godliness to manliness’ (Lawson and Silver 1973: 345). This was encouraged through the concept of muscular Christianity, exemplified in the work of Thomas Hughes (1879) *The Manliness of Christ*, a treatise advocating a masculine interpretation of Christ through the

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18See Radford (1985) for a number of references of headmasters and university scholars advocating the educational, rather than utilitarian, value of languages ‘[…] as instruments of humanistic culture ‘[…]’ (MacGowan 1900–1901: 169).

19Bayley may be making an indirect reference here to Bathua Makin’s (1600–1675) cogent defence of women’s intellect. The original statement reads:

> It is objected against poor Women, they may learn Tongues and speak freely, being naturally disposed to be talkative: But for any solid Judgement or depth of Reason, it is seldom found in their giddy Crowns. I proceed therefore to shew they have been good *Logicians, Philosophers, Mathematicians, Divines, and Poets* (Makin 1673: 13).

Makin, former governess to Charles I’s daughter Elizabeth Stuart (1635–1650), was a staunch advocate of girls’ education and founded girls’ academies in Putney and Tottenham.

20By the 1780s the Grand Tour was no longer thought necessary to the refinement of the gentleman, and speaking French ceased to be indispensable to his accomplishment.[….] The very monosyllabic harshness of English and its taciturnity of its (male) speakers, disparaged early in the century, were now celebrated and fused into a valued common trait – manliness’ (Cohen 2010: 75).
virtues of courage, chivalry and athletic discipline. This attitude, coupled with the reinterpretation of classical pedagogy as text-based rather than oral, strengthened the reluctance to develop orality in foreign language learning.

This construction of the taciturn aristocratic male was therefore tied inextricably to national identity, including linguistic chauvinism, and idealised models of gender whereby women (as well as working class boys it is important to note) were marginalised as loquacious and frivolous. The premise of the RM’s ‘direct method’ to bypass the learner’s mother tongue (in this case boys’ English) presented, quite apart from any pedagogical notion, a threat to their perceived Englishness. From a nationalistic and patriarchal perspective, the foreign language is therefore in a rivalrous tension with the first language.

The general view that ‘... Latin is the boys’ business, French the girls’ [... ]’ that was reported as the prevalent position by the 1868 Taunton Commission (Taunton Report 1868, VII: 298; see also Bayley and Ronish 1992: 366), continued to hold sway despite the inclusion of modern languages within the expanded curriculum of modern studies in endowed grammar schools. Indeed, their inclusion in the new schools was dependent on their being accepted ‘[... ] as having the same educational, moral, and intellectual values as Latin’ (Kelly 1969: 375) and relied on support from intellectual aristocrats such as Earl Fortescue who reported to the Taunton Commission his belief that ‘the subtler parts of French grammar afford a very good discipline to the mind and a very fair test of what might be called scholarship’ (Taunton Report 1868, I: 27).

While the suspicion of speaking foreign languages was certainly not unique to England, the ‘monolingual principle’ (Reinfried 2014: 267) that was central to the immersive pedagogy of RM methods, namely the removal of reference to English, found itself especially at odds with the mores of late Victorian and Edwardian nationalism, a time of swelling imperial pride and increased militarism. Although notions of gender and national identity would hardly have been challenged in the 19th century, if used at all to define issues pertaining to language education, they provide a useful descriptive frame to analyse notions of propriety (character development), appropriateness (pedagogical fit for purpose) and educational values (what was deemed important to know for whom). The terms patriarchy and patriotism offer a frame to extend the simplistic gender binary (boys / girls) through which much of the research into gendered perceptions of language learning has been conducted. Apart from the obvious

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21See, for instance, Doff (2008) who cites Münch’s (1908) observation that ‘... there is a common and widespread belief that performance in spoken language is and remains the business of an intellectually lower group of waiters and the like, and as if it always meant a kind of mechanical training unworthy of members of a higher human class’ (Doff’s translation, from Wilhelm Münch’s handbook article ‘Sprechen fremder Sprachen’, see Münch 1908: 815-820).
observation that gender is only one variable that intersects with others, the use of these terms also emphasises that patriarchal constructions of knowledge and learning do not just point to which disciplines are worthy of study, but point to ways of learning and studying, that are encouraged as gender-conforming. Simply put, patriarchy per se does not refer to what boys may or may not do but signals a normative positioning of monolingualism or, at best, a controlled, face-saving engagement with foreign language learning where the ‘emphasis [is] on problem-solving, goal-oriented, mastery-based teaching practices that [...] strengthen the patriarchal inscriptions of the subject and of society’ (Kramsch and von Hoene 1995: 330).

Concluding remarks

The challenges of teaching modern languages in English schools are as pressing today as ever, and many of the factors shaping pupil motivation and systemic resistances are deeply ingrained. Among these, we can distinguish between localised, pedagogical factors and the broader matrix conditions which shape these. In this paper, I have considered in particular the gender division in the history of language learning and teaching, and how this has been significant in the coalescence of national identity with relations to foreign languages. Gender has been a central cleavage in education systems throughout the world and continues to colour discussions of language learning and learner motivation in reductive ways, even as research has shifted from psychological essentialism to more complex understandings of language and educational socialisation.

The Reform Movement in modern languages teaching arrived at a time in England when the school system was newly established. The English model of education was heavily stratified, reflecting the logic of an entrenched societal hierarchy. This was also apparent in other European countries, but in England there were some key differences or, at least, characteristics that were more marked. In particular, deference to the traditional arrangement was much more ingrained, allowing a gentlemanly laissez-faire in matters of school governance and pedagogy and promoting the perpetuation of an elite, classics-oriented model that scorned utilitarian and vocation learning.22 The late 19th century was also a time of increased patriotism and militarism which saw the inculcation of national pride as an urgent function of education, a pride that was inscribed in a solid, monolithic ideology where there was no room for heterogeneity or difference. The conflict between nationalist sentiment in the service of imperial expansionism and learning the language of other

22Unlike, for instance, in Germany where state intervention encouraged vocational training at this time (see Deißinger 2001).
nations reinforced the desirability of the grammar-translation approach as the prestige model. This approach offered a contained, replicable pedagogical format that was easier to assess and less threatening to British schoolteachers having limited oral proficiency and, at least sometimes, an attitude of derision towards native-speaking foreigners.

In the longer term, pedagogical innovation was further stymied by a renewed nationalism in the wake of the First World War not least because Reform methods were perceived as a ‘German import’ (Bayley 1998: 56). Any new practices that encouraged oral practice\(^\text{23}\) such as emphasising choral repetition or using images to by-pass mother tongue, were grafted on to the structure of GTM rather than replacing it (Bayley 1998), and these changes mainly occurred in lower school years, with senior schools oriented to exam preparation where writing was prioritised. Developing speaking skills would not be a central classroom priority until the audio-lingual and communicative approaches of the post-war age.

One important legacy of the RM, which may be a result of its timing as much as its substance, was the professional dialogue that both introduced RM and simultaneously encouraged its contestation. From the late 19\(^\text{th}\) century we see a transformation in the discourse around languages and language study that continues today in professional journals and in the broader advocacy movement, a discourse which has amplified significantly in recent years through social media. In more general terms, the rationales posited in defence of modern languages continue to reveal broadly ‘[…] differing understandings of purpose […]’ (Forsdick 2011: 37) between the instrumental and utilitarian on the one hand and those arguing for the mental discipline of a liberal educational approach on the other. These differing understandings are clearly embedded in material and discursive structures that point to broader parameters of social class, family histories and gender normativity. Whichever outcome is promoted, be it instrumental or more broadly educational, an exclusive focus on measures of proficiency skirts around the complex and potentially risky enterprise of speaking another’s tongue. A challenge facing language education scholars, including historians, is to extend the theorising of auto/biographical subjectivities to incorporate (for example ‘queer’) voices that find themselves in tension with the constraints of patriarchal conformism.

\(^{23}\)Even where oral proficiency was practised, it is significant to note that speaking was highly controlled through drills and structured turns. Howatt and Smith (2002, vol i: xx) cite Abercrombie’s (1963) distinction to explain that spoken language in method classrooms was ‘[…] not conceived as ‘conversation classes’ but was ‘spoken prose’, not conversation’, as had been encouraged by earlier maîtres de langues such as Wanostrocht (see Coffey 2020a).
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